

# **100 years Mwalimu Nyerere: Is the revered teacher for Africa's education still a role model?<sup>1</sup>**

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## **Birth and becoming of an “African colossus”<sup>3</sup>**

Julius Kambarage Nyerere was born on April 13, 1922 in Butiama near Lake Victoria. His father was chief<sup>4</sup> of the Zanaki and had 25 surviving children by 22 wives. Nyerere was the second son of the fifth wife and grew up in his mother's home. Only at the age of 12 was he allowed to stop tending goats and go to state primary school. From an early age he was also involved in the Catholic missionary school of the White Fathers in what is now the diocese of Musoma. Nyerere was later baptized a Catholic there and took the name Julius. He practiced this faith until the end of his life with such conviction and so convincing that the diocese even initiated the process of his beatification in 2005.

The encounter with the White Fathers shaped Nyerere in two ways: First, their Catholicism was strongly social, if not socialist; this was especially true for the Irish head of the then missionary school. Secondly, education in the predominant regional language was the priority for the White Fathers, i.e., not in the languages of French, English or German that were usually used by the colonial masters. Although he spoke Zanaki with his mother Mugaya Nyang'ombe at home, Swahili effectively became Nyerere's second mother tongue, as the White Fathers taught in “high Swahili” as it were.

Nevertheless, the education that Nyerere enjoyed was heavily influenced by British or European traditions. In addition to theology, all of the White Fathers had to study philosophy for three years during their long training. The young Kambarage therefore came into contact with the social philosopher John Stuart Mill early on. Mill's feminist work *On the Subjugation of Women* (1869) made such an impression on him that he chose

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<sup>1</sup> This essay was written at the suggestion of Dr. Peter Häussler, former head of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES) in Dar es Salaam. I am grateful for his comments to a first draft. However, this version to which Peter Häussler wanted to make a few additions (perhaps also to correct some parts), is solely my responsibility. Moreover, this version is still under discussion before possibly going to be published, so comments from interested readers are highly welcome.

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<sup>3</sup> From the original German version translated by the author (admittedly partly with the help of Google) and to be edited in case of final publication.

<sup>4</sup> "Chief" was a term used by colonial governments, which appointed recognized local personalities to this position, which was previously unknown in the region. Chiefs should settle small regional disputes, but also recruit workers for road and school construction, for example, or collect taxes. Nyerere's father held this "office" from 1912 until his death in 1942.

it as the subject of his thesis at Makerere College (Kampala, Uganda), then the elite British-run school in Africa. This also opened the door to a three-year study-course in Edinburgh.

With “*African socialism*”, Nyerere left an ideological legacy whose importance for the development of this large and beautiful country is very controversial today. Certainly, education was at the forefront in formulating this ideology. The term "Mwalimu" (teacher) was not just an expression of his original profession, which Nyerere only practiced for a short time (1952-55). Rather, it was an expression of the lovable admiration of a literal “folk teacher”: Nyerere taught his Tanzanian people in thousands of lectures via his preferred medium of radio. Printed in three volumes, these were required reading in schools and universities. Television was even banned at times under Nyerere because “mwalimu” thought it kept people from reading and made them stupid. Ultimately, only comprehensive and practice-oriented education would guarantee personal autonomy, for which he preferred the English term “self-reliance” (self-confidence) or the Swahili term “kujitegemea” (independence).

In retrospect, Nyerere's concept of education is ambivalent. On the one hand, he initially narrowed the right to education largely to the primary area of education. This has led not only to the neglect of secondary and tertiary education, but also to an unintended process of screening out less gifted children. Nyerere therefore viewed education, particularly higher education, as a privilege that obligated one to give something back to the community, initially primarily in the form of labor services in agriculture, construction, and the municipalities. Furthermore, Nyerere tended to narrow higher education to humanistic education, including an almost boundless admiration of Shakespeare (which Nyerere translated into Swahili). This led to the neglect of the – if you will – disciplining power of scientific, technical, (business) management and, above all, mathematical education.

On the other hand, Nyerere's emphasis on practical – including rhetorical and discursive – education, but above all his call for gender equality in education is still relevant today. In addition, his firm rejection of education as “human capital”, including so-called property rights associated with it, can be understood as an educational mission that is relevant not only for the African "developing countries" but also – especially in times of a pandemic – for "developed" countries.

In the following we want to take a closer look at the development of Nyerere and examine the impact of this “African colossus” (Mwakikagile 2010, 15) on the development of Africa from different perspectives. Knowing well that "Africa" is the name of a continent on which at least 55 nations with hundreds of different ethnic groups and cultures coexist internally, we speak of "Africa" in the sense of a common idea that is still shared by many

Africans today as identity-forming. This fact alone can already be seen as a central legacy of Nyerere.

How did it come about that the son of an African clan chief became a devout Catholic, one of the first Tanzanian students in Europe, the first Tanzanian president, the first spokesman for "African socialism", the "father of the nation" (*Baba wa taifa*) and finally – in 1995 – the first Gandhi Peace Prize laureate? How do we actually assess his performance? What remains of the brief dream of African socialism? And above all: What does this teach us, 100 years after Nyerere's birth, about the power of education to solve today's development problems?<sup>5</sup>

## 1. Nyerere: The born universal teacher

Kambarage was not allowed to attend public primary school – a fee-paying boarding school – about 40 kilometers from home until he was 12 years old.<sup>6</sup> His intelligence was quickly noticed, so he was allowed to skip a class. With one of his teachers – James Irengé – he used to have political conversations outside of school from an early age. In his memoirs, Irengé believed that he had already trained Nyerere to adopt a kind of militarism of the tongue: "Use the tongue instead of guns". At the suggestion of a school friend, the young Kambarage came into contact with the White Fathers at an early age, and he regularly attended their missionary school. The lifestyle of these missionaries left a strong impression on him: the combination of a disciplined school, a well-run farm and a health center evoked in him an image of order and harmony that nourished his vision of Ujamaa throughout his life.

