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PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF KISWAHILI COMPOSITION WRITING

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ABSTRACT

The philosophical underpinnings of composition writing can be traced to Edgar Allan Poe artistic works of poetry that dominated American poetry in the 19th century and Walt Whitman 20th century poetry in Europe. Similar to a poem that does not deliver excitement to the audience a composition should equally balance between the success with the audience and the critical taste. A further reflection on four theories of philosophy of compositions gives an insight to this philosophical foundation: the expressive theory, which places emphasis on the writer; the mimetic theory, which emphasizes correspondence with reality; the rhetorical theory, which focuses on the effect to the reader and lastly the formalist theory which emphasizes traits internal to the work. More emphasis has been put on five characteristics of a philosophical paper, which depicts philosophical argumentation thus qualifying Kiswahili composition writing to be philosophical. In support of this, composition is not a manifest of either accident or intuition; it is work that proceeds step by step to its completion, with the precision and rigid consequence of a mathematical problem.

Keywords: *Philosophizing, Philosophy of composition, Argumentation, Philosophical analysis, Subject matter, Educational dimensions*

INTRODUCTION

The term Philosophy stems from two Greek words: *Philos (love)* and *Sophos (wisdom)*. Thus *etymologically*, philosophy means the love or the pursuit of wisdom (Njoroge and Bennaars, 1986). To get appropriate philosophical loci for Kiswahili composition writing, it is imperative to gain an insight in the debate of philosophy of composition as envisaged by seasoned artists and subsequently merge their thinking with the thinking in technical philosophy.

The Philosophy of Composition

The philosophical underpinnings of composition writing can be traced to Edgar Allan Poe (1845) artistic works of poetry that dominated American poetry in the 19th century and Walt Whitman 20th century poetry in Europe. Similar to a poem that does not deliver excitement to the audience a composition should equally balance between the success with the audience and the critical taste (Bucur 2009). Poe pointed out that an improperly brief essay degenerates into mere epigrammatism. This ought to be evaded in composition writing. In the philosophy Poe (1845) allude that a composition can be read as a document of American thinking either as pragmatic, empirical approach to writing or as a technical product. This is what paved way for the unity between creativity in writing and peoples

culture. To gain more understanding of Kiswahili composition writing in these philosophical dimensions we ought to further to reflect on Abram's (1953) four theories of philosophy of compositions as explained by Fulkerson (1979). First, is the expressive theory which places emphasis on the writer. Second, is mimetic theory, which emphasizes correspondence with reality. The third is the rhetorical theory which focuses on effect to the reader, and lastly the formalist theory which emphasizes traits internal to the work.

It can be argued that composition writing can be classified as philosophical papers due to its address of the five characteristics (Portmore, 2001; Chudinoff, 2007). First is the purpose of the paper or what the author sets out to do and why. Secondly, the audience- each paper has an audience- the people who will find the paper interesting and helpful. The third characteristic has to do with argumentation- the local bits of reasoning that serve the purpose. In the fourth point, a paper has a narrative or the global structure into which the arguments are arranged. The fifth characteristic addresses the style or the manner in which the paper is written. According to Portmore (2001) the exploration of ideas in composition writing depicts philosophical argumentation thus qualifies to be philosophical.

In furthering this argument Thomas (2014) posits that composition writing is an art that revolves around evaluation and development of correct reasoning and effective style. Thus concurring with Portmore (2001) and Rippon (2008) contention that composition ought to be seen as an organized argumentative writing which reflects correct deductive and inductive reasoning; fallacies; critical appraisal of evidence; construction of rebuttal and counter-arguments. Bucur (2009) also joins this debate of *The Philosophy of Composition* and adds that composition is not a manifest of either accident or intuition it is work that proceeds step by step to its completion, with the precision and rigid consequence of a mathematical problem. Though Clark (2009) proposes analytical philosophy as basis for broad understanding of compositions, this concept will only limit us to the subject matter envisaged by the proponent's but not concept of knowledge this study sought to delve in.

