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Education as a Tool of Liberation from Corrupt Leadership in Africa: A Comparative Study between Plato's Allegory of the Cave and Julius Nyerere's Allegory of the Mountain

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ABSTRACT: Africa is currently facing many challenges, such as drought, poverty, moral corruption, political turmoil, negative ethnicity, economic dependence among others. This paper is an analysis of how political leaders contribute to political turmoil in Africa. Both Plato and Nyerere view education as a tool for liberation. Education liberates a person from the chains which constrain him or her against participation in matters of decision making in a participatory democracy. In the allegory of the mountain, Nyerere notes that an educated individual is a self-reliant person who can be creative and productive within the humanity for the common good of the community. He does not isolate himself but is able to liberate others from ignorance through education. For Plato, an educated person possesses not only knowledge but also political wisdom as a philosopher-king. Such a person applies political wisdom in reforming education for the common good of society. The two metaphors or analogies of education of Nyerere and Plato are analyzed comparatively to tease out lessons for Africa to transcend the challenge of inept political leadership. This paper use the method of conceptual analysis to argue that education for liberation is the panacea to Africa's aridity of poor leadership.

KEYWORDS: Africa, education, liberation, leadership, Plato, Nyerere, allegory, tool

I. INTRODUCTION

Africa faces myriad of challenges, such as poverty, moral corruption, political turmoil, anachronistic beliefs, international debt, negative ethnicity, and misplaced curricula among others. The focus of this paper is on political turmoil precipitated in most African countries due to deficiency in political leadership. In politics, Africa suffers from the 'big man syndrome' where once elected into the office of president most African rulers degenerate in (into) dictatorship contrary to tenets of participatory democracy. The problem of the tyrannical presidency in Africa leads to many social, political and economic problems. This paper is an attempt to search for a method by which Africa can transcend this poverty of lack of appropriate political leadership. The approach employed in this paper is a comparative study of Plato's metaphor of the cave and Nyerere's allegory of the mountain. Both metaphors are demonstrations of how sound and authentic education can be a liberating tool in Africa. This paper will give a brief history of both Plato and Nyerere, and then it will present an analysis of their allegories by trying to give an interpretation of each. The paper shall then discuss education as a liberating tool in Africa by giving out how a sound and authentic education ought to be. It will tackle the question of a holistic approach to such education, the characteristics of sound and authentic education, the characteristics of the liberated political leader and lastly give a brief recommendation and conclusion.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Africa suffers from corrupt political leadership. This problem is not peculiar to Africa, it is a global problem and as ancient as the beginning of the establishment of national states. This is evident in the history of western social-political philosophy, particularly in Plato's Republic. The classical manner in which Plato captured the problem of corrupt political leadership makes his theory relevant to Africa today. In book 5 of the *Republic*, he cautions that; "Till philosophers are kings or the kings ...of this cosmos have the spirit as well as clout of view point, and political enormity along with acumen meet in one ... cities will never have rest from their evils" African states based on this theory of Plato will not have rest from corrupt political leaders unless African rulers have the spirit and power of philosophy integrated with political leadership. The problem of corrupt political leadership in Africa persists because of what Plato refers to as "those commoners natures who pursue" political

greatness to the exclusion of the spirit and power of philosophy. Based on this theory Plato's allegory of the cave and Nyerere's allegory of the mountain will be integrated to derive an African philosophy of education as a tool for liberation from corrupt African political leadership.

The road to complete knowledge, is explained by Plato by means of a tale which is commonly known as the parable of the pothole.² The allegory of the cave presented by the Greek philosopher Plato in his work the *Republic* in book seven to compare the upshot of education and the dearth of it on our nature.³ It is inscribed as a discourse concerning Plato's brother Glaucon and his mentor Socrates, who re-counted it.

Behold! Human beings living in a concealed cave that has a aperture uncluttered in the direction of the light and realizing all along the cave; here they have been from childhood, and have their legs and necks chained so that they cannot move, and could only perceive afore them, being disallowed by the shackles from turning round their heads. Above and behind them a fire is blazing at an expanse, and amid the fire and the prisoners, there is an elevated approach. There is a raised wall built along the way like the screen which mannequin thespians have in front of them, over which they show puppets. Men are passing along the fortification carrying all categories of ewers, and effigies and figures of faunae prepared from wood and stone and numerous constituents, that appear over the wall. Some of the people are talking while others are in silence. The prisoners realize merely their shadows, or obscurities of one more, that the fire chucks in the contrary barrage of the cavern. If one of the prisoners suddenly escapes and no longer takes the shadows for the real objects, at first he will suffer sharp pains; the glower shall anguish him, and he will be incapable to perceive the realisms that his previous situation he had perceived the glooms; he will realize that all that he had seen before were all illusion. He will be confused by the increased light and the changes in the quality of the objects of his perceptions.

Compelled to look straight in the eyes, he will have pains in his eyes which will make him turn away to take refuge in the objects of vision which he can see, and which he will conceive to be in reality clearer. If he goes another step further and looks at the sun, he will be pained and irritated because his eyes will be dazzled and will not be able to see anything at all of what is now called realities.

He shall need to grow habituated to the light of the higher universe. At first, he will see the shadows finest, subsequent to the replications of men and other substances in the water, and then the bits and pieces themselves. Then he will stare at the dainty of the moon besides the stars and the heaven; and he will realize the sky in addition to the stars night healthier than the sun or the light of the sun by day. Lastly, of all, he shall be able to perceive the sun, and not sheer likenesses of him in water, nonetheless he will realize in his particular appropriate place, and not in another, and he will anticipate himself the manner in which he is.⁶ Nonetheless, if he were to return to his chained companions and tell them of his experience outside the cave, they would throw scorn on his explanations, just as the sensists scorn explanations of the doctrine of the real understandable form of being.⁷

III. INTERPRETATION OF THE CONCEPTS IN THE ALLEGORY OF THE CAVE

So as to grasp the real meaning of the metaphor of the cave, is of paramount importance to expose some of the concepts such as the concept of the cave, prisoner, shadows, sun, fire, chains, and finally the escaped prisoner.