Kambarage passed the primary school final examination (then Standard IV) as the best in the entire region. This got him a scholarship for the state elite school in Tabora, then the "Eton of Tanganyika". This all-boys secondary school prepared, among other things, for the prestigious Cambridge School Certificate, which gave access to study in England. Although Kambarage had no desire for sport in Tabora either, actually an essential element of the elite English school system, he compensated for this deficit by eagerly participating in the boy scouts (boy scouting), where he quickly developed leadership qualities. Still, he retained his early habit of burying himself in books rather than playing.

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<sup>5</sup> Of course, this essay is not a comprehensive appreciation of the personality and achievements of this great statesman; it only illuminates some aspects from my personal point of view, especially in connection with education.

<sup>6</sup> This and the following chapter are based on Molony (2014), supplemented in part by Häussler (2017), Mwakikagile (2010) and my own investigations (Schmid 2020a). A recently published trilogy on Nyerere's life and work could not be included here (cf. Shivji et al. 2020). However, reviews in *Tanzanian Affairs* (cf. Myers 2021, Walsh 2021) on this three-volume mammoth work confirm my assessments; I would like to thank Elisabeth Bollert (currently head of the FES in Dar es Salaam) for drawing my attention to this volume.

It was also during the time in Tabora that Julius Nyerere developed a great desire and talent for debates (debate clubs, debate competitions).

At the beginning of 1943, Kambarage left the country for the first time at the age of 21: he aimed at Makerere College in Kampala (Uganda) in order to study for a teacher, again with a scholarship after passing a difficult entrance exam. At the time, Makerere was considered the entry point into a prestigious study abroad programme. England or USA preferably, although the British intended the college and associated university to keep the young African elite on the continent; including their hidden motive of not letting the already diffusing bacillus of revolutionary ideas at universities abroad spread to Africa. At the end of the year, young Nyerere returned briefly to his homeland to be baptized a Catholic (by the White Fathers) and take the name Julius. He had withheld this long-held decision until the death of his father (1942); so he in turn became one of the first Zanaki Catholics.

The education at Makerere College promoted two other talents of the still young Nyerere: his ideological as well as his organizational leadership talent. From an early age he was concerned with questions of colonialism and independence, particularly what this liberation would bring to Africa. In an article in the Tanganyika Standard that appeared as early as 1943, Julius Nyerere outlined his ideas of “African” socialism, emphasizing how alien European or American individualism was to Africa. It is not unimportant to emphasize that Nyerere here largely equates “individualism” with “egoism”, while the philosophical foundations of individualism – in the Kantian sense, that is, using one’s own reasoning mind and being an author of oneself – remained alien to his later studies. In addition, Nyerere founded three organizations with friends, one of which – the revived TAA (Tanganyika African Association) – should become the nucleus of TANU. After three years, Nyerere completed his teacher training with a diploma.

The Tabora school wanted to bring Nyerere back as a teacher. At the beginning of 1946, however, he accepted the offer of the White Father Richard Walsh to teach biology and history at the Catholic St. Mary College in Puga (near Dar es Salaam), although he only received half the salary there and had to forego a civil service career. Although he liked to teach and going beyond his subjects, he soon threw himself more and more into political activities. He also clarified the somewhat complicated question of marriage for him. Originally, Magori Watiha – according to Zanaki custom also with a bride price – had already been assigned to him as a future wife when she was a three to four-year-old child. Later, the marriage was formally consummated, but never really lived out. For Nyerere, even then, the bride price was a sign that women – like slaves – could ultimately be bought; he also found the stark educational difference unacceptable. During his political activities, Nyerere met the Catholic Maria Waningu Gabriel Magige in Tabora, with whom he became engaged at Christmas 1948 before traveling to England in early 1949.

Equipped with a scholarship from the British colonial administration, he began a three-year course at the University of Edinburgh. For Nyerere, the actually generous grant was meager because he had to support his fiancé Maria and family members in his home village, which was then plagued by famine. For almost the entire period of his studies, he fought persistently with the English colonial authorities – the authorities called it "impertinent" – for an increase in family allowances. In order to enforce his demands, he even threatened to abandon his studies, a trait that repeatedly surfaced throughout his political career in the form of threats of resignation.

In Edinburgh, according to the wishes of his sponsors, Nyerere was actually supposed to choose "science" as a subject, i.e., chemistry and physics among others, but he decided to pursue a master's degree in "art". In his first year he took courses in political economy, social anthropology and English literature. His lifelong love for Shakespeare, whom Nyerere frequently quoted and sometimes translated into Swahili, e.g., "Juliasi Kaizari" (1963/69) and "Mabepari wa Venesi" (1972), probably stems from this first year. Of course, it should be noted today that Nyerere's translation of "Mabepari" – in the narrower sense *"The Bourgeois"* and not *"The merchant"* – has a strong ideological undertone. Furthermore, it should be remembered that many adventurers who traveled Africa, down to the colonial soldiers or officers who were at work there, carried Shakespeare in their knapsack, as it were, as the well-to-read book *"Shakespeare in Swahiland"* brings to our attention in an amusing way (Wilson-Lee 2019).

In the second year, Nyerere opted for economic history, and in the third year he chose constitutional law and moral philosophy as major subjects. After three years he graduated – with good, but not outstanding results – with a simple M.A., whereby the Scottish M.A., it has to be added, at these times was only classified as a bachelor's degree at English universities.

To sum up, and to put it somewhat exaggeratedly, these last years of education in Scotland did not promote the development of a professional academic teacher for schools, colleges or universities, but the development of a socio-political polymath who returned to his country determined to seek liberation from colonial rule as quickly as possible and to assume the role of the "teacher of the nation" in shaping the institutions of the liberated country. Nyerere's experiences and assessments of politics and democracy in England and Scotland certainly played just as important a role as his education in English literature, political economy and moral philosophy, as will become clear in the following chapter.

## 2. Nyerere's political career

Since 1918, Tanganyika, formerly German East Africa, was "only" under British administration as a mandate of the League of Nations. Kenya, Uganda and Zanzibar, on the other hand, remained British protectorates, so that the British, as colonial rulers, could do as they pleased. The British had fewer colonial interests in Tanganyika than the Germans, who continued to pursue the traditional colonial goal even during the Weimar Republic, especially under the Nazi rule under the umbrella of the *Reichskolonialbund* promoted by Hitler. For the British, the former German East Africa (*Deutsch Ostafrika*) was of less importance, both strategically and economically, and was therefore not thought to be settled and "colonized", as was the case in Kenya.

