

Liberating Adult Education, Animation and People Centred Democracy ¹

Marjorie Mbilinyi

Adopting Issa Shivji's paradigm, "The philosopher in Nyerere was informed by, and in constant search for, human equality and freedom, while the king in him was driven by the imperatives of building a nation-state" [Shivji 2020 Book Three: 2]. Mwalimu Nyerere advocated transformative pedagogy and liberating adult education, which he linked to nation building and people-centred participatory development, especially at grassroots level. He argued that adult learners have knowledge to share. They need to be encouraged to think, analyse critically and act on their own behalf so as to improve their situation. They thereby became active subjects, and participated equally in making key decisions on resource allocations at all levels and benefited equally. While referring to individual demands for freedom and dignity, Mwalimu emphasized the collective nature of these demands, and argued that the African people can only realize real democracy and freedom by uniting together so as to fight against neo-colonialism and corporate globalisation and to struggle for equitable, just development and economic liberation. At the same time, he was a powerful ruler who established an Executive with no checks and balances and focused on nation building and African liberation, not socialism. He denounced global elites and Northern based imperialism, but in the early years he rarely took action against the growth of a bureaucratic bourgeoisie in his own state and party. The failure to translate his ideals of equality and justice into a popular mass movement of workers, peasants, students and others contributed to the ultimate downfall of ujamaa. At the same time, he succeeded in sustaining national unity in an increasingly hostile context during the 1980s debt crisis and confrontation with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) demands for Structural Adjustment (SAP) and neoliberalism [Shivji 2020 Book Three].

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Mwalimu throughout behaved with integrity and commitment to the development and welfare of Tanzanians and the sovereignty of Tanzania and the African continent. Adult educators can learn from the struggles that emerged to put transformative education and participatory democracy into practice. For example, participatory methods and philosophy of learning, organizing and action research have been developed within the animation conceptual framework, often called [participatory action research](#). Several activist organizations in Tanzania have adopted animation as the way they organize themselves, and also how they facilitate dialogue, advocacy and participatory action among the communities in which they work. How prepared are they/we to put into practice Nyerere's call for liberating adult education in solidarity with the people?

Liberating Adult Education

Education for Self Reliance (Nyerere, 1968) emphasized the basic principles of people centred development, saying the educational system is not

“designed to produce robots, which work hard but never question what the leaders in Government or TANU [now CCM] are doing and saying. ... Our Government and our Party must always be responsible to the people, and must always consist of representatives – spokesmen and servants of the people. The education provided must therefore encourage the development in each citizen of three things: *an enquiring mind; an ability to learn from what others do, and reject or adapt it to his own needs; and a basic confidence in his own position as a free and equal member of the society, who values others and is valued by them for what he does and not for what he obtains.*” [author's emphasis].

In most schools and adult education programmes, students continued to receive what Paulo Freire (1970/2000) called 'banking education': the teacher deposited information and knowledge into the minds of the students; the students transferred that same deposit of information and knowledge onto their examination paper or homework – without any call for original thinking, problem solving or creativity. Banking education continues to prevail today at all levels of education, including the University.

ESR principles were advocated for both schooling and adult education. In his speech on 'Adult Education and Development' (1976), Mwalimu Nyerere summarized the key principles of what we now call *uraghibishi* or animation.

"..Man can only liberate himself or develop himself. He cannot be liberated or developed by another. ...

..The same is true of education. Its purpose is the liberation of Man from the restraints and limitations of ignorance and dependency. .. The ideas imparted by education, or released in the mind through education, should therefore be liberating ideas; the skills acquired by education should be liberating skills..."

This means that adult education has to be directed at helping men to develop themselves. ..it particular it has to help men *to decide for themselves – in cooperation – what development is*. It must help men *to think clearly*; it must enable them to examine the possible alternative courses of action; to make a choice between those alternatives in keeping with their own purposes; and it must equip them with the ability to translate their decisions into reality.