3.1 The Cave

The concept of the cave here represents the world of ignorance, lack of education where people are chained by obstacles against reality. For Plato, everyone has a potentialities for knowledge. They can learn and acquire knowledge, but due to various impediments such as laziness, lack of attention and curiosity, lack of responsibility, many people remain chained by ignorance. "... The power to learn is present in everyone's soul and the instrument, with which each learns, is like an eye that can turn around from the darkness."

¹ The Republic by Plato, http://www.idph.net

² Richard H. Popkin & Avrum Stroll, Philosophy Made Simple (London: A Howard & Wyndham Company, 1979), p. 178.

³ Plato, *The Republic*, 514a-520a.

⁴ Joseph I. Omoregbe, *A Simplified History of Western Philosophy*. Vol.1. Ancient and Medieval *Philosophy* (Joja Educational Research and Publishers Limited, 1991), p. 41.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

⁷ Martin Walsh, *A History of Philosophy* (London: Joffrey Chapman, 1985), p. 26.

⁸ Marc S. Cohen (Eds), *Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1995), p. 374.

The people who are not able to get out of the cave are like those who are contented in their ignorance and they do not wish to see the light as they ought to.

3.2 The Prisoner

The term prisoner is used in this sense to represent a person who has been enslaved in ignorance. He/she is content in his/her lack of knowledge. However, it is possible for him/her to get liberated from this state and become aware of what really takes place in the real world. He/she can be liberated through education, thus it is the role of the true philosopher to help him do so. The philosopher-king has to offer education to the uneducated people and thus to liberate them.

Prisoners represent the majority of mankind, that multitude of people who remain all their lives in the state of eikasia, beholding only shadows of reality and hearing echoes of truth. Their views of the world are the most inadequate, distorted by passions and prejudices.

3.3 Shadows

The shadows here represent unreality, that is, the world of sense appearance. It is the changing world, the temporal world which one cannot rely on for acquiring true knowledge. The shadows of the images that are cast on the wall are particular things of the world. The people who are living in the shadows are the blind people of this world who cannot see the real world as it is. All they are able to see is darkness. For them, the reality is the copy of copies of reality.

These people are like a child who has been blind since childhood. He has never perceived a picture of a tree, even though he hears about a tree. He sees the shadows of a tree but not the real tree. On the other hand, when he gets his full sight, he is able to see a real tree as it exists.

3.4 The escaped Prisoner

The escaped prisoner represents a person who tries to obtain the true reality. Since he is not satisfied with the state of ignorance, he tries to move towards the real knowledge. Richard Patterson captures these in the words: ".... in the cave, the escaped prisoner finds the shadow, images and he sees the wooden images which cast the shadow- images and finally fire as the source of light." He is able to realize that all they had all along taken to be reality were but mere shadows of the real objects that exist.11

3.5 Chains

The chains here represent all obstacles which impair or prevent people from seeing realities. There are many obstacles, such as irresponsibility, poverty, moral decadence, poor leadership, political instability, lack of teachers, ignorance, and irrationality among others. The chains can also represent the whole situation of a person such as idleness, economic dependency, lack of vision, lack of curiosity, and lack of attention to the facts of reality. Moreover, people can be obstacles to others, impairing them from acquiring knowledge.

3.6 Light or the Sun

This concept can represent all sources of true knowledge, that is, the gates towards knowledge or reality. It is the light which removes shadows and reveals the true reality of knowledge. The light helps one to reach the true object: from invisible state to a visible state. It must be noted that this process is always painful at first. When one first sets his/her eyes on it, it seems to be an upheaval task that cannot be accomplished. It needs a lot of dedication and perseverance to fully behold it.

JULIUS NYERERE'S ALLEGORY OF THE MOUNTAIN

In his philosophy of liberation, ¹² Nyerere talked of the allegory of the mountain which can be summed in this way: There is a mountain whereby at the foot of the mountain there is a valley in which people live. The people are very contented with the situation of the valley. They find it difficult to climb the mountain and reach the apex where there is light. Normally, in the valley of a mountain people do suffer floods, shadows, diseases, and coldness among others. The people are blinded from seeing an enemy that may be approaching from the other side. All these are evils that can be overcome through the process of mountain climbing. One has to get out of the dangers of floods, that is, he has to get away from diseases, poverty, and misery among others.

⁹ This implies ignorance.

¹⁰ Richard Patterson, *Image and Reality in Plato's Metaphysics* (Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company, 1985), p. 27.

11 John Wild, *Plato's Theory of Man* (USA: Harvard University Press, 1946), p. 184.

¹² Julius K. Nyerere, 'Education Never Ends' In Tanzanian Experience, p.36.

The process of climbing to the top of the mountain is not easy. It is tiresome and has got many challenges. Along the way, there are dangers that are frightening, and tempt him to change his mind from getting to the top of the mountain. Some will succeed to climb and some will refuse to climb and they even pull down those who are taking the initiative to climb. Contrary, they seem to be comfortable with the situation of the valley.

It is only those who will climb the mountain are able to escape these challenges at the valley. From the apex, they are safe from all dangers that are facing the society. And from this position, they are able to see the enemies and dangers that are approaching their community. They have attained real security and the real light.

Those who have reached the apex should get down the valley and advice their fellow clansmen on the beauty of the apex of the mountain. They should help them climb and support them where necessary so that the people here can get to the top of the mountain and hence be freed from the challenges they are facing; the valley of slavery. Nyerere came up with the theory of liberation which states that education is a tool for liberation.¹³

4.1 Interpretation of the Allegory of the Mountain 14

4.1.1The Mountain

The concept 'mountain' depicts full knowledge. At the apex of the mountain is where a person is able to acquire full knowledge. He is able to see the challenges and has the capacity to solve them. The mountain depicts the light or the sun or the vision. A person who reaches the apex of the mountain is a person who is fully educated.