On the contrary: the League of Nations' mandate obliged the British government to prepare Tanganyika for independence. That they did indeed take this role seriously can be read in the recent novel *Afterlives* by Nobel Prize winner Abdul Razak Gurnah who was born in Tanzania: "The British administrators had no fear of guerillas or bandits in this territory and could get on with the business of colonial administration without resistance from the colonized. Education and public health became their priorities. They made a big effort to inform people about health issues, to train medical assistants and open dispensaries in far-flung parts of the colony. They distributed information leaflets and conducted tours by medical teams to instruct people on malaria prevention and good childcare" (Gurnah 2020, E-book).

As a matter of fact, in addition to health, education was a priority for the British. However, not in the sense of an education that reaches the entire population, but mainly for training in civil servant positions in administration and as teachers in the schools that were built successively. The education system was expanded to attract the educated elite who would later "take over". Catholic missions played a central role in Tanzania as implementing institutions, e.g., the Catholic Maryknoll Missionary Order (founded in New York in 1911), with which Nyerere was closely connected throughout his life apart from the White Fathers. After the Second World War, the UN put even more pressure on the British government than before to implement the mandate of independence. The tradition that high school and university education was the safe entry point for citizens in Tanzania to official positions, however, still has a negative repercussion on the Tanzanian education system, as will be explained later.

Nyerere also benefited from this system, as explained above. Furthermore, his political ideas had been shaped into clear forms during his education in Scotland, in some cases so strongly that they remained an integral part of his convictions that guided his later politics. The three most important ones should be highlighted and briefly discussed here: A pejorative view of opposition in democracy; an inflated notion of the common good to the

point of legitimizing the deprivation of individual freedom of opponents; a tendency to identify the market economy with capitalism or imperialist economy.

First, Nyerere failed to appreciate the importance of the opposition as a constitutional sword of Damocles that enabled the legitimate replacement of governments through free elections. From his own perspective, the British two-party system was more of a horror than a model because it seemed to him fundamentally dividing and excluding large minorities from the government. Free elections were enough for Nyerere's democratic legitimacy, the rest was government by opinion, or – as he preferred to put it – “government by debate”.

That is why, second, Nyerere long held on to the view that the one-party system was a genuine part of “African” democracy. For him, opposition with the explicit goal of overthrowing a government bordered on treason against the national common good and, in extreme cases, legitimized imprisonment without charge. That is why Nyerere stuck to the colonial "Preventative Detention Act" in 1962, to which Oscar Kambona, for example, fell victim. Kambona was for a time General Secretary of TANU and for a short time Minister of Foreign Affairs after independence. He remained in exile in London from 1967 to 1992 on charges of attempting to overthrow the government. In the case of the Ujamaa policy, Nyerere even went so far as to invoke the colonial "Deportation Ordinance" of 1938 to force reluctant peasants of the countryside to relocate to the artificial Ujamaa villages.

Third, Nyerere was in Scotland at a time when nationalization dominated the press headlines. These strengthened his economic policy views, which he had largely adopted from the Fabians. The Fabian Society was founded on January 4, 1884 and was instrumental in founding the Labor Party. It represented an evolutionary (instead of revolutionary) path of socialism, i.e., a kind of left-wing social democracy. In the early 1950s, during Nyerere's time in Scotland and England, the "left" wing was dominant, advocating, among other things, the nationalization of the health sector. At the time, its program was characterized by a fundamental skepticism about market principles, in contrast to the early neo- or ordoliberal school that became dominant in Germany.

The academic basic ideas of the social market economy therefore remained largely alien to Nyerere, while the rebellious social philosophy of liberation theology in Latin America was closer to him. A credible anecdote relates that one day his personal assistant, Joan Wicken, drew his attention to a book by Rosa Luxemburg. It was to become one of his favorite political and economic reading, while Marx's writings did not appeal to him. Incidentally, Joan Wicken was the daughter of an English trade unionist and a member of the Fabian Society and the British Labor Party before she came to Tanzania and from 1960 accompanied Nyerere as personal assistant until almost the end of his life. To what extent she influenced Nyerere (or even wrote his speeches) during this whole period seems

to be open; in any case, this extraordinary personality has long deserved an honorable biography.

In political practice, Nyerere had attracted the attention of the British administration early on (1953) by founding his own party, the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU). After the liberation from the British Mandate in December 1961, he became the first Prime Minister of Tanganyika, a year later its President, and after almost two more years (April 1964) President of Tanzania, which was united with Zanzibar. TANU was renamed the Party of Revolution, *Chama cha Mapinduzi* (CCM). In the more than two decades as president, Nyerere developed into the undisputed intellectual leader of Africa, who also cultivated a skillful political dealing with the leading powers USA, China and Russia. He also played the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) against each other at times. He even waged war in Africa to bring about the overthrow of the brutal dictator Idi Amin in Uganda.

In 1985 he decided – almost uniquely in Africa – to leave office voluntarily. For a long time after that, he remained the undisputed intellectual spokesman of the party – formally, however, only until 1992. At the end of his term of office and years later, he then moved away from some of his political ideas and initiated some reforms such as allowing opposition (albeit half-heartedly) or anchoring individual basic rights in the Tanzanian constitution (Bill of Rights). As an elder statesman, he also mediated in African conflicts, especially in Burundi, and got involved in the international discussion on development cooperation and democracy. He indignantly accused the donor countries of arrogance, patronage and neo-colonialism. They would make their (official) aid dependent on “good governance”, just as the wealthy in the pre-welfare state only helped the poor who deserved it (“deserving poor”). Without a decent subsistence level, he rightly insisted, there can be no fully developed democracy. He also persuaded many African dictators to adhere to the basic rules of democracy: in particular, loyalty to the constitution with strict limitation of terms of office and the rule of law without corruption.

