



African Indigenous Philosophical Foundations and Ethics: A Deconstruction and Reconstruction of Kenyan Education System

ABSTRACT

One of the objectives of education is to promote ethical behaviour among learners. This is emphasized by various commissions and reports on education. Despite the enormous investment in education over the years and the high academic qualification, the level of impunity, corruption and intolerance among graduates and other leavers has become a major concern among educationists and stakeholders. Efforts through reforms and commissions have not yielded much in developing ethics among learners. This raises concern on the influence of African indigenous philosophical foundations on ethics. The current study aimed at determining the influence of deconstruction and reconstruction of African indigenous philosophical foundations on ethics among learners in all levels of education. The study was carried out in Kenyan universities and communities. Descriptive survey and correlation research design were adopted for the study. A sample size of 384 respondents comprising of 324 students and 60 academic staff participated in the study. Data collection was done using questionnaires and interviews. Instrument validity was enhanced through expert judgement by supervisors. Reliability of instruments was estimated by use of Cronbach Alpha. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. Research hypothesis was tested using regression and correlation analysis at a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$. The study found out that the African indigenous philosophical foundations contribute significantly towards ethics. The null hypothesis that there exists no significant influence on deconstruction and reconstruction of philosophical foundations on ethics is not supported in the current study. The study recommends the need to integrate the African indigenous philosophical foundations in order to influence ethics among learners in all the levels of education.

Keywords: Deconstruction, Reconstruction, Philosophical Foundations, Ethics.

Ruth M. Mwanzia

Department of Education,
Chuka University,
Chuka, Kenya.

I. Introduction

According to Singer (2001) ethics is the standard of good and bad distinguished by a certain community or social setting. Bewaji (2004) defines ethics as the character or attribute of an individual dealing with what is good and evil. In this study, ethics is defined as a set of guidelines that define acceptable behaviour and practices for a certain group of individuals or society. Ethics is important in the society because it is an essential part of the foundation on which a civilized society is built (White, 2016).

Ethics safeguards the total way of life, which forms the culture of people. African traditional communities conceived ethics as an integrated whole (Kinoti, 2010). For instance, an honest person was described as one who could be relied upon because he or she was truthful, generous, courageous and had sense of justice.

In Kenya, the notion of ethics dates back to pre-independence period. Indigenous education emphasized on normative and expressive skills through instilling the accepted behavior and creation of unity respectively (Sifuna & Otiende, 2006). Indigenous education forms part of African heritage and therefore it is inseparable from African way of life. Indigenous knowledge is often perceived as primitive and historical comprised of ancient practices of the African people. While that could have a meaning to those who propagate such views, to Angioni (2003); Dei (2002); Purcell (1998) and Turay (2002) the word indigenous refers to specific groups of people defined by ancestral territories, collective cultural configuration and historical locations. Owour (2007) observes that indigenous denotes that the knowledge is distinctive and belongs to people from specific places with common culture and societies. From studies by researchers on African indigenous education, it is clear that indigenous education was grounded on specific aims of education which were realized through a well thought out philosophical foundations intended to guide social and moral behavior. But, like African philosophy itself, the ideas and beliefs of the African society that acknowledge ethics have not been given detailed investigation and clarification in the Kenyan education system and thus, stand in real need of insightful and extensive analysis, interpretation and implementation. Attempts have been made by contemporary African philosophers to give continuous reflective attention to African moral ideas however; this has not been fully achieved.

According to Owuor (2007) an examination of education reports, such as the Ominde Report of 1964, Gachathi commission of 1976, Kamunge commission of 1988 Constitution of Kenya 2010 and Basic education Act 2014 indicates that the government fully recognizes the importance of promoting ethics in the formal education system. While these reports seem to be inclined towards inclusion of indigenous discourses and perspectives in the education system, there have been obstacles at the implementation stage. There exists a glaring mismatch between the goals of education and the expected outcomes. The current study sought to determine the influence of deconstruction and reconstruction of African indigenous philosophical foundations on ethics in the Kenyan education system.

II. Statement of the Problem

Education is critical in producing ethical people in the society. The African educational system inculcated ethics among members of society and produced ethical and morally upright individuals for generations. With the introduction of colonial education the responsibility of inculcating ethics to children was taken up by the new education system. Ethics has been a key focus for education policy in Kenya since independence. An examination of education reports including Ominde, Gachathi, Kamunge, constitution of Kenya 2010 and Basic education Act 2014 indicates that the government fully recognizes the importance of promoting ethics in the formal education system. Despite the enormous investment in education over the years and the high academic qualification among graduates, the level of impunity, corruption and intolerance manifested in theft of public resources, nepotism, ethnic hatred, religious intolerance, hate speech among others has become a major concern among educationists and stakeholders. Efforts through reforms and commissions have not yielded much in developing ethics among learners. The current study sought to determine the influence of deconstruction and reconstruction of African indigenous philosophical foundations on ethics among learners in all the levels of education.