4.1.2 The Valley

The concept 'Valley' implies the zone of ignorance where people are chained by lack of knowledge. In this state, they are facing the multitude of challenges such as diseases, flood, poverty, diseases, anachronistic beliefs, hunger, attacks, and coldness among others, but they are unable to overcome them because they do not have a tool for liberation. They are totally desperate and full of anxieties.

4.1.3 Climbing the mountain

Climbing the mountain of knowledge depicts people getting into the heights of being able to see things globally as they reach the apex. It is in climbing this mountain that one is able to avoid, or as Nyerere would put it, get out of the dangers of the floods, that is to get away from diseases, misery, poverty among others. The process of climbing the mountain depicts various struggles that are involved in trying to acquire knowledge. There are many challenges and some people are tempted to give up along the way.

4.1.4 Climbing the Peak of the Mountain

Depicts the challenges a person is facing on the way is acquiring education. A journey towards education is full of obstacles; one can easily fail to persevere. It needs a personal determination to climb to the peak. The 'bushes' implies the hindrances on the way as a person climbs the mountain. These are obstacles which impair the effort of a person who climbs the mountain.

4.1.5 Flood

The concept 'flood' at the valley of the mountain depicts the zone of several challenges faced by the people at the level of ignorance. Due to lack of education, they are not able to attain solutions at all; they do not know how to eradicate these vices. The remedy to this situation is to climb the mountain.'

4.1.6 The Apex

It is only those who persevere to the end that are able to reach the apex of the mountain. The apex of the mountain shows those who have attained full knowledge. They have been liberated from the challenges that are facing the society hence they are safe at the top. From the top, they are able to address the challenges of the people or even see the enemies and dangers that are fast approaching their community. With that, they can offer advice to the people on how to eradicate these vices hence live a better life. Those at the top cannot be attacked with challenges such as poverty, diseases, and anachronistic beliefs.

4.1.7 Descending to the Valley

The descending downwards depicts liberated individuals who have been empowered by the process of education and have understood themselves and the societal realities in general. They are therefore moving downwards to the valley to liberate the ignorant masses. As the role of the true philosopher is to assist others to see the true reality by educating them. As Socrates in his method '*maeutics*' 15 that a philosopher is one who has a mission of helping others to give birth to knowledge. This is the mission of the true philosopher/ the African Scholar who has already seen the upper world.

¹³ Gerald A. Bennars, *Ethics, Education and Development* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1993), 94.

Nyerere, Education Never Ends, Op. Cit., p. 36.

¹⁵ That means the midwife who can help a pregnant woman to give birth.

In a nutshell, the process of acquiring knowledge does not end, it is cyclical because one anticipates and orients himself/herself into endless knowing, foreknowledge, which is an ongoing process.

V. INTEGRATION OF THE ALLEGORIES (PLATO AND NYERERE)

5.1 Prisoners

In the allegory of the cave, Plato talks of prisoners who have been chained inside a cave since their childhood. All they can see and hear are only shadows and sounds but not the real objects. They take the sounds and shadows to be the true reality. It is true that these prisoners are suffering from ignorance. All they take to be true reality are just but shadows of what really exists in the real world. Due to the chains, they are not able to come to contact with true reality hence they need to be liberated so as to know that what they perceive as real are mere shadows.¹⁶

In the same way, according to Nyerere, those who are living down in the valley are suffering from ignorance. Due to their ignorance, their lives are exposed to so many dangers and challenges. They can be attacked by floods at any time. From the valleys, they are not able to see their enemies approaching and they are again exposed to poverty and diseases. Majority of the people are in this state and they are ignorant about their miserable state. They need somebody who has been to the apex of the mountain to come and liberate them. Even though, such a task may not be easy because the people themselves are contented in their ignorant state.

Africa today suffers from a serious state of ignorance (cave and valley). There are many parts of Africa where there is a serious challenge to food security, terrorism, poor leadership, moral corruption and political instability. For example, people continue to die of hunger in many parts of the continent yet very little is being done to uplift them from this situation. The little handouts that they are given by their respective governments and NGOs do not help at all. The state of ignorance calls for a long-term solution to some of these by implementing practical educational policies that can help people to alleviate from their suffering states. The liberative initiatives should come within the African continent than depending on other continents. There is a Swahili proverb which says 'Elimu ni Mlango wa Maisha.' The proverb supports the concept of education for liberation, that 'education is the entry for life.'

5.2 An Escapee from Ignorance (Cave and Valley)

Plato captures this in the escaped prisoner. Immediately the prisoner frees himself from the chains, he realizes that all that he had taken to reality were just but shadows of the real objects. The process of escaping is quite a long and painful process. It needs perseverance and patience to be fully liberated. The prisoner realizes that his eyes are pained at the sight of light because he was used to staying in a dark cave. He is not able to look directly at objects but prefers to look at them from their reflections in the water. It is only after some time that he will be able to even look at the sun and even the stars and moon.

The same way, in the allegory of the mountain, the process of climbing the mountain is not an easy task. One is likely to face challenges along the way. The process itself is tiresome and one needs to be well disposed of so as to go through the whole of it. In real life, it is in the mountains where most wildlife prefers to live, and this means that, when one is prepared to climb the mountain, he must accept to expose himself to such dangers. Again, as one climbs the mountain, the climate becomes very cold and this can expose somebody to diseases that can even kill the individual if not well addressed. But all in all, because of the desire to attain knowledge, one must move out of the comfort zone at the valley and expose himself to such dangers with an aim of attaining full liberation at the apex.

For Africa to be liberated, she needs to go through some painful experience. This means her people have to sacrifice part of their lives and values so as to go through the process of liberation. The African scholars must be well disposed to sacrifice their time and lives for an intellectual journey so as to put Africa in the same scale with the rest of the world. Some of the African traditional values that no longer make sense in the contemporary world must also be sacrificed, some of which include: female circumcision, wife inheritance, bias against women, tribalism, corruption and nepotism, our leaders putting their lives in line, even accepting to go to jail, like Mandela did, so as to liberate the continent.