The man, who never enriched himself and always appeared modest, remained the great and widely loved teacher (*mwalimu*) of the Tanzanian people until his death in 1999 as a result of leukemia. Half a million people accompanied their "*Baba wa taifa*" – the father of the nation – to the grave near his home village.

What remains of the work of this man, who was showered with 21 honorary doctorates and many international awards? Does his "African socialism" still give us anything worth thinking about today? Are the values he wanted to oppose to Western capitalism still worth striving for? Were his ideas and concepts spot on – as many Africans and Nyerere fans still think – but only failed because of the internal resistance of corrupt party officials,

above all because of external resistance from the World Bank, IMF or misguided development aid? Let's try to answer these questions approximately.

### 3. Nyerere's African Socialism

Nyerere's socialism is genuinely “African” because for him African culture – at least as he experienced it as a child – was inherently socialist. It required only emotional reminder and rhetorical restatement. To do this, Nyerere made eclectic use of various elements: Marxist, Leninist, Maoist and elements pieces from Christianity and Islam, to which he added as a core element the idea of *jamaa*: this Swahili word means "family" or "people of the same kind" who are looking after the well-being of the family “together” (*pamoja*). Everyone should work according to his or her ability, support the elderly, the sick, children or those in need and cultivate mutual respect. Of course, the position of the oppressed woman should be improved compared to tradition, which is – so to speak – a trademark of Nyerere. During his tenure, however, this concern was not really translated into an enforced recruitment of women into important political positions.

Apart from the position of women, Nyerere's conception contained a primordial equality that had to be recultivated in the confrontation with colonial rule. Nyerere could not see any class conflict in Africa. That is why his socialism clearly differs from other socialist currents in Africa: for example, Afro-socialism, which took up elements of the Soviet and Chinese models of socialism; or Afro-Marxism imported from Latin America, for which Che Guevara personally flew to Africa to help it flourish.

Nyerere published this reformulation of African socialism in his speeches and writings, edited in Swahili and English in a three-volume series: *Freedom and Unity* (1966), *Freedom and Socialism* (1968), *Freedom and Development* (1973). It is noticeable that in all three book-titles the word "freedom" comes first. Of course, this should not be misunderstood as a commitment to the philosophical-liberal tradition. Rather, Nyerere's concept of freedom has a nationalistic-African underpinning: He is concerned with liberation from Western domination, including Western individualistic values, in order to break the chains of African archetypal socialism and revive it, so to speak. The program of this liberation (*roadmap* in modernistic terms) was: "unity", "socialism" and "development".

His ideas of African socialism are most clearly summarized in the Arusha Declaration of January 1967 (Nyerere 2008). It was primarily addressed to his CCM party, which he founded himself and still governs today, then still called TANU (see above). The Arusha Declaration, however, should also be seen as a coup of liberation against the first signs of blatant undesirable developments not only in the country but also in the party, which

prompted Nyerere to write down a condensed and unambiguous code of conduct. The party chairman, who initially tended towards social democracy, now formulated in a clear socialist style.

The "Declaration of Arusha", adopted by TANU on February 6, 1967 as a resolution, begins as clearly as simple with the sentence: "The policy of TANU is to establish a socialist state." The "TANU Faith" lists nine principles of socialism. Among other things, it "believes" that the state should exercise "effective control over the most important means of production" in order to ensure "economic justice" and that "every individual has the right to receive a just wage for his work". Above all, the social differences in the country should be reduced and the new state should become self-reliant, i.e., also economically independent of other countries. In the notorious Section V, known as the "Leadership Code", TANU party officials are required not to look after their own interests, e.g., as business entrepreneurs at the same time; politicians' wealth should also remain limited, which caused an outcry from many leading party supporters.

As a first step, immediately after the resolution was promulgated, the banks were nationalized. Even then, Nyerere did not want to recognize that this step alone would lead to a massive exodus of foreign minorities, especially Indians, who in some cases dominated the banking business and made up a large part of the otherwise barely existing middle class (Hirji 2014, 2017). The nationalization of companies and industrial plants quickly followed.

Nyerere's dream of socialism also included relocating the inhabitants of their small, scattered home villages to large communal villages in order to form decentralized, self-sustaining economic and social communities (*ujamaa*). The basic idea – in explicit opposition to European individualism – was the emphasis on the community over the individual. Family ties (clan) should become village ties, village ties should become cooperative production communities, and cooperatives should become a socialist nation. The idea was also to make rural areas more attractive in order to prevent rural exodus towards the city. This idea was accompanied by an education campaign, particularly literacy for the rural population. For example, the villagers often gathered under mango trees because there were not enough classrooms. Nyerere's belief in the Ujamaa idea along with broad popular education was so strong that he – as already mentioned – did not shy away from forced resettlement; he saw like-minded people in Mahatma Ghandi and especially in Mao Tse-tung. Even today, Nyerere's Ujamaa policy is highly controversial. Although 'insiders' and some of those involved during Nyerere's time may no longer be enthusiastic but still benevolent of his ideas (e.g., Ibott 2014, Vilby 2007), the judgment from liberals (e.g., Bernhardt 2016) is devastating and from Marxists (e.g., Hirji 2014, 2017, 2018, 2019) highly skeptical.

In his first and own evaluating retrospective 10 years later, Nyerere already recognizes great successes (Nyerere 1977): illiteracy has been eliminated and the country – until today, by the way – has been saved from major civil wars. He also admits, however, being still far – very far from the goal; even 30 years would not suffice to fulfill his dream. Eventually, he had to declare his Ujamaa policy a failure: Within a short period of time, Tanzania had gone from being Africa's largest agricultural exporter to being the largest agricultural importer. In addition, he saw a new enemy emerging from within: corruption. Eight years later, in 1985, Nyerere's disillusionment and disappointment were so great that he finally announced his resignation, a very rare occurrence among post-colonial African rulers.

Up until his death, Nyerere also distanced himself from parts of his ideological convictions in lectures or writings, such as the meaningfulness of nationalizing agricultural businesses or farms and the one-party system as an allegedly genuine element of “African” democracy (Nyerere 2011). He also differentiated his ideas of good education by increasingly emphasizing the importance of basic research and natural sciences. But he always defended his educational policy in principle and even proudly saw it as a lasting legacy. In the following chapter, therefore, we will examine this side of the great African a little more closely, above all from the point of view of the fundamental value of education and to what extent education could continue to be the central engine of development.

