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ETHICS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A RETHINK FOR A TRANSFORMATIVE MODEL IN AFRICA

Aidan G. Msafiri

Introduction

Ethics in higher education serves as both the soul and heart of true and holistic human transformation and empowerment. Ethics constitutes the fundamental principle of value based, inspirational, and practical education.[85] It is informative, formative and has the potential to be transformative, particularly against the present-day profit-oriented education models, trends and brands. Values that are the "DNA" of transformative education do not simply fall from the sky. Such values are nurtured and safeguarded, and passed onto future generations. Amidst the ever-growing "void" or "vacuum" of values, especially in higher education, there is an urgent need to rethink a new model and paradigm of education.[86] New models should be based on the

[85] Aidan G. Msafiri, Climate Change Ambassador for the United Republic Of Tanzania, Kilimanjaro.

[86] This section was previously released on Globethics.net website, and is republished with authorisation of Globethics.net Foundation.

fundamental ethical values of: care, concern, trust, responsible leadership, accountability, foresight, true love, dignity, honesty and patriotism.

Ethics

The term "*ethics*" has its origins from the Greek language "*ethos*". It implies an 'outlook shaped by the awareness of moral values'. It involves reflection and action of what is objectively good, to be pursued, and what is objectively bad, to be avoided. This reflection on action is founded on three key pillars: the objective good, the self, and the others.

Non-Humans

Ethics transcends faith, race, political affiliations, cultural status and gender and is therefore cross-boundary by nature. Ethical living implies practicing what is objectively good, on personal, social, economic, political and other levels.

From both Christian and Interfaith perspectives, there is agreement that ethics orients, motivates and empowers, harmonizes and inspires personal faiths, families, communities and nations. Ethics aims to know what is objectively 'good' and what is objectively 'bad', and facilitates decision-making to avoid the 'bad'.

It must be well understood that ethics are not laws stipulated by governmental forces. Ethics is made up of inner values, virtues, habits, norms, attitudes, beliefs, criteria and principles. Unlike laws, ethics is motivated by the inner, non-tangible values such as: peace, faith, Agape (love), solidarity, fairness, care, compassion, trust, justice, empathy, wellbeing, joy, equity, accountability, transparency, sustainability, forgiveness, mercy, and moderation.

NB: We cannot measure such values empirically; neither can we touch them, as we simply live them.

Ethics is also motivated by transcendent/metaphysical beliefs or revelations. The may include reward after death, punishment after death and eternal happiness. A human being is capable of knowing these super

natural realities. In these instances, ethics and ethical living do not fall from the skies. These realities are reflected, lived, and passed onto future generations through religious and societal norms and values

Higher Education

The term "education" originates from the Latin "*educare*", which implies 'to inform, to inspire, to share, to mentor or to enlighten with values, life views and world views'.

It must be well noted that learning, be it primary, secondary or tertiary, is not simply an event ,but rather a value-based, life-long process of transforming the cognitive, affective and psychological dimensions of the human being's mind, soul, body and will.

More generally, higher education refers to post-secondary education. It is usually delivered at educational establishments such as universities, colleges, academies, seminars or institutes. However, there can be a difference between higher education and further education.

Rationale/Justification

A value-based ethical education model is key to a holistic, transformative and developmental process. It is the best cure against Nyerere's "cancers" of development, namely ignorance, disease and poverty. It also poses arguments against Mahatma Gandhi's Seven Blunders Theory. The theory stipulates

> "wealth without work, pleasure without conscience, knowledge without character, business without morality, science without service, worship without sacrifice and politics without principle."

At present, at the centre of the Tanzanian ethical educational system lays the infamous dictum from President John Magufuli, 'Kutumbua Majipi', which translates 'Operating on Boils'. The dictum exists as a

result of corrupt practices within Tanzanian society. This highlights the need for a shift into a new paradigm truly reflective of values.