Philosophical Analysis of Teaching

Since this study focused on pedagogical methodologies, it is inescapable to analyze teaching composition in philosophical terms. While educators view teaching as process of imparting skills and knowledge (Nasibi, 2003), philosophers look at it in terms of the conceptual connection between teaching and learning (Noddings, 1998) as postulated by Dewey (1933). According to Dewey (1933) teaching and learning is conceptualized as the relationship between the 'seller' and the 'buyer'-*no one sells unless someone buys*. This implies the two take place simultaneously. However, most philosophers of 1960s challenged the notion that 'teaching implies learning' instead they held a different view. While teachers *intend* to effect learning learners on the other hand fail to learn even when the teacher works hard to teach them (Noddings, 1998). Notably, some of these philosophers wanted to protect teachers from the unfair attacks that were directed at them in the 1960s.

Later Scheffler and Othanel Smith (1960s) put forward their thesis that teaching does not imply learning but can be characterized as: intentionality criterion, where the teacher attempts to bring out learning; reasonableness criterion, where the strategies chosen by the teacher must be "not unreasonably thought to be likely to achieve the learning aimed at"; and the criterion of manner, implying that what the teacher does must fall under certain restrictions of manner (Noddings, 1998).

While most philosophers and educators agree with the first criterion; that teaching aims at bringing out learning, few philosophers like Paul Komisar (1960s) object to this. To him it is some form of 'intellectual acts' within the teaching process that provide some form of awareness that bring out learning. In this context Komisar pointed out that introducing, demonstrating, hypothesizing, appraising and interpreting are an appropriate context that make learners aware. To this end Dewey agrees that the only way to increase learning is to augment the quantity and quality of real teaching. He views the teacher as the guide and director; the teacher steers the boat but the energy that propels it must come from the learner. This analysis of teaching agrees with the implicit methodologies discussed in this study.

Similar view is shared by Dewey (1933) when he argued that learners ought to be involved at the level of constructing their own learning objectives. He emphasizes that teachers have even a higher responsibility to follow up what the learners have learnt as a result of their initial awareness and consequent investigations (Noddings, 1998). In essence this view stresses teachers' knowledge of the entry behaviour of the learner prior to initiating the pedagogical process.

Overview of Technical Philosophy in Composition Writing

From the Greek foundations intimated earlier on philosophy as field of study involves an effort to solve fundamental problems, to gain a comprehensive view of the universe, and to find answers to the questions on the origin, nature, and destiny of matter, energy, life, mind, good, and evil (Njoroge and Bennaars, 1986; Gunga, 2010). Philosophy, like all other studies, aims primarily at knowledge. The Knowledge it aims at is the kind of knowledge which gives unity and system to the body of the sciences, and the kind which results from a critical examination of the grounds of our convictions, prejudices, and beliefs (Archie and Archie, 2004).

Philosophizing on the other hand involves independent thought process and requires skills in Coherent reasoning (Gunga 2010) or using the power of human reason to solve problems and to resolve issues in human lives, hence philosophical thinking (Njoroge and Bennaars, 1986). Since the study of philosophy involves working with concepts rather than facts, the activity of philosophy seeks understanding rather than knowledge. In other words, emphasis in this course of study is placed on the reasoning process (Archie L and Archie J.G.2004).

While general philosophy deals with a wide world of philosophy, technical or formal philosophy is an outgrowth of wide philosophy due to formalization of human activities, westernization and specialization Njoroge and Bennaars (1986). Technical philosophy is concerned with four distinct areas generally referred to as the branches of philosophy. These are; logic, epistemology, axiology and metaphysics Njoroge and Bennaars (1986). Logic is defined as the study of correct reasoning. It therefore studies the structure and principles of arguments. It studies how arguments are constructed and how fallacies can be detected and avoided thus minimizing misunderstanding and meaningless arguments. In this aspect, *deductive reasoning* helps to infer conclusions from general premises while *inductive reasoning* helps to infer conclusion from particular instances Njoroge and Bennaars (1986). Epistemology reflects on the study of knowledge. While scientists describe their observation about human knowledge in a factual manner, philosophers go beyond mere facts. In this regard philosophers reflect on the nature of knowledge thus raising epistemological questions about knowledge, which goes beyond observable facts (Njoroge and Bennaars,1986).