#### **4. Nyerere's educational policy and its aftermath**

Education is a broad field. It goes from simple physical skills to artistic ability, it includes language and communication skills, cognitive understanding and abstraction, simple knowledge and accumulated experience as well as the presence of mind to apply these knowledges at the right time, the right place and the right person, even if the quick-witted reaction in conversation ends only in the form of a metaphor or a proverb. The latter, as we know, is a gift much appreciated in Africa that was particularly pronounced at Nyerere.

In our "Western" academic culture, these (non-exhaustively) enumerated educational characteristics are packed into more “weighty” terms such as school, job, study, research, science and – as the alleged result – accumulated human and social capital. In the primitive form, "human capital" was formerly measured by the number of years of schooling, and a country's level of development by the rate of children going to school. Today we are certainly more clever and more differentiated, but in the days of the young President Julius Nyerere the primitive accounting system of “human capital” was definitely the practice of heavyweights such as the World Bank and UNESCO in

“development assistance.” This should be kept in mind as we briefly sketch Nyerere's first statements on education.

#### *4.1 The importance of education for young Nyerere*

In the Arusha Declaration (February 5, 1967), Nyerere lists two conditions for the country's development: hard work and intelligence. Work comes first, but it should be "intelligent". In the words of the great teacher, this intelligence consisted above all in passing on the existing knowledge of the elders: A large hoe brings greater yields than a small one, and a plow pulled by oxen is even better. Pesticides and knowledge of soil quality, seasonality of crop growth and similar experiences are other components of smart farming. Scientific research on mechanical cultivation methods or processing of agricultural products was not planned.

The funding of education was for Nyerere evidently a public task, as long as it was not free of charge by simply passing it on personally. Financing higher education through parents or loans, as practiced in many countries, especially in the USA, was unthinkable for Nyerere. All the more since he had a distant relationship to money and capital anyway. Money in the sense of credits or loans was not part of intelligent management for him, on the contrary. In his early writings, Nyerere considered thinking in terms of money to be stupid or at least "dangerous" for development. Money is the “mammon” in capitalism; "hard work is the root of development" in socialism. The Arusha motto is almost simple-minded: capitalism exploits people, in socialism people cooperate on an equal footing. This simple and permanently repeated equation of capitalism with colonialism, i.e., exploitation, might in retrospect even be seen as a stumbling block for the potential development of an independent "welfare state" like model of Tanzania's (perhaps also of Africa's) economy and society.

The fundamental Arusha Declaration, to which Nyerere adhered for a long time, is silent about the details of education or the educational system. In later speeches he clarified his ideas (especially Nyerere 1968, 267-290). There are two points that are striking and – as it were genuinely Nyerere – that he kept repeating in variations: First, the aim of education is to strengthen the “social ethics” that prevail in the country; second, education should always be a collaborative effort and not for individual gain. He therefore took it for granted that a good general education and free access to this knowledge for everyone was a prerequisite for passing on the rich treasure of empirical knowledge for “intelligent” agriculture. In order to ensure this, Nyerere nationalized the education system – in addition to nationalizing banks and companies – but soon had to make concessions to the established structures, especially the religiously based private schools. Basic education was free and freely accessible to everyone (including girls), and adult education (literacy)

to which Nyerere paid special attention showed rapid success that was recognized around the world.

Knowledge in the sense of further development through basic research and learning to learn were not included in Nyerere's early concept of education. Almost the opposite. In a famous speech at the University of Dar es Salaam in July 1966, he rebuked faculty and students that "pure research for its own sake" was a "luxury" in Tanzania's present state of development; priority should be given to applied research to combat poverty and accelerate economic development. Every student must also be willing to take on work in the countryside or in construction or in the community. It was only in later speeches and writings that Nyerere recognized the high value of basic research: in 1991, the "Southern Commission" he headed gave much higher priority to the recommendation that the management of resources in "science and technology" and the corresponding "education and training" be given much higher priority than before (Nyerere 2011: 278).

So, the great teacher came back from his studies of English literature, history and social economy in Edinburgh with a concept of education that bore strong traditional African traits, in the sense: It is not so much the school but the village that trains and educates children. His idea about higher education was strongly humanistic and philosophical on the one hand, and on the other hand he had a deep aversion to the educational inequality experienced in England, especially the educational arrogance of the elite. Is this the – or at least one – root of the poor performance of the Tanzanian education system today? Just as Gandhi's idiosyncratic concept of education partly explains the underdevelopment of education in India compared to China or South Korea (Drèze/Sen 2013)?

Like Gandhi, Nyerere was – as already indicated – almost a fanatic of practice-oriented education. This initially went so far that he obliged schools to establish farms on which pupils should work, in order to practice not only handling the hoe, but also developing modesty against any educational arrogance. In addition, these farms – and thus also the students – should partially secure the maintenance of the schools. This view also explains why Nyerere was at loggerheads with university students in Dar es Salaam in the early years of his presidency. Many rebellious (sometimes even striking) students were therefore sent to the countryside – as a sort of rehabilitation. In contrast to Gandhi, of course, who strangely enough stuck to the caste system until his end, Nyerere resolutely advocated the principle of equality in education, including girls and young women, and thus opposed any privileging of social classes.

So, to answer the question of whether Nyerere's presidency is still having an impact today, we need to look more closely at the Tanzanian education system in the context of economic and social development. It is always helpful, thereby, to have a point of reference, which suggests comparing Tanzania with neighboring Kenya if possible.

#### 4.2 *What is the state of the Tanzanian education system today?*

With one important exception, the education systems of Tanzania and Kenya are similar. Kenya practices the 2-8-4-4 system: 2 years of pre-primary school, 8 years of primary school, 4 years of secondary school and 4 years of university or college. The Tanzanian education system is more differentiated in the middle range: 2-6(7)-4-2-3+: i.e., two years of pre-school, 6 (formerly 7) years of primary school, 4 years of lower secondary school, 2 years of upper secondary school, 3 or more years of college or university.