Thought-provoking Ethical-based Questions

What are the short, medium and long-term consequences of dissociating ethics in families and in the educational curricula? Where is the absence of ethics in academia and intellectual professionalism leading us (*quo vadis*)? What are the impacts of the commercialization and commodification of education in Africa and worldwide? Do we believe that ethical behaviours are rewarded more than unethical behaviours? Do we agree that, when good people do nothing, evil increases? What are the weaknesses of the information revolution to society? Are they not emptying their minds and filling their databanks? (Ref. "*Homo Idioticus*") Is the present day knowledge-based society transforming the human person ethically, socially and as a human? What are the implications of observations such as "operation well done, but patient died", "graduation done, but graduates remain illiterate"? What are the implications of value-free education trends or models, "patchworks", and "bluff society"? Are university students' mere consumers, or innovative producers of knowledge and skills? Do we agree that ethics is the key incubator and protector of transformative higher education? What are the impacts of political interests in the process of curricula development and policy? What are the effects of "academic inbreeding"? Is the academia managing or damaging its own image and mission? Do the mission, vision and core value statements of a university mean anything today, especially without ethical engagement and transformation? What are the roots of the ever-growing "copy and paste" plagiarism and laziness cultures among college students?

These questions will be addressed in three key parts.

Ethical and Value-based Education as a Transformative Tool against Destructive World and Life Views Today

Economic Illusions in Higher Education today

"I am because I consume" vs. "I am because we are" or "I am because I think". This line of thinking manifests itself within the complacency syndrome, catalysed by the 'Speed maniac' culture we experience in present day. The following quotes adequately capture this line of thought: "All what matters is the bottom line structure", "The survival of the fastest syndrome" and "When in Rome, do like the Romans do."

Cultural-Religious and Anthropological Illusions in Higher Education Today

Common illusions which roam in higher education point towards a sense of superiority. This may include, but is not limited to: "Educated men are superior to others", "My tribe is more than your tribe" and "Our religion is superior to theirs."[87]These anthropological illusion contribute to the growth of religious fanaticism, intolerance, fundamentalism and Bokoharamism

Academic Professional Illusions in Higher Education Today

The illusions which circulate amongst academics, may include, that "PhD holders and Professors are awarded with more rights and dignity than certificate, diploma and Bachelor Degree holders" and "the longer the CV, the greater the respect." This exemplifies how values, such as respect are awarded due to academic achievement and accolades, opposed to a values-driven environment, in which all can flourish.

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[87] Luciano Mattei, P. Wambura, A Guide To Christian Ethics And Formation In Moral Maturity, Philosophical Studeis 12, Nairobi, CUEA Publications 2000, pp. 17-19.

Ethics-driven Higher Education and Wisdom as a Post-colonial and Post Modern Liberation Toolbox

Liberation from Nyerere's three major enemies namely, ignorance, poverty and diseases, requires dismantling corruptive practices, abolishing the "Big Result Now" mindset and ridding the educational system of egocentrism, abuse or misuse of power, leadership vacuums and resource depletion. It is of equal importance to fight against gender discrimination, oppression and indifferentism. Liberation in itself is as an authentic African/ "*Tanzanian Renaissance*" for true peace, sustainable growth and common welfare. As Samuel Kobia observes,

> "Authentic renaissance must lay down the foundation of democracy as a way of life; so that the whole body of social systems and constraints are subject to ethical evaluation…The late Mwalimu Julius Nyerere once said that peace was another word for development". "Development is about peace, it is about an abundant life, it is about justice, and it is about happiness"[88]

Ethics-driven Higher Education and Wisdom as a Therapy against Educational "Boils" and Disasters of Today

The more knowledge one attains the more power one has. There is a constant struggle between the knowledge-based societies and the illiterate, marginalized and less privileged. Recent trends have noted a rise in"*Shule za Sekondari za Kata*" ("Ward Secondary Schools"), meaning, more emphasis on quantity than quality or 'quantity over quality'.