Axiology on its part is the philosophical study of values. Axiology is broad with branches that deal with different set of values. The first is ethical or moral philosophy, which reflects on the origin and nature of moral values. It attempts to gain an insight and distinguish what is right and what is wrong. The second branch is aesthetics, which is the philosophical study of artistic values and meaning of beauty. In another context, axiology is concerned with social, cultural and political values thus social philosophy, political philosophy and philosophy of culture (Njoroge and Bennaars, 1986).

The fourth branch of technical philosophy is metaphysics, which deals with what goes beyond the study of nature. Metaphysics, therefore deals with questions that are concerned with what lies after or beyond the physical world of sense of experience (the realm of supra-sensible). Metaphysics has four sub-branches namely; cosmology, theodicy, ontology and rational psychology. Cosmology is the study of universe or cosmos. Theodicy is a development of cosmology and is the rational investigation of supernatural. That is of religious concepts and beliefs. The philosophical study of 'being' which tries to explain the commonness of all things, living and non-living is referred to as ontology. Lastly, is the rational or philosophical psychology also known as 'philosophy of mind'. Its focal point is the awareness that we perform certain activities such as perceiving, imagining, remembering, feeling, understanding and willing, which are attributed to the 'mind' as opposed to the body.

Subject Matter and Philosophical Foundations

Dewey (1933) defined subject matter in terms of the material used in resolving a problem in a given situation. This is in form of facts that are observed, recalled, read, and talked about or ideas suggested in course of or development of a situation having a purpose (Noddings, 1998). To Dewey, subject matter should be presented in a way that makes it purposeful to students in working through problematic situations. Each subject should be included in the curriculum not to be presented as a body of unconnected facts to be rote learned but as a way of explaining human activity, enlarging social connections, or solving social problems. Philosophy of education on its part entails philosophical analyzes and clarification of concepts and questions central to education (Njoroge and Bennaars, 1986; Gunga, 2010). Philosophy of education draws from ancient philosophers, including Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Herbart, Froebel and Dewey (Noddings, 1998).

Socrates (469-399BC) and his '*Socratic method*' taught by engaging learners in dialogue. He would start by posing deceptively simple questions that would prompt deep thinking, a process referred to as destructive cross-examination (*elenchus*). This analysis would continue to satisfaction of both the teacher and the learner. Quite characteristic was his dominance of the dialogue thus the teacher led questioning. In giving information as implied by the explicit method of question and answer. In doing this, the Socratic Method fulfils the critical function of technical philosophy. This function encourages honesty of thought which protects man from fanaticism and hypocrisy, intolerance and dogmatism as well as slogans and ideologies. Hence it liberates man from narrow-mindedness.

Plato (427-347 BC) on the other hand was an ardent disciple of Socrates thus his views mirrored those of Socrates especially on quick fire-dialogues, conversational in style (Craig, 2002). He believed that student as should be educated according to their capacities hence education for workers and artisans, of guardians (soldiers) and of rulers. Thus the 'functionalist' model of education designed to produce competent adults for the needs of the state. Arguably, the components of Plato's' education view have remained at the heart of liberal education for years. Literature, history, mathematics and philosophy still form part of the curriculum. To this end Kiswahili composition writing, which is embedded in creativity espoused by literature finds its root in this philosophical foundation of Plato.

Like Plato, Aristotle (384 – 322 BC) believed that people should be educated for their appropriate place in life. As people perform tasks and fill particular functions, they develop (or fail to develop) excellences peculiar to the tasks and functions. In education, Aristotle established a model of moral education where learners should be trained in morally appropriate modes of conduct. The community should inculcate to children values and immerse them in supervised activities designed to develop relevant virtues. His character education model gained prominence in the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century. We can argue that creativity in writing as envisaged by Noam Chomsky (1955) is deeply rooted in this philosophical background (Gotzsche, 2009).