This structural difference probably contributed to fact that, so far, a stronger selection can be observed during the educational process in Tanzania than in Kenya: While in Kenya the sharpest cut occurred during the transition from the (longer stay in) primary school to secondary school, children in Tanzania still have to overcome two more hurdles in secondary school (F2, F4) for transiting to upper secondary school (F5, F6).

In Table 1, we can see this difference by looking at two indicators: First, the transition rate of students from primary to secondary school in Tanzania is 56.3%, much lower than in Kenya at 85%. Second, the enrollment rate shows that far fewer children or young adults reach college or university level in Tanzania than in Kenya. In addition, despite a larger population, less than half as many young people study abroad in Tanzania as in Kenya. The funding of students from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), small in number anyhow, is also much lower. After all, public spending on education in Tanzania as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is significantly lower than in Kenya.

The demographic component is of central importance, and here the two East African neighboring countries face the same problem: compared to around one tenth in Germany, young people in Tanzania and Kenya between the ages of 15 and 24 (i.e., in the age range of upper secondary school or in vocational school, colleges and universities) make up two tenths of the population. Like other sub-Saharan countries, Tanzania also experienced a population explosion: At the beginning of Nyerere's presidency (1962), around 10 million people lived in Tanzania, in 2018 there were already 58 million; 128 million are expected in 2050. The social and economic pressure of the rising generations was and still is enormous: 65 percent, i.e., two thirds of the population, are young people under 25.

From this development, even if it may not have been recognizable in this dramatic extent during his term of office, Nyerere drew the conclusion, entirely in line with his philosophy of independence (“self-reliance”), to initially focus all efforts on education in primary schools and on adult literacy. An elementary school certificate must be sufficient for life, primary school should therefore not be regarded as a preliminary stage to secondary school. The dramatic consequences of this misjudgment can no longer be overlooked today: out of 100 children who start primary school in Tanzania, only 15 complete lower

secondary level (F4) and thus acquire the right to higher education (upper secondary school, college or university). Girls are disadvantaged with each higher grade, even if gender parity in primary school was achieved earlier in Tanzania than in Kenya and is now taken for granted in both countries.<sup>7</sup>

*Table 1: Characteristics of the education systems in Kenya and Tanzania 2021*

	Kenya	Tanzania
(1) Population	53,771,000	59,734,000
(2) Population 15-24-years old as % of population	11,247,000 20.92*	11,697,000 19.48*
(3) Public expenditure for education % of GDP	5.31	3.70
(4) Transition rate from primary to secondary school as % **	85	56.3
(5) Enrollment rate (college & university) as % of yearly cohort	11.46	3.10
(6) Students in foreign countries as %	15,732 2.66	6,876 3.96
(7) Number of sponsored students by DAAD - from Germany - from foreign countries	78 729	53 239

\*) for comparison: the share of people in age 14-24 in Germany is 9.6%

\*\*) Share of students who transit from primary to secondary school, in Kenya after 8 years of primary school, in Tanzania after 6 years of primary school; data for 2016

Sources: DAAD 2022, 2022b; for row (4) Republic of Kenya (2018); The United Republic of Tanzania (2018)

Language is the second central contextual feature for understanding the Tanzanian education system. Due to Nyerere's strong language policy, the national language in Tanzania is not only officially, but also de facto Swahili – in contrast to Kenya, for example. At Nyerere's instigation, even English-language novels are said to have been banned from libraries, if not burned. English is also disappearing as a colloquial language. But not in class, because the teaching material from secondary school and in colleges or universities is mainly offered in English.

In addition, a relic of the colonial elite education is still effective – albeit to a clearly decreasing extent: manual, entrepreneurial or agricultural vocational training is still frowned upon by many or is hardly offered. In addition, the emigration ('brain drain') of

<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, the given figures in this paragraph cannot be differentiated by gender.

newly qualified academics is a constant and considerable danger. According to Karim Hirji (2014, 146), a former mathematics and statistics professor at the University of Dar es Salaam, this 'brain train' persists today, regardless of ethnic origin. For example, according to his readable autobiography, eight percent of trained medical professionals tend to emigrate to 'lusher pastures'; 40 percent stopped practicing after a short time because they found better earning opportunities elsewhere. The more qualified, the greater the tendency to emigrate or change jobs. There are still illiterate people (about a quarter of population), especially among the elderly. The quality of the schools varies greatly from region to region. Parents who can afford it send their children to the increasing number of private schools in Tanzania, which have better infrastructure or more qualified teachers.

In Tanzania, thanks to Nyerere, primary schools have long been free of charge, but secondary schools have only been free from fees since 2016. Nevertheless, parents still have to pay for food, infrastructure, school books, uniforms, etc.; now and then for small daubs (tutoring, exams). Additional costs for accommodation arise – as in Zanzibar – if the schools for the upper secondary level F5 and F6 are only accessible in the next larger city; registration and examination costs are also still common in the high school. The language of instruction in primary schools (grades one to seven, recently one to six) is Swahili; but English in secondary schools (Form 1 to Form 6), although many teachers do not master this language, sometimes even when they are assigned to teach English as a foreign language.

Another central problem are the absences in regular classes, which can amount to up to 50 percent. This applies not only to teachers, but also to students. This leads to the common practice of locking students up in so-called 'camps' at the school for two to three months before the national exams, so that they are present from Monday to Friday and from morning to evening (including overnight stays). In addition to the parents, the school principal in Jambiani (on the east coast of Zanzibar), for example, asks the hotels for a contribution to school meals or mattresses for accommodation during this time.

After all, the teaching methods are mostly still outdated, i.e., frontal teaching, memorization by heart and multiple-choice-tests prevail. To make matters worse for girls, they are still often asked to help out in the family; or sanitary support is lacking in their period time; or they get even banned from attending school if they are married early or pregnant. The repeal of this by President Dr. John Magufuli even tightened school ban in 2017 was one of the first measures taken by his successor Samia Suluhu Hassan in summer 2021.

Dual vocational training hardly exists, and there are only a few, but very expensive, specialist colleges such as the Kizimbani Agricultural Training Institute (KATI), the Institute for Public Administration (IPA) or the College of Health Science on Zanzibar.