The current trend of 'quantity over quality 'in higher education is led by the need to collect professional and academic accolades, simply to compete for employment . It lacks the formative and transformative values, virtues and core competencies for affirmative action.

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[88] Samwel Kobia, The Courage To Hope, (Geneva: WCC Publications) p. 131

There is an absence of core communication skills, but greater pressure for current graduates to become "multi-linguists", "multiplayers", "job creators and not job seekers". Graduates lack the courage to stand for truth and advocate for their beliefs. The emergence of 'I culture' opposed to a 'We culture' presents a major challenge within the educational system.

There has also been an increase in destructive solidarity, with phrases such as "birds of the same feather flock together' becoming increasingly politicized within educational systems.

Ethics-driven Higher Education and Wisdom as "Best Practice" For Self-sufficiency and Sustainable Livelihoods

The famous Afro-Caribbean writer C.L. James makes the following observation on the relevance of the Arusha Declaration

> "Julius Nyerere in theory and practice laid the basis of an African State which Nkrumah had failed to do…In the Arusha Declaration Nyerere laid down his principles. This is one of the greatest documents of the past World War II."[89]

In the same vein of thought, Saju Chachalachal noted that

> "One of the best means of empowering others, especially the youth generation is through different modes of education…we have a great responsibility to offer a method of education that would enhance life…If our educational institutions and programs become centres of empowering others, including the downtrodden and the marginalized, it opens up the horizons of growth and success to everyone…"[90]

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[89] C.L. James, Nkrumah and Revolution: (London: Allison & Busby) p. 7.

[90] Saju Chachalachal Cmi, Ignitig Minds to Transform the Society, (Bangalore: 2013) p.x.

Ethics-driven Higher Education as a Key Trigger for a Humanizing, Civilizing and Liberating Process

First, education must be a credible means of acquiring formative wisdom for practical life; it must provide a truly dynamic liberating culture. True education should by its very nature empower humans to effectively and efficiently utilize their spiritual, intellectual, physical, cultural, economic and technological potential for a quality and fulfilled life. As a civilizing process, education must enable humans to think for them,[91] to decide for themselves, and to be creative, innovative and proactive.

Ethics-based Higher Education and Wisdom as the "DNA" and Trigger for True Self-reliance

Nyerere's noble paradigm of "Education for Self-reliance" (ESR) cannot be exaggerated. *For Nyerere,*

> *"*Agricultural and food sovereignty was priority number one. It underpinned its practical and particularly its service-oriented objectives. For Nyerere "…education in Tanzania should not be designed just to produce passive agricultural workers of different levels of skills, who simply carry out plans or direction received from above. It must produce good farmers; it has also to prepare people.

For they are free workers and citizens, in a free and democratic society, albeit a largely rural society. They have to be able to think for themselves, to make judgements on all the issues affecting them, they have to be able to interpret decisions made through the democratic institutions for our society and to implement them in the light of peculiar local circumstances where they happen to live…"[92]

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[91] Saju, p. 62.

[92] Unpublished paper by Rwekaza S. Mukandara UDSM- Redet Workshop Jan. 2015.

Ethics-promoting Higher Education as a Trigger for Sustainable Peace, Coherence and Common Wellbeing

Firstly, a true and credible education model in Tanzania must be established, in order for education to play a key role in building sustainable peace. Such education models should belief-promoting, whilst protecting traditions of care, and promoting empowerment, inclusivity, fairness and equality. By doing so, this creates more opportunities for meaningful dialogue, and ultimately strengthens national unity. Secondly, a holistic educational model must proactively fight gender inequalities, and reflect on its role in tackling social conflict, gender based violence, and female genital mutilation. It has to avoid the gender bias, which very often promotes extreme masculinity at the expense of balanced/moderate femininity. A YouTube TV Advertisement in 2013 noted that:

> "In March, 2013 Safari Lager won the title of the No. 1 beer in Africa at the Inaugural Africa Beer Awards, which reinforced its positioning of Tanzania's Champion for Champion Men. Admittedly, this grand and gorgeous TV advertisement was made to showcase moments in the lives of various men, not women worldwide in welcoming others to the World of Champions and Heroes not Heroines."