III. Literature Review

This chapter reviewed literature on the influence of deconstruction and reconstruction of African indigenous philosophical foundations on ethics in the Kenyan education system. The chapter contains information about African indigenous philosophical foundations. African indigenous education as practiced by many communities simple or sophisticated rests on firm and sound philosophical

foundations. This implies that this system of education used its own principles on which it was built. Sifuna, 2006, like Omona (1998) has outlined five pillars upon which African Indigenous Education rests. These are preparationalism, functionalism, perennialism and holism and communalism. The philosophy of communalism (Sifuna 2006, Mush, 2009 and Ocitti, 1973) attest that communalism or group cohesion, parents sought to bring up their children within a community in which each person saw his well-being in the welfare of the group. Sifuna, (2006), like Omona (1998) contends with Mush (2002), that preparationalism as a philosophical base for indigenous knowledge implied the role of teaching and learning to equip boys and girls with the skills appropriate to their gender in preparation for their distinctive roles in the society. Functionalism implied becoming useful to oneself as well as to one's family, community, clan or society to learn what was of relevance and utilitarian to both the individual and the society.

The principle of perennialism which is also considered same as conservatism explains most colonial societies were backward oriented much more than being future-oriented. African indigenous education did not allow the progressive influence of the mind of young people. Most traditional communities in Africa perceived education as a vehicle for maintaining or preserving the cultural heritage and status quo. This partly explains why traditional teachers discouraged pupils from experimenting with the unknown and imposed heavy sanctions on those who tried to do so. The principle of wholisticism as the name implies referred to multiple or integrated learning where a learner was required to acquire multiple skills. The holistic nature of customary education enabled young people to acquire a variety of skills that made them productive in many ways.

IV. Methodology

The study was carried out in Kenya universities and communities. Descriptive survey and correlation research design were adopted for the study. The target population of the study was comprised of 537,211 subjects. A sample size of 384 respondents comprising of 324 students and 60 academic staff participated in the study. Data collection was done using questionnaires and interviews. A research permit was obtained from the National Commission of Science, Technology and Innovation after which a pilot study was conducted in order to improve on the reliability of the research instruments. Reliability of instruments was estimated by use of Cronbach alpha method. A reliability coefficient of 0.789 for the academic staff questionnaire and 0.792 for the students' questionnaire were realized. Validity of research instruments was ascertained by university supervisors and other experts. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data with the aid of Scientific Package for Social Sciences version 25.0. Research hypotheses were tested using regression and correlation analysis at a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$.

V. Results and Discussions

The study sought to determine the influence of African indigenous philosophical foundations on ethics in the Kenyan education system. Philosophical foundations are elements of philosophy that have a bearing in regard to the purposes and content of education. During analysis of data collected a Likert scale indicating Strongly Disagree (SD) $1 < SD < 1.8$; Disagree (D) $1.8 < D < 2.6$; Neutral (N) $2.6 < N < 3.4$; Agree (A) $3.4 < A < 4.2$; and Strongly Agree (SA) $4.2 < SA < 5.0$ was used. Descriptive statistics of the mean and standard error were used to analyze the results.

African Indigenous Philosophical Foundations

The respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree with several statements of African indigenous philosophical foundations in influencing ethics in the Kenya education system. The pertinent results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics on African Indigenous Philosophical Foundations

	N	Mean	Std. Error
--	---	------	------------

Emphasizing on an education system that promotes a spirit of communal cohesion	384	4.23	0.039
Preparing learners for various roles in the society	384	4.35	0.036
Emphasizing on holistic development of learners	384	4.25	0.043
Promoting moral and religious values in education	383	4.38	0.035
Emphasizing on an education that promotes continuity of desired societal values	384	4.30	0.038
Having an education that prepares learners for future responsibilities in society	384	4.51	0.033
Emphasizing on equal opportunities to all learners	384	4.35	0.042
Emphasizing on education that inculcates value of environment protection and conservation	384	4.30	0.037
Promoting positive attitudes of mutual respect	384	4.39	0.034
Providing learners with necessary skills and knowledge for national development	384	4.46	0.033
Overall Mean score	-	4.35	0.037