The tertiary education system is in transition. The tuition fees (approx. 400-600 euros per year) are high. Currently, furthermore, there is a restrictive higher education policy, officially due to the poor quality of university teaching (DAAD 2018).

Despite intensive reform efforts, educational development in Tanzania made little progress. In fact, the quality of the Tanzanian education system even deteriorated around the turn of the century until around 2015, which is impressively documented by various institutions and sources. A few snapshots will have to suffice here. A representative survey of reading skills by UWEZO in 2010 showed: Only one in ten Form 3 students (aged around 15) could read a story in English at Form 2 level; only three out of ten managed it in Swahili (UWEZO 2010). A 2010 World Bank Education Survey found that less than 10 percent of Form 4 students could correctly read all the words in a short sentence in English. The Southern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality found: In Zanzibar, only four out of five teachers achieve the required reading skills for 12-13-year-olds (UNESCO 2016, Box 10.5, p. 201).

All in all, a rather bleak picture of the Tanzanian education system emerges. In a report by the Tanzanian Ministry of Education with the support of UNESCO, this impression is summed up almost dramatically. The idea that school knowledge is actually useless or even a waste is still strong today, especially in rural areas. This not only explains the fact that many pupils only go to school every now and then and that the boys try their luck as beach boys rather than at school when tourism is at its peak, but above all the still very high "out-of-school-rates". In Tanzania, 3.5 million children between the ages of seven and 17 were out of school in 2016, about one child in four children in primary school and over two in five children in secondary school. The report, however, registers the greatest deficit in the poor quality of primary schools, which is also seen as the root cause of the selection process in secondary education. The primary education system alone, says the report, limits qualified human resources to 35 percent, and the secondary education system reduces this further to just 15 percent of the population (The United Republic of Tanzania 2018).

This sober analysis of the situation in 2016 seems to have given Nyerere's home country a jolt. Recently, however, we observe a rather positive trend.

#### *4.3 Future perspectives of the Tanzanian education system*

So far, we have presented snapshots of individual aspects of the Tanzanian education system. We can only get a better impression of the future prospects, however, with a further comparison and with a comprehensive range of quality features. Fortunately, the Mo Ibrahim Foundation provides up-to-date information on this (MO Ibrahim Foundation

2020). In their 2020 Governance Index Report, the Human Development Index also monitors the development of education systems using five indicators:

1. Equality in Education: This indicator measures the gender parity ratio in primary and lower secondary education and assesses the extent to which high quality basic education is accessible to all citizens.
2. Education Enrolment: This indicator measures the percentage of students enrolled from pre-primary to tertiary education over the corresponding official school-age population for each level of education.
3. Education Completion: This indicator measures the completion rate at primary education level and the number of years of schooling that a child of school entrance age can expect.
4. Human Resources in Education: This indicator measures the average number of pupils per teacher at primary level of education and the percentage of teachers in primary education who have received the minimum standard of training required for teaching.
5. Education Quality: This indicator assesses the extent to which there are solid educational institutions and education policy is successful in delivering high-quality education and supports research and development, as well as the extent to which the education system meets the needs of a competitive economy.

In the table below we reproduce an excerpt from the MO report and compare Tanzania with Kenya.

*Tab. 2: Education indicators of Tanzania and Kenya in 2019*

Indicator	Kenya			Tanzania		
	Index <sup>1</sup>	Ranking <sup>2</sup>	Delta <sup>3</sup>	Index	Ranking	Delta
Equality in Education	54.6	19	- 6.0	70.0	9	+ 20.0
Education Enrolment	38.7	18	+ 2.6	22.3	39	- 0.9
Education Completion	71.0	13	+ 3.7	38.9	40	- 16.7
Human Resources in Education	74.8	23	+36.1	73.0	25	+ 2.8
Education Quality	72.4	4	- 5.5	58.3	13	+ 8.7
<i>Education Total</i>	<i>62.3</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>+ 6.2</i>	<i>52.5</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>+ 2.8</i>

1) Index = achieved score from 1 to 100; 2) Ranking among 55 African countries; 3) Change compared to 2010; Source: MO-Index (2020, country tables p. 111 and 134)

In terms of education, Tanzania has improved slightly (and increasingly so in recent years) compared to the previous decade: the country ranks 24th out of 55 African countries, i.e.,

in the lower middle. As already indicated, Kenya has made further progress and is in 9th place, i.e., at the lower top.

The appraisal or assessment of the two education systems differs greatly in some dimensions. Both countries, especially Tanzania, get the worst values for participation in education. In Tanzania, we can mainly attribute this to the strong selection process in the upward educational transitions. As we have already indicated, this selection process is probably a relic of Nyerere's hesitant policy of expanding the secondary and tertiary education system. For a long time, Nyerere insisted that "primary school" was perfectly adequate for the vast majority of a predominantly agrarian population.

Kenya received the best value (in the ranking) for the quality of education, i.e., when assessing the level of educational institutions and education policy. Tanzania also performs comparatively well on this indicator and – in contrast to Kenya – is improving significantly. This supports the rather optimistic view of the future that this could have a positive effect on the other education indicators for Tanzania in the next decade. However, in Tanzania it seems to be important to focus in particular on the area of successful completion of educational training. In our experience, this means in concrete terms preparing the children more intensively and individually for the national final examinations, for example through improved teaching methods, and further increasing the capacities of public secondary and tertiary schools. Currently, the transition chances of Tanzanian girls in particular to the higher secondary level (F5, F6) are low because they usually do worse than the boys in the national examinations in the lower secondary level (F2 and F4). We can confirm the better graduation rates in Kenya from our own experiences through Child Development Fund (CDF): The children we support in Kenya in secondary education consistently did better than in Tanzania (Schmid 2020a).<sup>8</sup>

Most interesting in the context of our Nyerere review is Tanzania's comparatively outstanding ranking in educational equality; this applies to both the current level and the positive dynamics. Here we can make the judgment with good reason: Mwalimu Nyerere left a truly lasting positive legacy in favor of educational equality for girls or women. The mere fact that the current President of Tanzania, Samia Suluhu Hassan ("Mama Suluhu") is one of the very few women to head an African government can fill the country with pride.