Ethic-based and Pro-active Higher Education as a Platform to Prevent Risky "Operations" against Human Rights

"*Operesheni Tokomeza*" was launched on the 4th October, 2014, which aimed to curb poaching and illegal ivory trade. This effort organized by Tanzanian scholars, graduates and leaders proved to be unsuccessful. It contributed to abuse of human rights, in particular by the deployment of 885 Army Force officers of the Tanzanian Defence Forces (TPDF), who forcefully and violently responded to poaching acts. Karlon N. and Crosta A concluded that:

> "The deadly path of conflict, ivory starts with the slaughter of innocent animals and ends with the slaughter of innocent people. It is a source of funding for terrorist organizations that transcends cruelty. It is the "white gold" for Africa Jihad, white for its color and gold for its value. If we fail to act now, militant groups like Al-Shabaab will lay down their roots deep in the African landscape destroying its heritage for generation to come. Dangerous and unpredictable Al-Shabaab's involvement in ivory trade brings with it an alarming dimension".[93]

Are scholars and graduates aware of these dangerous dimensions? If yes, is it wise to simply ignore them?

Ethics-driven Higher Education Curricula as a Promoter of Sustainable Centres for Excellences and Growth, and R&D in Society Today

Excellent scholars, students, educators and graduates need to regard themselves top performers in demonstrating noble service in their respective disciplines and professions. They are key stakeholders, and they must translate their passion into their profession. They must be the engine for future research and development. They must dully demonstrate a new culture of service for humanity, and not the mere "service for money" culture or simply serve their own interests.

As Peter Eichhorn aptly comments:

> "Researchers, librarians, technicians and administrative staff involved, but also PhD Students, graduates… are part of the

[93] Karlon N., Costa A. ("An Undercover Investigation on Ivory And Terrorism." This is available at: http://elephantleague.org/project/africas-white-gold-of-jihad-al-shababandconflict-ivory/

process of scientific work… and primarily active as producers and not consumers or even customers…"[94]

Ethics-driven Higher Education as Means Against Destructive Anti-life Ideologies and Slogans

Upon Marguerite A. Peeters observations, he stated that "Slogans of social engineers are manipulative and play on self-evident truths. They seem to propose a program to which nobody can be opposed… they betray common sense. They do so in a seductive manner".[95]

From a Tanzanian perspective, the unethical slogans, nouns and adjectives, have become increasingly engrained in the youths' life. These sayings are conflicted with traditional values, especially from a religious perspective. One of the phrases which have been normalised includes: "Kula Bata" which translates to 'Be immoral'.

Ethics-driven Higher Education and Wisdom as an Effective Means for Sustainable Use and Management of Natural Resources in Tanzania

Service-oriented education and wisdom must be value-driven, and build on the values of 'responsibility, trust, freedom, peace, justice, inclusiveness, transparency, solidarity, common welfare, happiness and hope'.[96] A 'wise scholar' should embody democracy and lead by example for their communities, and the 'Anawim' (poor).

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[94] Peter Eichhorn "Determinants For University Excellence" in Paolo Rondo-Brovetto, Iris Saliterer (Eds) The University As A Business (Wiesbaden: VS Research, 2011) p. 37.

[95] Marguerite A. Peeters, The Globalization Of The Western Cultural Revolution, (Institute for Intercultural Dialogue Dynamics, asbl) p. 167.

[96] Aidan G. Msafiri "Democratic And Sustainable Governance In Natural Resources in Tanzania" in CETA and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Journal, Vol. II, March, 2013 p.19.