The results in Table 1 suggest that the respondents, on average indicated high agreement with integrating aspects of African indigenous philosophical foundations in the Kenyan education with an overall mean score of 4.35. Most notably, having an education that prepares learners for future responsibilities in society had the highest mean of 4.51 and a Std. error of 0.033. Emphasizing on an education system that promotes a spirit of communal cohesion had the lowest mean score of 4.23. According to Woolman (2001) the main purpose of education is to educate individuals within society, to prepare and qualify them for work in economy as well as to integrate people into society and teach people values and morals of society. Role of education is a means of socializing individuals and to keep society smoothing and remain stable. Education in society prepares youngsters for adulthood so that they may form the next generation of leaders. One of the education essential tasks is to enable people to understand themselves. Students must be equipped with knowledge and skills which are needed to participate effectively as member of society and contribute towards the development of shared values and common identity.

Correlation Analysis Philosophical Foundations and Ethics

Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation (r) was used for data analysis. Correlation is a value between -1 and +1. In the interpretation of results for the linear relationships in the study, for a weak correlation, “r” ranged from + 0.10 to + 0.29; in a fairly weak correlation, “r” ranged between+ 0.30 and + 0.39; in a fairly strong correlation, “r” ranged from + 0.6 and + 0.79 while in a fairly strong correlation, “r” ranged from + 0.8 and + 0.99. The interpretation for the strength of the correlation by use of ‘r’ values was as indicated by Shirley et al. (2005). The values of “r” and “R2” were considered while interpreting results and a confidence level of at least 95% in the tests of hypotheses was required.

This objective of the study sought to determine the influence of deconstruction and reconstruction of philosophical foundations on ethics among learners in the Kenyan education system. In order to assess the relationships among the independent variable and the dependent variable, a correlation analysis was conducted. Results of the analysis are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Correlation Analysis Philosophical Foundations and Ethics

	Ethics	D & R philosophical foundations
--	--------	---------------------------------

Ethics	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	384	
D & R philosophical foundations	Pearson Correlation	.445**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	384	384

The results of the Pearson’s product moment correlation analysis as presented in Table 2 show varied degrees of interrelationships. The D & R philosophical foundations are statistically significantly correlated with ethics ($r=0.445$; Sig. 2tailed (P-value) $=0.000 < 0.01$). Ndofirepi and Ndofirepi (2012) state that any education system is developed under philosophical foundations that guide its processes. Education is influenced by philosophical, social, economic, political and cultural norms of the society. Philosophical foundations must be capable of stabilizing social order, conserving culture in the society and acting as an instrument of social reconstruction (Okoro, 2010). Education being a multipurpose process not only inculcates social, economic and cultural awareness in humanity but is also an important medium for grasping and promoting life enhancing values among human beings which form ethics. To enhance the whole education system there is need to address more fundamental issues of the social and moral consequences of the unregulated activities in education. Well stated philosophical foundations help in promoting ethics among learners.

Regression Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

The objective of the study was to determine the influence of deconstruction and reconstruction of philosophical foundations on ethics among learners in the Kenyan education system. Respondents were asked to rate the extent in which they agreed with several parameters of African indigenous philosophical foundations in the Kenyan education system. The following hypothesis was tested.

H03: There is no statistically significant influence on deconstruction and reconstruction of African indigenous philosophical foundations on ethics among learners in the Kenyan education system. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Regression Analysis of Philosophical Foundations and Ethics The goodness of Fit

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate	
D & R philosophical foundations	.445a	0.198	0.196		0.83716	
The Overall Significance of the Model						
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
Total	333.756	383				
D & R philosophical foundations	Regression	66.035	1	66.035	94.222	.000b
	Residual	267.721	382	0.701		
	Total	333.756	383			
The individual Significance of the Model						
Unstandardized Coefficients			Std Coefficients		t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
Model	(Constant)	-0.163	0.366		-0.445	0.656
D & R philosophical foundations	D & R philosophical	0.855	0.088	0.445	9.707	0.000

foundations

The results in Table 3 show that 19.8% of variation in ethics is explained by the D & R philosophical foundations. On the basis of these results, the study revealed that the philosophical foundation has marginal significance towards ethics.

F-statistic was used to assess the overall significance of the simple regression model. Results in Table 3 indicate that D & R philosophical foundations significantly influences ethics with F-statistic of 94.222 and a p-value=0.000<0.05.

T- test was used to determine the individual significance of the influence. The results in Table 3 show that the D & R philosophical foundations were considered to be statistically significant with regression coefficient of 0.855 with a t-value=9.707 and p-value=0.000<0.05. This implies that for one unit change in D & R philosophical foundations, ethics increases by a factor of 0.855. Beta coefficients indicate D & R philosophical foundations of 0.445.