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) ideas arose in the Christian era and middle ages (Noddings, 1998). His philosophy of '*freedom*' viewed man as born free and good, and could remain that way in some ideal state of nature. According to Rousseau the corrupt man is a result of accommodating needs of other people we live with. Thus education should seek to preserve the natural goodness and induce a positive sense of civic responsibility. He believed that children are born good and teachers should preserve this goodness while facilitating growth of the various competencies required for adult life. A facet of Rousseau philosophy can be seen to be compatible with the twentieth century ideas of psychologist and educators like Alexander Sutherland Neil(1960s), Jean Piaget (1960s), Maria Montessori (1907) and Kolb's (1984) experiential learning. Notably, Piaget theory and Kolb's experiential learning have been explicitly linked to Kiswahili composition writing in this study.

Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827) also had a great influence on philosophy of education. Pestalozzi followed and refined Rousseau ideas. He believed that a lesson should end with a moral point. He created '*object lesson*' approach to build on John Locke ideas. This is where a lesson

begins by exhibiting an object then inviting students to describe it. From this philosophy, we justifiably say that set induction as explained by Nasibi (2003) was founded.

Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776-1841) too built on Rousseau ideas about senses and their critical function in education. To him the mind functions in terms of presentations called “*apperceptive mass*”- a collection of previous experiences that could be called into play to understand a new percept or idea. To him teaching methods should be designed to match the way minds work and teachers must prepare learner for new material by bringing to consciousness relevant experiences in learner’s apperceptive mass. According to (Noddings, 1998) this is the forerunner to Jean Piaget’s (1960) cognitive structure. His four-step lesson found place in what the followers made into five-step lesson: preparation, presentation, comparison and abstraction, generalization and application. These elements are valid in today’s lessons as espoused by Nasibi (2003). In concurrence Musau and Chacha (2001) as well as Njogu and Nganje (2006) validate same steps in teaching Kiswahili composition writing.

Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852), a third philosopher influenced by Rousseau is regarded as the father of kindergarten (Noddings, 1998). He equated the kindergarten to a garden in which children, like flowers, unfold and grow. This reflects Rousseau’s inherent goodness in children. We have already indicated the compatibility of Rousseau’s philosophy with the twentieth century ideas of psychologist and educators like Jean Piaget’s (1960s) cognitive learning, Maria Montessori (1907) philosophy which led to constructivist approach and Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning.

Educational Dimensions and Kiswahili Composition Writing

It would be hard to ground Kiswahili composition writing to philosophical underpinnings without looking at education in the multi-dimensional approach envisaged by philosophers. The multi-dimensional approach identifies four dimensions that are traced back to R.S Peters (1966). In his book *Ethics and Education (1966)*, Peters arrived at three criteria for analyzing education (Njoroge and Bennaars, 1986). One, education must involve the transmission of what is worthwhile, valuable or desirable, thus the desirability condition. Two, education must involve knowledge and understanding or the knowledge condition. Lastly, education rules out certain procedures of transmission that lack willingness and voluntariness on part of the learner- the procedural condition. The four dimensions are; cognitive, normative, creative and dialogical dimensions, respectively (Njoroge and Bennaars, 1986; Sifuna et al., 2006).

Cognitive dimension finds its roots in concept formation, operational and formal thinking as viewed by educational psychologists. In this regard cognitive learning is as a result of close link with cognition or knowing thus the basis for cognitive dimension (Sifuna et al. 2006). While cognitive learning is a process or a task, knowing is the outcome of learning. Njoroge and Bennaars (1986) stress that cognitive dimension must be understood in terms of knowing rather than of learning. Since ideally education involves knowledge and understanding and not just learning, then there is a close link between education and knowledge as envisaged by the cognitive dimension. From this argument, it is right to conclude that learning achievement in the course of learning Kiswahili composition writing is fundamental. It is the close connection between education and knowledge as envisaged by cognitive dimension of education.

The philosophical study of knowledge is known as epistemology, which is one of the main branches of technical philosophy (Bradley and Swartz, 1988; Craig, 2002; Sifuna, Chege and Oanda; 2006). In analyzing the concept of knowledge three criteria or conditions need to be met. One condition is the belief condition where knowledge is viewed as a matter of belief or conviction while the second is the truth condition, which refers to the actual truth of what one asserts or looks at. According to the first condition to know implies having a ‘true belief’ that it is actually true. But to know that it is true belief requires the third condition; grounds condition. This is concerned with the grounds or reasons for knowing something. Thus for someone to claim to know something and to have true belief, then one must have sufficient grounds to verify or justify the claim (Njoroge and Bennaars, 1986; Sifuna, Chege and Oanda; 2006). Since the study of knowledge in technical philosophy falls

under epistemology, then Kiswahili composition writing can be arguably said to be grounded in the cognitive dimension.