Towards a Rethink and Paradigm Shift: Rediscovering Educational Principles and Values Today

The Principle of Human Dignity and Rights in Higher Education

Human dignity and rights underpin both the intrinsic and inalienable values of all humans created in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26).

The principle of Education for Self-reliance (ESR) in Higher Education

Education for Self-Reliance underscores the values of self-actualization and self-realization of each and every human, as noted by Julius K. Nyerere. It attempts to inculcate the "*Know what*", "*Know how*" as well as the "*Know why*" aspect of the learning process. In the same vein of thought, Bill Gates states: "If you are born poor, it is not your mistake, but if you die poor, it is your mistake."

The Principle of a Mind Set of Destruction in Higher Education (Rom. 12:1-8)

A mind set of destruction re-thinks and re-assesses, introducing a new world and life view. Such mind set challenges the "*status quo*", as well as the 'business as usual' syndrome. Deconstruction needs to "think outside the box", and embrace a constructive new way of responding to diverse socio-economic, academic, technological and cultural challenges.

The Kerygmatic Service-oriented Enculturation Principle in Higher Education

This principle emphasizes on the on-going proclamation of Jesus' formative attitudes, teachings, norms, values for integral liberation, and development and enlightenment of humanity. From an osteological point of view, Pope Francis asserts that proclaiming Christ necessarily means

> "Showing that to believe in and to follow him is not only something right and true, but also something beautiful, capable of filling life with new splendour and profound joy… We must be bold enough to discover new signs and new symbols, new flesh to embody and communicate the word…"[97]

The Principle of Responsible Scholarship in Higher Education

Responsible scholarship emphasizes the unique role of academia, "Scholarly gurus" and "intellectual Think Tanks", particularly in rendering dignified and sustainable service to humanity and society. Responsible scholarship and leadership must be both value-based and service-oriented. It differentiates itself from irresponsible models of leadership, which quite often lack, vigour, focus, and creative engagement of selfless giving and holistic liberation.

Last, this principle guarantees not only "*future fitness*," but also provides what Paul Tilich (1886-1965) affirms, "The power of creating beyond oneself without losing oneself" through a transformative faith or religious belief. Hence, reinventing a formative "*Christian Avant-garde*".

The Principle of Globalisation as a Concern in Higher Education

Globalisation as a concern to higher education is a relatively new model, and introduces transformative view by Aidan G. Msafiri (2013). This principle calls for new value-based commitments, and collective responsibility in globalizing life-promoting values, such as: virtues, ethos, attitudes and principles.[98] As the quote states, "when good people do nothing, evil increases." Globalization is inevitable, it is inescapable,

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[97] Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium (EG) No. 167.

[98] Aidan G. Msafiri, Globalization of Concern II pp.1-45 passim Ibid

but as academics, we need to globalize good, when the world and society is globalizing evil.

The Principle of Success Factors Consciousness in Higher Education

This principle demands both personal and collective awareness, and readiness for strategic thinking, planning and decision making for affirmative action. The edifice of the principle is built on the following key trajectories and pillars: the what, the how and the why. This principle must also be built on 'SMART' goals (*S*trategic, *M*easurable, *A*chievable, *R*elevant and *T*imely), discipline, competence, teamwork, efficiency and communication.

The Golden Rule Principle in Provision of Education Services (Mt. 25:34-36) In Higher Education

This principle encapsulates a profound, broad-spectrum, and love-based approach in life. It highlights both the verticality and horizontality of human obligation for selfless giving and agape.[99] This must be demonstrated through service to others.