..every adult knows something about the subject he is interested in, even if he is not aware that he knows it. He may indeed know something which his teacher does not know....It is on the basis of this knowledge that greater understanding must be built, and be seen to be built. ...

The organizers and teachers in an adult education programme *..have consciously to identify themselves with those who are participating in it primarily as learners. Only on this basis of equality, and of sharing a task which is of mutual benefit, is it possible to make full use of the existing human resources in the development of a community, a village or a nation."* [NB: *my emphasis*; note the male bias in Mwalimu Nyerere's writings; read [wo]men, her/himself]]

Liberating pedagogy has a political agenda, a revolutionary agenda. Mwalimu used the concept of "agitation" and linked it to organizing and mobilization. In Mwalimu's words ("Adult Education and Development" 1976),

".. the first function of adult education is to inspire both a desire for change, and an understanding that change is possible. For a belief that poverty or suffering is "the will of God" and that man's only task is to endure, is the most fundamental of all the enemies of freedom. Yet dissatisfaction with what is must be combined with a conviction that it can be changed, otherwise it is simply destructive. Men living in poverty or sickness or under tyranny or exploitation must be enabled to recognize both that the life they lead is

miserable, and that they can change it by their own actions, either individually or in cooperation with others.” (137)

“Education has to increase men’s physical and mental freedom – to increase their control over themselves, their own lives, and the environment in which they live... Teaching which induces a slave mentality or a sense of impotence is not education at all...(“Adult Education and Development” 1976,135)

According to Mwalimu, adult educators “are not politically neutral; by the nature of what they are doing they cannot be. For what they are doing will affect how men [sic] look at the society in which they live, and how they seek to use it or change it ... Adult Education is thus a highly political activity. Politicians ... therefore ... do not always welcome real adult education” [Ibid]. In a speech on the *Implementation of ‘Education for Self Reliance’* to the National Executive Committee Meeting of TANU, Musoma, November 1974, Mwalimu said: (Nyerere 2005):

‘... education ought to enable whoever acquires it to fight against oppression...’ [101]

‘...we have not succeeded in liberating ourselves mentally, nor in having self-confidence, nor in selecting that which is most suitable to our objective conditions instead of continuing to ape the systems of other people whose economy and mode of life is totally different from ours’ [103]

What is the role of an adult educator cum teacher in the revolution? In a passionate speech to teachers in Dar es Salaam in 1969, Mwalimu said, *‘The Job of Teachers is Revolution’*:

“When we talk of change or revolution in education, teachers begin arguing: ‘Oh! You will lower standards!’ But whose standards? They are colonial standards – and of how much use have they been to us? If these standards were good and relevant to our situation, we would not be talking of weakness and poverty today. We must be able to see what is good for ourselves and only in this way can we change. You teachers therefore must accept to be revolutionary teachers, not teachers to make people go to sleep.”

“Even if you are working in the village your job is to bring about African Revolution. You are carrying out your duty for the whole of Africa. Because history has given us Tanzania, we have to

eradicate weakness and poverty in Tanzania. But we are not working for Tanzania alone. We are also working for Africa because of the suffering we have experienced as Africans.”

“You are working for Africa and secondly you are playing your part in a world-wide revolution. A situation where the rich exploit the poor will go. All exploiters will be dealt with in the world.”

Animation methodology philosophy and Transformative Feminism

Mwalimu’s philosophy of liberating pedagogy is the centre of what is referred to as participatory pedagogy, participatory organizing, or what we now refer to as animation – *uraghibishi*. Historically animation has been used as part of a process of strengthening the capacity of grassroots women and men to organize themselves, analyse their own situation, identify basic causes of their problems, and carry out strategic actions for change (Freire 1970/2000, Rahman 1993). As Mwalimu Nyerere noted, the process is normally highly political [with a small ‘p’]; the process leads participants to collectively challenge local power structures and to demand their rights, as women, as youth, as peasants and workers, as ‘ordinary’ villagers.