5.3 Personal Effort

It is evident that both allegories, personal effort is required so as to get out of the comfort zones. The prisoners in the cave appear to be contented in their states and the illusionary life seems to be giving them all that they need. This is why it is observed that, should the escaped prisoner try to go back to the cave and inform them of the reality outside, they can even kill him. This is an indication that they are comfortable in their states.

¹⁶John Wild, *Plato's Theory of Man* (New York: Harvard University Press, 1946), pp. 184-185.

¹⁷ That means, education is a gate way to life or the light to life.

In the valley as well, the people living down there seem to be contented and that is why they are not making any effort to move or to climb the mountain. At the valley, life appears to be simple and one can access most things without much struggle. Nevertheless, this should not to be the circumstance. In both of these instances, personal efforts must be put so as to get out of the contentment and to move towards a better life even though it contains much struggle and pain. As Aristotle says, 'the roots of education are bitter, but the fruits are sweet.' ¹⁸

For Africa to be liberated, Africans themselves need to step into the ring and bargain for their space in the global world. It should be known that nobody will come down and bring life to Africa if the Africans themselves seem to be disinterested. The African leaders must come together and have one common vision for Africa. They must champion for African unity that is policy- oriented. As Hans-Georg Gadamer says, they should fuse their horizons together and their intentions together into one agreement. The African curriculum developed in schools must seek to unite the learners and not to divide them. The students should be formed to build their self-esteem and feel equal to the rest of their age-mates anywhere in the world.

5.4 The Attainment of Light

After the painful experience and coming to terms with the reality that entire one had known before in the valley, were but mere shadows of the real objects, one is now fully liberated and can now enjoy the real picture of himself, and of reality as it really is. He is now aware of the things as they exist in their real nature and can now perceive them.

In a similar way, once somebody reaches the apex of the mountain, he is now freed from ignorance. He is able to have a view of the two worlds as they exist, that is, the valley and the mountain. He is able to draw a comparison between the two and realize what the people in the valley lack. From here, he is free from poverty, diseases, and misery. He does not suffer from false beliefs but can be able to think objectively. He is able to see the dangers that are facing his society and identify possible solutions to these dangers.

Such a state can be likened to our African scholars who have gone through the formal education. From their scholarly view, they can see the problems bedeviling Africa and be able to offer practical solutions. For example, they can do their studies in agriculture and know the type of soil and what crops can be planted in such lands; they can advise the people on what kind of plants that can prevent soil erosion, what kind of trees can bring about rains, what kind of technological developments can be implemented in Africa that will not pollute the African environment.

5.5 The liberative Role of the Escaped Prisoner

Plato noted that wisdom is only important if it is placed at the service of the community. The escaped prisoner, after attaining full light, goes back to the cave and informs his fellow companions of the reality outside the den. He should explain to them that all the things they take to be the real objects are just shadows of what really exists. Even though, Plato notes that the process of explanation can be difficult, the other prisoners can scold or even kill him because of their contentment with their state of ignorance.

Nyerere also noted that those who have reached the apex must make sure that they climb back to the valley and liberate their fellow kinsmen. This is an indication that education can only be important if it is for the service of the community. Nyerere said that the liberated individuals should not see themselves as withdrawn from the society, but they should come back and try to alleviate their fellow kinsmen who are still languishing in the state of ignorance. This is in line with Plato who states that, '....the primary duty of the philosopher is to liberate a prisoner from the cave, to liberate man from physical, material world, that is, the world of appearance, for the shadows of unreality and to bring them into the realm of true being...the world of ideas.' ²⁰

They have had an exposure outside their village, and so, even though their brothers and sisters may be contented with their ignorant state, these liberated leaders must make sure that they help them to overcome all these challenges that the society is facing.

VI. CHALLENGES FACING AFRICA

Africa suffers from many challenges, such as political turmoil, colonial legacy, negative ethnicity, corruption, poverty, terrorism, misplaced curriculum, intellectual abstraction, non-identity, diseases, international debt, environmental degradation, and poor technology.²¹ However, in this paper, we shall focus on political turmoil,

1959).

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¹⁸ www.http//:google.scholar.org.

¹⁹ Paul Ricoeur, *The Task of Hermeneutics* (Philosophy Today, 1973), p. 125.

²⁰ Cf. Johanne Hershberger, *The History of Philosophy* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company,

²¹ Ibrahim Farah, Sylvia Kiamba, "Major Challenges Facing Africa in the 21st Century", *At the International Symposium on Cultural Diplomacy in Africa* (Berlin, 14th -17th July, 2011), p. 1.

in a very special way, on the poor African leadership, particularly African presidents. The closing years of the twentieth century are bound to be for Africans a time of prolonged, deep reflection and self- examination. Having achieved political independence in all African states, we need to take stock of the victories, defeats, and compromises that constitute and inform our enigmatic present. The future will note that the conquest by the peoples of the lands was much more complicated and protracted struggle than it first appeared to be. Otherwise, we need to ask ourselves the question as to why the majority of the African states are facing internal rebellion or attempted coups a few years after independence. Walter Rodney, in his book *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* states that;

political instability is manifesting itself in Africa as a chronic symptom of the underdevelopment of political life within the imperialist context. Military coups have followed one after the other, usually meaning nothing to the mass of the people, and sometimes representing a reactionary reversal of the efforts at national liberation.²³

Rodney proposes that the plunderage and systemically unethical creativities instituted in the clusters to sequester ordinary wealth in Africa to Europe have expedited underdevelopment of Africa though it establishes the growth of Europe. The independence which most African states achieved appeared to be ill-fated. It did not bring with it the hoped-for freedom that was the object of the struggle in the 1950s and early 1960s. During the period of the struggle for national liberation, when colonialism was confronted, the Westernized Africans stood firm, took positions of leadership, and made the political demands its fighting slogan. Nevertheless, what do we find? With the attainment of independence, the quaking resumes! What change is there in general or in particular? The colonialist is stronger, more powerful than ever before. He promises left- over's if we behave ourselves. And indeed we do not find it difficult to behave.²⁴