Finally, in commemoration of Nyerere's 100th birthday, the question arises to what extent the current Tanzanian education system can be traced back to Nyerere's educational policy. Which lingering problems of his past should be tackled more intensively and which – possibly forgotten – positive impulses should be taken up again?

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<sup>8</sup> For more information see [www.childdevelopmentfund.com](http://www.childdevelopmentfund.com).

## 5. What remains of Nyerere's education heritage?

First of all, it should be noted that Nyerere's education policy in the 1970s was initially successful: Tanzania quickly not only had the highest participation rate in primary education, but also the highest literacy rate in Africa. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, however, the country fell into a deep economic crisis. The triggers for this unfavorable development included the rapidly rising oil prices, natural disasters and also restrictive conditions imposed by donor countries, above all by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. Public expenditure on education also fell victim to the imposed “structural adjustment programs”, so that the schools and parents had to pay for a large part of the funds themselves.

On the one hand, this resulted in a decline in participation in education. Primary school enrollment fell from 94 percent in 1982 to 69 percent in 1989. On the other hand, this situation promoted the establishment of private schools. Today, their role varies depending on the level of education. Private schools continue to play a minor role in basic education. In the secondary sector, the importance of private schools has recently been declining again, after a sharp increase. In 2001, 42 percent of students were still enrolled in private schools; currently it is just under a third. The reason for this is on the one hand the increased state support in the secondary sector, on the other hand many parents cannot afford the high school fees of private schools. Until 2004/2005 schools in the private sector did not receive any government support. Only since 2005 can private schools that allow children with disabilities access to their institution receive state funding (Schnöller 2013).

As an interim conclusion, it should be emphasized that – in addition to Nyerere's initial narrowing of education to "folk education" – there were external factors, above all the "Official Development Assistance" (ODA), and internal (dramatic population growth) factors that inhibited the development of the Tanzanian education system. Nyerere's education policy, however, can at least be criticized for a lack of consistency in one other point. In practice, his successful language policy stopped at schools and universities. According to current knowledge, however, the importance of language (especially the mother tongue) for understanding, analytical penetration and the ability to learn is far underestimated. Imagine, to choose a drastic example, that after the Second World War the occupying powers of Germany had forced German educational institutions to teach in senior high schools or grammar schools (Gymnasium) only in Russian, English or French and to use corresponding teaching materials in those foreign languages: Not only students, but above all the teachers would have been overwhelmed, and we probably wouldn't have experienced the “German economic miracle”.

Poorly equipped classrooms and the large number of children in a class (between 45 and 55 students who have to share one textbook in groups of three or four) is another reason why the quality of the teaching suffers. As far as we can see, Nyerere has never (or at least not strongly insisting) called for support of the education system when negotiating for official development assistance. The consequence, among other things, is that even today many underpaid teachers (especially in secondary school) often give paid tutoring before or after class (Schnöller 2013) – a practice that drastically contradicts the equality principle of Nyerere's educational ideal.

In an international comparison beyond Africa – especially in comparison with China and South Korea, which were at the same level of economic development as Tanzania at the beginning of the 1960s – the Tanzanian education system needs still to be reformed. Certainly, both Tanzanian governments (mainland and Zanzibar) recognized the main deficits long ago and can recently – as we were able to show with our indicator comparison between Kenya and Tanzania – point to rewards of their effort. However, it is obvious that it will take time before the diverse problems of the Tanzanian education system – above all the problem of many teachers' low qualification – are satisfactorily solved. It is to be hoped that Nyerere's legacy of gender-equality in education in Tanzania will continue to be cultivated and, above all, strengthened at the higher educational levels and ultimately find expression in the staffing policies of companies and public institutions. President Hassan has accordingly commissioned a report.

Finally, we would like to recall an aspect that always played a major role in Nyerere's speeches on education, but has more or less been forgotten, namely the sharp rejection of any economistic and egocentric conception of education as individual "human capital", more precisely: education as an institution developing exclusive "property rights". For Nyerere, education should always be a collaborative effort and not just for individual gain. For him, passing on knowledge was a prerequisite for economic and social development.

The high actuality of this view for modern education economics or sociology is re-confirmed in the book by Joseph Stiglitz and Bruce Greenwald (2015): *Creating a Learning Society. A New Approach to Growth, Development, and Social Progress*. The core thesis of this study (trying to summarize it in simple and non-economic terms) is that innovation – and thus economic and social progress – is based on cooperation and the transfer of knowledge. Economists speak here of "spill-over" or of "positive external effects." Since these effects are particularly strong in the industrial sector, it makes perfect sense to protect such areas from ruinous competition in the early stages and only gradually to leave them to free trade – a strategy that has so far been denied to most African countries.

Even in global competition, (highly) educated workers in companies should not withhold their knowledge or experience out of self-interest or keep it to themselves as a kind of monopoly. According to modern development theory, it is not so much a matter of minimizing the so-called operational transaction costs, as the Nobel Prize winner Ronald Coase (1990) – still reverentially quoted in these days – would have us to believe. The key of development is maximizing the flow of information, in other words, the passing on of new knowledge between workers or employees, the companies, the sectors, the municipalities and regions. In the long run, mere self-interest is harmful not only at the individual or organizational level, but also at the national and international level. The market and the pure market economy, or worse, capitalism tending towards imperialism fails in the educational task of a learning society that strives for becoming a global human society (“Weltgesellschaft”).

This applies in particular to the financial capitalism that Nyerere persistently scoured, in which the shareholders have the upper hand instead of the stakeholders. From this point of view, the current behavior of many nation states (including the German government) also partially contradicts Nyerere's postulate of cooperative education, e.g., the minor importance of education in international cooperation or (although worthy of discussion) withholding patents in connection with the Covid-19 pandemic. For social and economic development to flourish, it is important to create a learning society, also on a global scale. Only such cooperation can guarantee welfare for all and not for the few. This legacy of Julius K. Nyerere is also to be commemorated in the celebrations of his 100th birthday.

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