Animation is used interchangeably here with participatory action research, to connote the breakdown of the barrier between research and action, as the poor/grassroots become the owners of the research/action process. Animation also refers to transformative pedagogy, providing an alternative approach to adult learning and education [ALE]. A wide variety of potential actions can be envisaged here, from short-term strategic planning and implementation to solve short- and long-term problems at community level, to advocacy for change at local and national level. In all cases, however, these actions are about exercises in the use and control of power to depict reality, its causes and what to do about it. For this reason, it is a mistake to view participatory research and action primarily as a set of techniques.

Participatory action research involves a reversal of power relations within the research or learning process, as well as within different levels of society itself. Indeed, the main goal of the enterprise is social change, rather than the collection or transmission of information. The key actors are the poor themselves, often working through local grassroots CSOs. They set the research agenda, according to priority issues identified at the local level. Analysis tends to be holistic and in depth, in order to provide the kind of rich information needed for the tasks in hand.

Although outsider experts may be called upon to help facilitate the process, their tasks are defined by the grassroots actors through negotiation and debate. A bottom up decision-making structure is thereby established, which becomes a school for democracy in general. Ownership is held and claimed by the grassroots, and they often provide substantial resource support for the process. Having planned the research activity as part of their programme for social change, members of the community are highly motivated to participate, and will have a strong desire to analyse the findings. Hence, the separation between research and information dissemination breaks down, at one level, and becomes more complex on another. Grassroots groups will want to develop different kinds of information packages for advocacy purposes: media briefs, popular booklets, pamphlets and posters, but also expert reports for use in advocacy work with policy makers in government and development agencies and in wider social movements.

The empowerment which results in the context of transformation is understood to be a process which increases the capacity of the poor and disempowered to (TGNP 1993:29/30):

Analyse and know the world at all levels;

Act on their own behalf; and

Increase their power and control over the resources necessary for sustainable and dignified life.

According to TGNP (1993:30), "The concept of empowerment connotes a process whereby a community (or a marginalised social group) increases its power, by challenging structures of society which disempower and removing the barriers to transformation. Both individual and collective action are called for to change power relations, often in several sectors at the same time."

The most promising examples of putting Education for Self Reliance into practice through animation during the last forty years have not been in formal schools but in informal education cum animation spaces created and nurtured by advocacy civil society organizations. Methods are adopted to facilitate participants to carry out their own assessment of the situation, analyse basic causes, and act to change the structures and systems which are oppressing and exploiting them (Mbilinyi 2003). The use of poetry, drama, case studies, art and song not only enhances the analysis process, but also energises people's creativity, linking logical analysis with 'art' which everyone can practice. Small group discussions, visual representations of key concepts, and open question

and answer sessions ensure that every participant has a role and a voice, while encouraging cooperation and strong criticism and self-criticism of ideas and actions. Dialogue among participants who share the same ultimate goals, but have access to different kinds of information and knowledge, generates new knowledge about the situation and how it can be changed. There is a direct link between analysis and action, theory and practice, and a constant challenge to hierarchies of power, whatever their foundation may be.

The outcome in the immediate short term is enhanced self-esteem, a recognition of the knowledge and skills which the participants already have, and growing recognition of the need for more analysis and more information and where to find it. Animation ignites a passion for justice among animators and participants alike, which feeds into action. The democratic principles which are adopted within the animation education/research/organizing process become models of the kind of alternative power structures that people want and try to create in their families, communities, workplace, schools and in the political arena.

Animation has been embraced by transformative feminist movement building in Tanzania and world wide. Elements of what we now call transformative feminism were articulated by progressive third world feminists in the 1970s and 1980s onwards. Of paramount importance is the emphasis on the need for feminist work to challenge patriarchy, capitalism, racism and globalization; as well as to embrace struggles for national and regional liberation and development and women's liberation. In the present context of Tanzania and Africa, transformative feminism concentrates on patriarchy and neo-liberalism, which are perceived to be interwoven and inseparable.