Africans must rise up and begin to philosophize within their context. Africa must come up with political policies that are relevant and pragmatic in an African experience. It is quite disheartening that our political stances are still dictated by the West simply because we cannot stand on our own. In contemporary Africa, people still witness African heads of states who do not want to relinquish their duties even after being defeated in the election. Still, some are ready to amend their existing constitutions to allow them more time in office going ahead to punish their perceived opponents so as to silence them. Most of them are morally corrupt, self-centered and poor leaders. Generally, many African presidents are dictators; they want to remain in power. In this case, they end up causing conflict, negative ethnicity, poverty, environmental degradation, misuse of natural resources, international debt and corruption. Walter Rodney in his book, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, states that the situation is that Africa has not yet come anywhere close to making the most of its natural wealth, and most of the wealth now being produced is not being retained within Africa for the benefit of Africans. It is also stated by Siaka Stevens, the President of Sierra Leone when in 1974 he told the delegates to a conference of his ruling party that,

The most serious danger which confronts us today as a people is the danger of losing our hold on our traditional past and heritage while we have not yet fully grasped the cultures and traditions presented to us.....Most of us are 'displaced persons' from the educational and cultural point of view.²⁶

According to Plato and Nyerere, the solution to all these challenges is 'education for liberation. Both have put an emphasis on education as a tool which will be able to uplift Africa from the state of the cave and valley to the state of light/sun and mountainous apex.

VII. THE SOUND AND AUTHENTIC EDUCATION AS A SOLUTION FOR THE PROBLEMS CAUSED BY POLITICAL TURMOIL

7.1 Sound and Authentic Education as a tool for Liberation

An authentic and sound education is that which produces a liberated person in whole aspects. It is the kind of education that liberates all the aspects of a human person, that is, psychological, economic, political and social

²² Tsenay Serequeberhan, Hermeneutic of African Philosophy. (New York: Routledge, 1994), p14

²³ Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*? (Tanzanian Publishing House, Dar-Es-Salaam 1973) p. 46

²⁴ Tsenay Serequeberhan, *Our Heritage* (Boston: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000), p. 4.

²⁵ Walter Rodney. *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa?* (London: Bogle-L'ouverture Publications, 1973), p. 34.

²⁶ Stevens Siaka., Address to the Fourth National Delegates Conference of the African People's Congress. 1974.

dimensions. In his latest speech in 1998, a year before his death, Nyerere talks about a sound and authentic education, a speech that was delivered to the students of Open University, he asserts, a sound and authentic education should be universal and relevant. Universal applies to all; relevance, it must be for liberation for man and society. Not just an instrument which alienates one from himself/herself or even the society. ²⁷

Such an education should be competitive globally. Education that can make one work anywhere in the world. Education that enables one to attract potential foreign investors to come to Africa, and enable Africans to compete globally in the free market. Paul Frere seems to concur with this point when he says that a liberating education consists in acts of cognition, not transferable of information. The sound and authentic education is that which emphasizes dialogue; the teacher- of- the- students and the students- of- the- teacher relationship. This kind of education produces a learner who is a creator and not a creature.²⁸

7.2 A Holistic Approach

There is a need for an educational system that does not isolate the child from its social and economic values in which it operates. A holistic education must be part of the society. Just like adults, children too learn more from their experience of life than their books and teachers. On the understanding that education is that which liberates man from the restraints and limitations of ignorance and dependence, it also increases physical and mental freedom. The reformed schools and education system must serve to cement and strengthen the aspects of traditional societies which would enable them to adapt to change and come to terms with the modern world through stable, integrated community progress. 30

Nyerere emphasizes the need for education using a Swahili maxim: 'kama unadhani Elimu ni ya ghali, jaribu gharama ya ujinga.'³¹ Learning has to create the person to be human for the reason that he is conscious of his or her potentialities in an affirmative sense, life-enhancing affiliation with himself or herself, neighbor as well as the surrounding. Plato says that if we are to educate our young ones, the first thing is to consider what virtue is. And to him, virtue designates excellence, the excellence of anything, in any field whatsoever. Whatever is able to do its proper function, attain its proper end or good, we call a thing of virtue or excellence.³² It must be emphasized that a sound and authentic education is that which has a well-organized curriculum, which is relevant to the society and focuses on the problem solving of societal challenges. It must be individual along with social-centered education. In addition, such education should lay its foundations in culture. Culture has a particular relevance for education because it provides the framework of a given society's educational system: it sharpens education and in it, it is shaped by the educational enterprise. Rahman Babu also recommends that:

Since these traditional principles which kept the family and the community together, are demonstrably desirable for the maintenance of social order and the wellbeing of the community, they must be made part of the educational system of the present just as they were part of the educational system of the past.³³

The education system should incorporate African traditional values such as the principle of fraternity, leadership, dialogue, planned development, harmony, autonomy, humanism, black consciousness, morality, religion, values, and conservation of nature. According to Plato and Nyerere, the most important solution towards the above-mentioned challenges is through education. Africa needs educated liberated leaders to do away with the above problems. Political turmoil in Africa can be compared with the state of a prison in the cave and the valley. Plato uses an example of enlightenment or escaped prisoner who liberates himself or herself and acquires a moral calling to go back to liberate others. After liberation, his/her role is to serve the common good of the society. The primary duty of the philosopher is to liberate a prisoner from the cave, from the shadows of unreality and to bring them into the realm of true being, the world of ideas.³⁴ Therefore, Africa requires ethical

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²⁷ Julius K. Nyerere, "Education for service and not for selfishness," in *Nyerere on Education*, ed. Elieshi Lema (Dar es Salaam: Haki Elimu, 2004), pp.160-161.

²⁸ Cf. The Tanzania Education Journal. No.8.Vol.3 (1974):5.

²⁹ Cf. *The Tanzanian Educational Journal*, p. 6.

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ If you think that education is very expensive, try to consider the cost of ignorance.

³² Laszlo Versenyi, *Socratic Humanism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1963), p. 84.