Conclusively, the study revealed that D & R of philosophical foundations contribute significantly towards ethics. The null hypothesis that there exists no significant influence of philosophical foundations on ethics is not supported in the current study.

Angioni (2003) notes that the philosophical foundations employed in the traditional African education are still relevant today. No serious educator in Africa can afford to ignore the principles draw from indigenous education. The assumption is that there is a certain degree, in which traditional education is still being promoted all over Africa in spite of the modifications which have come up as a result of adopting the western style of schooling. African traditional education is focused on the attainment of quality education, with centres of excellence that are recognized and profoundly appreciated by the stakeholders of the educational systems. Adeyemi and Adeyinka (2002) indicate that African indigenous education had its foundation in the five principles of preparationism, functionalism, communalism, perennialism and wholisticism.

VI. Conclusion

The study concluded that deconstruction and reconstruction of Kenyan philosophical foundations had a significant influence on ethics among learners. Having an education that prepares learners for future responsibilities in society had the highest influence compared to emphasizing on an education system that promotes a spirit of communal cohesion which had the lowest mean score in relation to all the other dimensions of the African indigenous philosophical foundations.

VII. Recommendations

This study endeavored to determine the influence on deconstruction and reconstruction of Kenyan education system in the bid to influence ethics among learners. Following a reflection on the same, the researcher recommended that there is need to integrate African philosophical foundations into the Kenyan education in order to influence ethics among learners in all the levels of education.

References

- Adeyemi, M. & Adeyinka, A. (2003). The Principles and Content of African Traditional Education. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 35(4), 425–440.
- Angioni, G. (2003). *Indigenous Knowledge: Subordination and Localism*. In G. Sanga & G. Ortalli (Ed), *Nature, Knowledge: Ethnoscience, Cognition and Utility*. New York: Oxford.
- Bewaji, J. A. (2004). *Ethics and Morality in Yoruba Culture*, in Kwasi Wiredu. *A Companion to African Philosophy*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing
- Dei, S. G. J. (2002). *African Development: The Relevance and Implications of Indigeness*:

- Indigenous Knowledge in Global Contexts: Multiple Readings of Our World. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- KICD, (2013). Secondary School Summative Evaluation. Nairobi: KICD
- Kinoti, H. W. (2010). African Ethics: Gikuyu Traditional Morality. Amsterdam and New York: Editions Rodopi
- Kinyanjui, K. (2012). The Role of Religion in National Cohesion and Integration. Nairobi: Nairobi University Press.
- Mushi, P. K. (2009). History of Education in Tanzania. Dar-es-Salaam: Dar-es-Salaam University Press
- NCIC, (2013). Strategic Plan. Nairobi: NCIC.
- Ndofirepi, A. P., & Ndofirepi, E. S. (2012). (E)ducation of (e)ducation in 392 Traditional African Societies? A Philosophical Insight . Stud Tribes Tribals , 10 (1)
- Ojiambo, P. (2009). Quality of Education and its Role in National Development: A Case Study of Kenya's Educational Reforms. In: Kenya Studies Review: 1, 1, 133-149
- Owour, J. A. (2007). Integrating African Indigenous Knowledge in Kenya's Formal Education System: The Potential for Sustainable Development: University of British Columbia Paideia Press.
- Purcell, T. W. (1998). Indigenous Knowledge and Applied Anthropology: Questions of Definition and Direction. Human Organization, 57 (3), 258-272
- Sifuna, D. N. & Otiende, J. E. (2006). An Introductory History of Education. Nairobi: University of Nairobi Press.
- Sifuna, D. N. (2008). Wither African Indigenous Knowledge?. The Case of Primary Education in Africa: From Colonialism to Globalization, Africa and Europe: Historical and Cultural Dilemmas and Challenges for Nationhood and Development. TRANS, (3) 24-32
- Singer, P. (2001). A Companion to Ethics. Malden: Blackwell Publishers
- Turay, T. M. (2002). Peace Research and African Development: An indigenous African Perspective. In G.J.S. Dei, B.L. Hall & D.G. Rosenberg (Ed), Indigenous knowledge's in Global Contexts: Multiple Readings of our World. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- White, J. (2016). Moral Education and Education in Altruism: Two Replies to Michael Hand. Journal of Philosophy of Education, 50 (3).
- Woolman, D. C. (2001). Educational Reconstruction and Post- Colonial Curriculum Development: a Comparative Study of Four African Countries. UK: Pergamon Publisher.