People centred democracy as alternative to neoliberal globalisation

Education for Self Reliance called for a revolution not only in the classroom and the school, but throughout society-- a complete transformation in how people governed themselves and how they organized processes of production and reproduction. The people were not to be 'robots' who 'never question what the leaders .. are doing and saying'. Mwalimu was calling for an entirely different form of leadership, one which would be participatory. Transformative education was also linked, in his view, to people-centred democracy and development.

Democracy to Nyerere was embodied in new principles of politics as well as economics, as argued in "The Purpose is Man", an impromptu speech he made

at a Teach-In at the University of Dar es Salaam on 5th August 1967 (Nyerere 1968: 324, author's emphasis):

Socialism, however, is not simply a matter of methods of production. They are part of it but not all of it. The essence of socialism is the practical acceptance of human equality. That is to say, every man's equal right to a decent life before any individual has a surplus above his needs; *his equal right to participate in Government*; and his equal responsibility to work and contribute to the society to the limit of his ability.

In Tanzania this means that we must safeguard and strengthen our democratic procedures; we must get to the position where every citizen plays an active and direct role in the government of his local community, at the same time as he plays a full role in the government of his own country. It also means that we have to correct the glaring income differentials which we inherited from colonialism, and ensure that the international imbalance between the wages of factory and service workers on the one hand, and of agricultural workers on the other, is not reproduced within our own nation. ..

In "Socialism and Rural Development", Nyerere argued that (1968: 347): "... there must also be an efficient and democratic system of local government, so that our people make their own decisions on the things which affect them directly, and so that they are able to recognize their own control over community decisions and their own responsibility for carrying them out. Yet this local control has to be organized in such a manner that the nation is united and working together for common needs and for the maximum development of our whole society."

Participatory democracy begins at the level of the village assembly and/or the neighbourhood - *kitongoji/mtaa*: (ibid: 359):

...Village democracy must operate from the beginning; there is no alternative if this system is to succeed. A leader will have an opportunity to explain his ideas and to try to persuade the people that they are good; but it must be for the people themselves to accept or reject his suggestions. It does not matter if the discussion takes a long time; *we are building a nation, and this is not a short-term thing*. For the point about decisions by an ujamaa village is not just whether the members do or do not decide to dig a well or clear a

new shamba. The point is that by making this decision, and then acting upon it, they will be building up a whole way of life – a socialist way of life. ... Therefore everything which relates exclusively to their village, and their life in it, must be decided by them and not by anyone else.

The quality of leadership was central to this analysis. Mwalimu Nyerere demanded a transformation in the power relations between leaders and citizens. In “The Varied Paths to Socialism” (1967 in Nyerere 1968: 309), Nyerere argued that there must be “among the leadership, a desire and a determination to serve alongside of, and in complete identification with, the masses. *The people must be, and must know themselves to be, sovereign..*” The people are sovereign – not the state, but the people!

However, when the people responded to the call for democratisation and transformation of education, factories and rural society in *Mwongozo 1971*, Nyerere consistently sided with the bureaucrats. Of central concern to him was the power of the Party and the State. He also had to contend with struggles within the Party. The clearest example was his about face when it came to the Ruvuma Development Association (RDA). At the beginning he provided the young peasant leaders with full support in their efforts to create independent production and social systems under their own control in the 1960s. However, when they collided with bureaucratic demands of regional authorities, he allowed the Party to ban RDA. When university students denounced government corruption and the self-aggrandizement of Members of Parliament, they were rusticated. Workers who seized their factories, and locked out management for being autocratic and corrupt, citing the *Mwongozo* principles, were fired. These outcomes brought to the surface the contradictions between Nyerere’s ideals and his practice when power struggles emerged. The Party and the State must be paramount. [See Shivji 2020 Book Three: 162-220].