³³ Abdul Rahman Mohamad Babu, *African Socialism or Socialist Africa*? (London: Zed Press Caledonia Road, 1981), p. 56.

³⁴ Cf. Johanne Hershberger, *The History of Philosophy* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1959).

and servant leaders to serve. One of the African roles should reform the education system, which is sound and authentic, as Nyerere puts it.³⁵ On the same account, Nyerere argues that.

Education has to liberate both the mind and the body of a man. It has to make him more aware of a human being because he is aware of his potential as a human being, and in a positive, life-enhancing the relationship with himself, his neighbor, and his environment. Education has, therefore, to enable man to throw off the impediments to freedom, which restricts his full physical and mental developments.³⁶

In Nyerere's allegory of the mountain, the escaped prisoner goes back to the valley to liberate his fellow Africans from ignorance, poverty, anachronistic beliefs, and political turmoil. That he should liberate them from what is negative, that is freedom from deficiency, and actualization of their potentialities. These leaders are social reformists; they should reform their fellow Africans and become masters of their own environment.

Both Plato and Nyerere offer a theoretical framework for reconstructing education as a tool for liberation in Africa from political turmoil. We need African leaders who are enlightened as philosopher-kings or queens who at the service of the people, as it was exemplified in life, leadership, and retirement of Julius Kambarage Nyerere; he went back to his village and became not only a farmer but a teacher who used to invite his village mates to come and learn from him. In this paper, Nyerere has become a true liberated and true African philosopher-king.

Nyerere sees education was traditionally perceived as a means of transmitting culture and a way of fitting individuals into the society. The individual was hence, subordinate to the society. Nevertheless, in the contemporary society, education ought to be viewed as a tool for liberation. Nyerere kept on emphasizing on education as a tool for liberation.³⁷ For him, prominence ought to be given to the individual. It is worth noting that Nyerere did not abandon the values invested in the society.³⁸ His words are captured in the quotation as follows:

In 1967, we defined the purpose of education as to 'transmit from one generation to the next the accumulated wisdom and knowledge of the society, and to prepare the young people for their future membership of the society and their active participation in its maintenance or development. Today, seven years later, I still think that this is a good definition. But it was a definition intended to cover all kinds of societies- it was designed to be universal; objective and descriptive. As a guide for action, it, therefore, needs some expansion and emphasis, especially for Africa. In addition, I believe that the necessary emphasis can be stated very simply: the primary purpose of education is the liberation of man.³⁹

From the above, we can depict that the primary purpose of education is, designated as liberation; it becomes necessary that we be very clear about the concept of liberation.

In a similar way, in the *Republic*, Plato outlines the process of education and how the young ones are to be formed:

The future guardians will complete their philosophical studies at the age of forty. And he says that it is until philosophers are Kings, or kings and princes of this world have the spirit of philosophy, and political greatness and wisdom, is when a just society can be realized. 40

From this, we can take note that Plato is very categorical on how the process of education is able to form and prepare him become a future leader of the society.

Liberation from the standpoint of logic implies 'being freed from' what appears inhibiting, from a constraint, in order to do certain things. In this sense, therefore, liberty presumes a restriction whose exclusion empowers man

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³⁵ Gerald Bennars. *Ethics, Education and Development* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1993), p. 94.

³⁶Julius Nyerere, *The Tanzanian Education Journal, Loc. Cit.*, p. 4.

³⁷ Gerald Bennars. *Ethics, Education and Development* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1993), p. 94.

³⁸ Julius K. Nyerere, *Ujamaa Essays on Socialism* (Dar es Salam: Oxford University Press, 1968), p45 ³⁹ The Tanzanian Education Journal, Loc. Cit., p. 4.

⁴⁰ Eugene Freeman & David Appel. *The Wisdom and Ideas of Plato* (Greenwich: Fawcett Publications, 1966), p.148.

to do some things. As Kingsley Price points out that for John Dewey, to be free from constraints are to possess the instrument by use of which we may alter the environment to bring it to our needs. ⁴¹ From an ethical perspective, liberation has everything to do with the ethical or value attached to the state, or the process of liberation. Kingsley points out that John Locke said that, through education, a child should be modeled by different virtues, which will enable him to manage one's affairs of this world with foresight.

Having pointed out the meanings in which Nyerere posed the term "liberation," some remarks regarding the inkling of emancipation are compulsory. Nyerere recognizes liberation as an ongoing procedure, comprising methodical annihilation of corporeal as well as mental obstructions of freedom. In a philosophical exposition of Nyerere's analysis of the term 'liberation' means to set free from something," what appears inhibiting from a constraint, in order to do certain things. Plato also talks about knowledge as mental seeing, grasping or touching a knowable object. He talks of knowledge in terms of seeing, touching and contemplating and speaks of the eye of the soul. In this way, knowledge should guide and inform our actions. Nyerere's emphasis on mental liberation as the key to the attainment of genuine humanity is overwhelmingly evident. Reasonably, carnal liberty is of diminutive or no import if the minds remain fettered. This is why both Plato and Nyerere look at the task of education as a process of expanding freedom.

From that, it is of great importance to consider the role of education as a vehicle for liberation in Africa. Education must seek to set free certain restraints and limitations that poverty, diseases, slavery, colonialism, ignorance, and dependence. A.R. Thompson in his book, 'Education and Development in Africa, states that,

Whichever strategy is dominant in nation-building policy, education has been as a major instrument for achieving the goals of unity, political stability and equality of opportunity and for circumventing situations which may give rise to conflict. 45

Liberating education should make human beings aware of two things: his own personhood and his power as a human being to use circumstances rather than be submerged in them. Education should arouse curiosity, ability to learn from others and provoke inquiry. An educated individual should be able to think for himself, make his own informed decisions and execute them. The primary objective of such a tactic is the refinement of the 'self' that is unrestricted and self- dependent. Hence, the preceding avowal does not, in any way, laud a situation of egoism, however rather, it underscores the indispensable role of free persons in structuring an open public.