The Principle of Deep Change (Transformation) and the Middle Path Education in Higher Education

Deep change goes beyond mere quantitative, arithmetic and geometric meanings and metrics of change. From a Judeo-Christian perspective, deep change (Greek: Metanoia) is pivoted on the value and virtue of moderation, in contradiction to the vices of extravagance and aviary. Accordingly, to Jeffrey D. Sachs' reflections on Buddhism and Aristotelianism is worthy paraphrasing:

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[99] Aidan G. Msafiri, "Ethics For Climate Justice And Sustainability Through Value-Based Approaches: A New Tanzanian Model And Paradigm Shift" in Oliver Rupel, Christian Roschmann, et Climate Change Vol. III (Baden, Nomos: 2013) p.679.

> "The essential teaching of both Buddha and Aristotle is the path of moderation pursued through life-long diligence, training and reflection. It is easy to be addicted to hyper consumerism, the search for sensory pleasures and the indulgence of self-interest, leading to brief but long-term unhappiness."[100]

The Principle of Dignified Value of Values in Higher Education

This value-oriented view attempts to uncover the value of prioritization as a viable and credible vehicle for integral development and transformation. Admittedly, values do not simply fall from the sky. They are formed, nurtured, cared for, preserved, transmitted etc. The "value of values" principle, especially in responding to pedagogical challenges, goes beyond the North Atlantic, quantitative-driven solutions, methods and approaches. It prioritizes the fundamental values of peace, service, empathy, stewardship, care, honesty and justice.

Practical Ways Forward and Conclusions

Our need to reassess the multidisciplinary and liberating role and relevance of ethics in higher education cannot be overemphasized. It must not only be both purpose oriented and value promoting, but also of relevance and sustainable, especially in the concrete "*Sitz im Leben*" (Life context). This calls for effective and sustainable deconstruction of the project paradigm. It provides both the "*Kairos*" (opportune time) and the "*Praxis*" (Practice). At this juncture, few but very pertinent conclusions need special focus. Firstly, ethics in higher education and knowledge are not dead artefacts for mere intellectual gymnastics and satisfaction. They must be for the sustainable service of all humans.

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[100] Jeffrey D. Sachs, The Price of Civilization: Economics And Ethics After The Fall (London: The Bodley Head 2011) p. 156.

Truly, the future empires of the future will be knowledge-based empires and societies. Liberating ethical and service loaded education is the heart and cornerstone of vibrant and sustainable opportunities for Africa and the entire globe.

Secondly, service-oriented wisdom and education must first and foremost be an option for poor. That is, for and with the "*anawin*" the (poor), the marginalized, the oppressed and the downtrodden. It must include the values of inclusivity and osteology. In this regard, university graduates, scholars, educationists, philosophers, theologians and "Think Tanks" must hear the voice cry of the poor, in the same way Yahweh heeded to the misery of the Israelites in Egypt.

As Pope Francis aptly observes in his Evangelii Gaudium, "If we, who are God's means of hearing the poor, turn deaf ears to this plea, we oppose the Father's will and his plan…" (EG. No. 187). As academics, we need to shift from "talk shops" to "workshops", from indifferentism to true empathy, from "academic arrogance" to self-giving professionalism. As one of West Africa Theologians once said, "*Theologians and scholars need to have long ears like those of a Rabbit.*" This powerful symbolism needs to be enculturated, adopted and contextualized for an affirmative action. I conclude by calling all of you to this short reflection of mine:

Be still… we are still the Platonic cave;

Be still… we are becoming victims of the cancer of 'graduation done', graduates illiterate;

Be still… we need to avoid making education "a commodity". It has to be a service for values and dignity;

Be still… our education models are increasingly becoming less ethical and patriotic;

Be still… we are becoming the best products of a plagiarist copy and paste culture, without acquiring clear, critical, creative or transformative minds;

Be still… we can see the ever growing "Lucuric" (gap) between knowing and doing, information and action, professionalism and ethical behaviour;

Be still… we need to integrate not only the aspects of ethical "Know what" and "Know now" but also "Know why" in our academic syllabus today;

Be still… we need to ethically ignite minds, hearts, hands, heads for self-reliance, self-actualization, self-realization, so that we may render a dignified and sustainable service to all of humanity.

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