Struggles and Crisis: Struggles over Neoliberalism and Structural Adjustment

Leaders in the government and state parastatals took advantage of their position to amass wealth in contravention of the Leadership Code. Corruption, financial mismanagement and growing inequality between the bureaucratic bourgeoisie and the majority of people led to visible dissatisfaction at grassroots level. This was heightened during the period of severe shortage of basic goods and immiseration of the people during the debt crisis of the 1980s. Crop authorities extracted surplus from the peasantry, forcing many to drop cash crops in favour of food crops they could sell on parallel markets. Within

the Party and the government, a growing number of leaders began to espouse neoliberal principles [Shivji 2020 Book Three: 162-230]. In his speech to the TANU National Congress in 1987, Mwalimu spoke openly about class divisions and struggles within the nation: “[i]f a minority can be clearly seen to be swimming in wealth obtained from theft, smuggling, and exploitation while the majority face extreme distress, it is not easy to defend unity and it is not easy for the government to succeed in its efforts to revive our economy” [Shivji 2020 Book Three: 351].²

At the same time, Mwalimu faced growing external pressure to drop socialism and self reliance and adopt structural adjustment principles. For eight years he defended Tanzanian government’s prioritisation of people over things, and justice over markets. His eloquent speech to the City of London on the mounting debt burden, IMF constitutionalities and SAP in 1985 exemplifies this:(Shivji Book Three: 341):

“If African Governments are really representing their people, they cannot accept conditions which would lead to more hunger, to social chaos, to civil war, or to the use of armies against their people...It is not a rhetorical question when I ask, should we really let our people starve so that we can pay our debts?”

Mwalimu Nyerere continued to speak out against neo-colonialism throughout his life. In his speech to the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs in 1986, he said:

“Yet policy mistakes by our young governments, or the existence of shameful corruption in many countries, is not sufficient explanation for Africa’s current economic condition. Although all African Governments differ in ideology, policy, and structure ... all countries have suffered a similar kind of economic regression and now face similar problems.

I believe that the basic explanation for Africa’s present economic condition lies in the fact that no African country has yet managed to shake off the neo-colonial hold of industrialized nations over our economies. .. Africa therefore continues to have an unequal

² “Address by Mwalimu Julius K. Nyerere, Chairman of Chama cha Mapinduzi at the Opening of the National Conference” (typescript) Dodoma, 22 Oct 1987, 10 [Haroub Othman Collection]

dependency relationship with the developed nations - mostly former colonial powers." [pp 8-9]

In the same speech, Mwalimu reminds his listeners of the historical context leading up to the present situation, which was defined by the struggles of African peoples against colonialism and racism:

"Our people's demand for independence, however, derived its major strength from their demand for human dignity and freedom. They wanted to govern themselves, in their own interests. And while they were demanding improvements in their conditions of life and in the provision of social services, they also wanted freedom and peace in their villages and towns and in their own lives." [pp 5-6]

Mwalimu then goes on: "... on balance, it cannot be said that we have fulfilled our people's hopes for democracy and Human Rights" [p. 6]

While referring to individual demands for freedom and dignity, Mwalimu also emphasized the collective nature of these demands, and argued that the African people can only realize real democracy and freedom by uniting together so as to fight *against* 'neo-colonialism' [i.e. imperialism] and to struggle instead *for* equitable, just development and economic liberation. These were not just abstract words - under Nyerere, Tanzania was the leader of the front line states fighting against colonialism in eastern and southern africa. Moreover, Mwalimu's notion of emancipation and people-centred development was on a global scale. Hence his commitment to the South Commission in Geneva.

In his speeches and writings on North South relations in the 1990s, Nyerere is scathing about the lack of international democracy and the forced imposition of structural adjustment on poor nations by the World Bank and IMF. In a speech at Urbino University in 1994 entitled "The South and the North Together", Nyerere said (1994 in Nyerere 2011 p. 295):

We all live in one world. We have, of necessity, created systems to regulate or govern our relationships, one with another. Yet, at the moment, there is no democracy at all at the international level, when countries of both North and South are involved. Instead, the international institutions we now have give added strength to the already strong and powerful. ..