7.3 The Characteristics of the Education for Liberation 7.3.1 Socio-Political Aspect

Education should free a person from socio-political limitations. Nyerere observes that:

A man develops himself by joining in a free discussion of a new venture, and participating in the subsequent decision; he is not being developed if he is herded like an animal into the new venture. Development of a man can, in fact, only be effected by that man; development of the people can only be affected by the people. 46

A human being is not an island, but a social animal, who needs others to live with, but not an isolated being. Education has the responsibility to liberate a person from the restraints, which prevent him from socializing with others. Odhiambo ⁴⁷ quotes Aristotle who says, man, is a political animal, and ordained by nature for the State life, also as a human being by nature is a social animal who needs to participate in political and social matters in his society. For this reason, then, education should set him free from the chains which limit him to participate in

⁴⁴Mary Warnock, *Plato's Epistemology and Related logical problems* (New York: Humanities Press, 1972), pp. 20-21.

⁴¹ Kingsley Prince, *Education and Philosophical Thought* (Boston: The Johns Hopkins University, 1967), p. 561

⁴²The Tanzania education Journal, Loc. Cit., p. 4.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁴⁵ A. R. Thompson, *Education and Development in Africa* (London: Macmillan Education Ltd, 1990), p .54.

⁴⁶ Julius K. Nyerere, *Man and Development* (Dar es Salaam: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 28.

⁴⁷ F. Ochieng' Odhiambo, *A Handbook on Some Socio- Political Philosophers* (Nairobi: Consolata Institute of Philosophy Press, 1998), p.12.

matters of decision making, leadership and participatory democracy in the society. A liberating tutelage aids the community to have liberative edifices, and determinedly partake in its ascendency. Such an education system should remove the classes that exist in the society. Nyerere noted that, in a capitalist society, the masters would exploit their slaves, yet they themselves would just be eating without working, own cars without driving them, their wives and children eating without working and all that. Education for liberative instrument should thus strive to eliminate all these barricades that exist in Africa. As Nelson Mandela too, says, 'education is the most powerful weapon to change the world.'50

In this sense, the learner is probable to procure the sort of teaching that shall unshackle him or her from the communal as well as civil restraints. An educated individual should thus be one who can freely socialize with his or her social members and participate in their state of affairs consciously. This is in line with Plato when he says that the knowledge of man is essential to the society.⁵¹

7.3.2 Psycho-Physical Elements

Education ought to set man free from psychological restraints or chains. It ought to unfetter him from the restraints of unawareness, then empowers him to have a full rule on him/herself as well as to enjoy his /her specific environs. Nyerere puts it in these words:

When a man succeeds in untying his wrists and liberating his arms, he can use his hands to liberate his feet from shackles, which bind them. Nevertheless, a man can be physically free from restraints and still be unfree if his mind is restricted by habits and attitudes, which limits his humanity.⁵²

This is what Plato argues that the shadows in the cave represent the imperfect unreal world of appearances and approximation in which the prisoners live in bonds which fetter them to their bodies.⁵³ Just like the prisoners who are liberated from the physical fetters, education should also liberate our psychophysical aspects. It is evident that the target of education is to liberate both the psychological and physical aspects of man. In this sense, the human person can be really humane. Locke puts an emphasis on the physical and psychological liberation that all learners should not ignore the physical training that can contribute to their happiness and welfare. A human person is a complex being who needs physical exercise for the sake of well-being. This is the reason why physical education should be emphasized in order to liberate an individual from physical constraints. And in the area of psychological liberation, the individual learner should undergo guidance and counseling in order to be psychologically balanced.

7.3.3 Economic Dependency

A sounds education should create a competent continent or citizens who are capable of eradicating their economic dependency and thus able to embrace self- reliance. Education, which Nyerere proposes, is that which makes people free and fully developed. Freedom and development are compatible as he puts it:

Liberty and growth are as utterly interrelated as are chickens and eggs; without chicken, you get no eggs, and without eggs, you soon have no chicken. Similarly, without freedom you get no development; and without development, you soon lose your freedom.⁵⁴

According to Nyerere, the only way that you could sway persons to embark on their particular progress is through learning along with headship. Through these, they will be capable of understanding both their own needs and the things that can satisfy their needs.⁵⁵ Hence, education in Africa should be set as a tool for economic liberation as well. In the same system of thought, Gerald Bennars says that education will show its true meaning and significance if it enables the poor, the illiterate, the marginalized and the oppressed to utter a

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⁴⁸ Cf. Julius K. Nyerere, *Man and Development*, p. 28.

⁴⁹ Julius Nyerere, "Leaders must not be Masters" in *African Philosophy: An Anthology* (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), p.78.

⁵⁰www.hptt/ google.scholar.org. Materials of the VI international scientific conference on September 10–11, 2015.

⁵¹ Raphael Demos, *The Dialogues of Plato* (New York: Random House, 1937), p. 431.

⁵²Tanzanian Educational Journal, Loc. Cit., p.4

⁵³The Wisdom and ideas of Plato, p.147

⁵⁴ Cf. Nyerere, *Man and Development*, p. 25.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

word in freedom. ⁵⁶And that word will be the beginning of authentic and human development. Thompson adds that, when the nation plans on economics, should not forget that education and economics are two things, which are together. Education plays a greater role in economic liberation. To restate the argument and purpose of education, Nyerere links says,

The purpose of education is, therefore, liberation through the development of man as a member of society. The purpose is not the development of objects whether they be pyramids, or irrigation ditches, railways or palaces. The development of things- what is usually called economic development- can be involved in the development of man. It is so in Africa, But the purpose of education is not to turn out technicians who can be used as instruments in the expansion of the economy. It is to turn out men who have the technical knowledge and ability to expand the economy for the benefit of man in the society.⁵

Nyerere's objective was to have a system of education, which can create a person who is capable of pushing his own economy. He asserts that the technical and practical education is an education for creators and not creatures. 58 Moreover, education cannot be considered apart from the society. The school arrangement cannot create a child in segregation from the societal and pecuniary organization that it functions. From this point, we realize that Nyerere's view on education is fundamentally geared towards the liberation of an integral human person, taking into consideration the relevant elements.