Yet, while democracy continues to be urged at the national level, international governance is being made ever more undemocratic. Increasingly, issues with any connection to economics are being transferred to the World Bank or IMF or now to the new World Trade Organization. Control over the Global Environment Facility was thus given not to the UN Environment Programme based in Nairobi, but to the World Bank!..What happens will not depend upon the interests of the majority but on the wishes of the rich minority!

Democracy must be applied internationally as well as nationally, and the people of the North, have to give it a chance. (297)

All of us -- black, white, brown and yellow people -- have to work together for peace and harmony in this one world in which we all live. But nationally or internationally peace cannot be imposed; for genuine peace is a product of justice. Let us dedicate ourselves to work for peace through justice for all human beings."

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Abstract

Mwalimu Nyerere embraced a philosophy of equality and justice at all levels; and at the same time as head of the ruling Party and President of the nation created a powerful Executive branch with no checks and balances. He advocated transformative pedagogy and liberating adult education, which he linked to people-centred participatory development. Nyerere emphasized the collective nature of individual demands for freedom and dignity, and argued that the African people can only realize real democracy and freedom by uniting together to fight against neo-colonialism and corporate globalisation and to struggle instead for equitable, just development and economic liberation. His priority was nation building. The ruling party reigned supreme in the One Party State. Nevertheless, Nyerere ruled with integrity, and commitment to the welfare of Tanzanians and the sovereignty of his nation and the African continent.

Key words

Animation, transformative pedagogy, liberating adult education, people-centred participatory development

Libérer éducation des adultes, animation et la démocratie centrée sur les personnes

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Résumé

Mwalimu Nyerere a adopté une philosophie d'égalité et de justice à tous les niveaux ; cependant, en tant que chef du parti au pouvoir et président de la nation, il a créé un pouvoir exécutif puissant sans contrôle ni contrepoids. Il prônait une pédagogie transformatrice et une éducation des adultes libératrice, associées à un développement participatif centré sur l'individu. Nyerere insistait sur la nature collective des demandes individuelles de liberté et de dignité, et soutenait que le peuple africain ne pouvait parvenir à une véritable démocratie et à la liberté en luttant contre le néocolonialisme et la mondialisation des entreprises, mais plutôt en luttant pour un développement équitable et juste ainsi que pour la libération économique. Sa priorité était la construction de la nation. Le parti au pouvoir régnait en maître dans un État à parti unique. Néanmoins, Nyerere a gouverné avec intégrité et engagement pour le bien-être des Tanzaniens et la souveraineté de sa nation et du continent africain.

Mots clés

Animation, pédagogie transformative, éducation des adultes libératrice, développement participatif centré sur les personnes.

Educación de adultos liberadora, animación y democracia centrada en las personas.

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Resumen

Mwalimu Nyerere abrazó una filosofía de igualdad y justicia a todos los niveles; sin embargo, como jefe del partido gobernante y Presidente de la nación, creó un poderoso poder ejecutivo sin controles ni equilibrios. Defendió la pedagogía transformadora y la educación liberadora de adultos, vinculándolas al desarrollo participativo centrado en las personas. Nyerere hizo hincapié en la naturaleza colectiva de las demandas individuales de libertad y dignidad, argumentando que el pueblo africano sólo puede lograr una democracia y libertad reales uniéndose para luchar contra el neocolonialismo y la globalización corporativa, y en su lugar luchando por un desarrollo equitativo y justo, así como por la liberación económica. Su prioridad era la construcción de la nación. Sin embargo, Nyerere gobernó con integridad y compromiso con el bienestar de los tanzanos y la soberanía de su nación y del continente africano.

Palabras clave

Animación, pedagogía transformadora, educación de adultos liberadora, desarrollo participativo centrado.