VIII. CONCLUSION

As it has been noted in the above section that an educated person is the one who is liberated this section gives various features of a liberated political leader as; active member of the society, fits into the community and serves it, uses education for the benefit of the society, a self-reliant person, who integrates with the society, having a sense of commitment to the total community, having an inquiring mind; ability to learn from others, having self-confidence and having a future vision.

Nyerere tries to show a difference between a liberated and unliberated political leader by using two different Swahili words; "Msomi⁵⁹ na Aliyeelimika⁶⁰" The former, according to Nyerere, is a person who has passed through books; he or she is "a learned friend" as he called him or her. Whereas the latter, is a person whom the books have passed through him or her; and this is a liberated person, who can integrate and apply in life what he or she has studied. For it is often the case, the target of the educational system, according to Nyerere, is to liberate an individual into skillful users of tools and make them creators, not creatures. 61He holds that pseudoeducation is that which prepares a person who is not effective in the society. He remarks,

Learning has not liberated a man if all he learns to want is a certificate on his wall and the reputation of being a 'learned person' professor of knowledge, for such desire is another aspect of the disease of the acquisitive society-the accumulation of goods for the sake of accumulating them. The accumulation of knowledge or worse still, the accumulation of pieces of papers, which represent a kind of legal tender for such knowledge, has nothing to do with development.62

In order for this target to be successful, there must be a sound and authentic system of education; well-planned curriculum and educational content. This type of education can be seen or measured through the product it produces, that is, the features of a person who has been liberated by the sort of edification. The following are some of the features of a liberated person;

⁵⁶ Gerald A. Bennars. Ethics, Education and Development. p. 37.

⁵⁷ Gerald A. Bennars, Ethics, Education and Development (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1993), p. 37.

⁵⁸ A. R. Thompson, *Education and Development in Africa* (London: Macmillan Education Limited, 1990), p. 82.

⁵⁹ A person whom education has not liberated him or her.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 13. Person whom education has liberated him or her.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.13.

⁶² http://www.infed.org/thinkers/et-nye.htm,21 October 1999. (In this study, "man" and associated pronouns (e.g. Him) is used in general sense to refer both men and women.

First, an educated political leader is he who becomes an active member of the society; gives a larger contribution to it and he is aware that, it is the society, which has educated him. ⁶³ As noted by Plato that a fully educated person possesses not only knowledge but wisdom as well; and he will see the moral necessity of putting the wisdom of his knowledge into use for the common good of the society. ⁶⁴

Second, an educated political leader should fit into, to serve, the communities from which they come from. 65 Third, the liberated political leader is who uses his education properly for the benefit of the society not as a tool for the exploitation of others. 66 Fourth, an educated political leader is a self-reliant person who can be creative and productive in the society, for the sake of his own community. Contrary to saying that this learning that has been given, has transformed one into a sought-after product, similar to cotton or sisal or coffee, this type of schooling has besmirched their humankind. Thus, their education has changed them into objects. The unliberated leader will spend his life sucking from the community to the maximum and contributes the minimum. 67 Such a system of education, which has produced such a person, should be condemned because it has proved failures, according to Nyerere.

Fifth, a free-thinking political leader is he who assimilates himself with the multitudes, does not segregate himself from the society and tries his level best to thwart the lure of intellectual conceit. Sixth, a liberated leader is he who fosters the social goals of living together, working together and having a sense of commitment to the total community. Seventh, a liberated political leader is he who is having an acquiring mind; ability to learn from what others do, and reject or adapt it to his own needs, and having a self-confidence and values of others and is valued by them for what he does and not for what he obtains. Fighth, a liberated political leader will recognize that his task is not yet ended. For he shall castoff paucity, and illness and illiteracy in the similar mode as he junks bondage, being aware that these are operational in abolishing the humankind of man as a superintendent with a lash. A liberated leader will work with others to defeat these evils, and will again use whatever resources are at hand. Ninth, a liberated political leader is a self-reliant and creative person whom education has made him an integral person, has received a holistic formation.

IX. RECOMMENDATIONS

Africans should continue to champion for a more united Africa. Being a growing continent, the African states should be more united in their policies and visions of ensuring Africa stands on its own and becomes economically stable. By this unity, such vices as terrorism can be curtailed. Africa should not wait for military aids from the UN and US in addressing conflicts facing it, but Africa should have a well-organized force that can address such vices. African countries should also stop taking advantage of one another. The weakness of one country should not be taken as a strength of the other. An example, is like when a country is in problems, and all that the other country sees are the mineral resources that need to be harvested from such states. Through this, our leaders will stop selfishness and become more united. The heads of states through their unity, will not allow those from other continents to take advantage of their fractured sister countries. African states should strive to be economically empowered. By this, they will be able to control their destiny and to decide their policies. Right now, it appears that the African continent is the dumping site for the other continents. It is in Africa where medicine is tested if at all they can work on human beings, old clothes are brought and dumped here in the disguise of second-hand clothes, used cars are imported in Africa and all sorts of things. Africa, through its education systems, should reclaim their cultural values and try to stand on both feet as a continent. In order to reform the current African educational system, which is the basis of transforming moral -social decadence, political instability and so on. The system should incorporate African traditional values which include fraternity, leadership, dialogue, harmony, planned development, conservation of nature, and morality. Nyerere notes that some of these values were distorted by colonialism. Africa, therefore, need to revisit and integrate them so as to curb the current challenges facing her.

⁶³ Julius .K. Nyerere. Essays on socialism, p.70.

⁶⁴Kingsley Price, Education and Philosophical thought, p. 35.

⁶⁵ Julius K. Nyerere, *Ujamaa Essays on Socialism*, p. 70.

⁶⁶ The Tanzanian Education Journal, Loc. Cit., p. 5.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

⁷⁰ The Tanzanian education Journal, Loc. Cit., p. 4.

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