The normative dimension is the socialization aspect of education. Socialization is the process of learning or training in which an individual is conditioned or moulded into a respectable member of the society (Njoroge and Bennaars, 1986). The normative character of education is an ideal to be pursued. It also refers to the norms or standards recommended in education, which in turn provide general guidelines for educational theory and practice (Sifuna, Chege and Oanda; 2006). The normative dimension is therefore the foundation for educational goals. Given that philosophical goals of educational are translated into curriculum instructional objectives as argued by Munyoki (2012) then we conclusively say that Kiswahili composition writing is firmly grounded in the normative dimension of education and subsequently axiology branch of technical philosophy, which deals with normative matters.

The creative dimension on the other hand views education as growth. The idea of natural growth is explained in three ways; first physical growth in which man exhibits his cultural being. Secondly, natural growth is seen in terms of developing in accordance with the laws of nature. Thus a child is not only allowed to grow physically but also mentally, morally, emotionally and socially. The third explanation follows progressivists concern with child-centered education (Njoroge and Bennaars, 1986; Sifuna, Chege and Oanda; 2006). Learning therefore occurs in the course of experiences of inquiry, of activity based on the needs and interests of the child. Creativity should be encouraged as a way of self-expression method of learning (Gunga, 2010). In this context therefore, education is seen as a creative experience which is open-ended. The fundamental principle is that children have an inherent impulse to create. This is one of the guiding principles of creativity in the art composition writing alluded by Gotzsche (2009). Lastly, the idea of natural growth suggests variation and diversity. This implies catering for individual differences catering for individual needs, interests or shortcomings highlighted by Nasibi (2003). The creative dimension reinforced progressivists idea that right or appropriate methods as envisaged by Odundo and Gunga (2013) can lead learners to discover content for themselves.

The dimension also views the world in two sets of explanations. The world of nature and the world of culture. The world of nature is the natural world one is born and confronted with an already existing world. One has no choice but to accept it if one wants to be part of it. The second view is the world of culture which explains man as a *conscious being* (Njoroge and Bennaars, 1986). Man is a subject who acts upon the natural world and creates a new world, a world that is typically human- the world of culture. Man's consciousness can in three levels; empirical level or pre-reflective level, which creates awareness through senses, the intellectual level in which ones forms concepts and the rational level where judgements are made and reasoning taking place (Njoroge and Bennaars 1986; Sifuna, Chege and Oanda; 2006). Since creative dimension emphasizes on liberating education composition writing cannot be divorced from this since it engages learners in exploring ideas in the real world and through creativity addresses them in writing (Gotsche, 2009).

The last dimension is the dialogical dimension which bridges the gap between individualization and socialization concepts of education (Njoroge and Bennaars, 1986). To establish the inter-relationship between man, society and education two models are postulated to explain the dialogical dimension. First is the traditional model in which man organized social life by establishing law and order. But the law and order was not natural thus it varied from society to society and from culture to culture. Secondly, is the bureaucratic model which distinguishes closed (traditional) and open (modern) societies. In the modern society, man has become an integral part of the bureaucratic structure in which individuals are aware of many alternatives and beliefs that are no longer held to be sacred or absolute. The traditional model viewed education as to be transmitted through generations through accumulation of wisdom and knowledge of society. Bureaucratic model inevitably points at formal education through schooling within defined bureaucratic context (Njoroge and Bennaars, 1986; Sifuna, Chege and Oanda; 2006). The dialogical dimension therefore opposes authoritarian education where the

teacher is the master while the learner the slave or servant who must willingly obey the master (Njoroge and Bennaars, 1986). Education is therefore inter-subjective process, which involves communication, encounter, participation and dialogue as advocated by Paul Freire (1968). Dialogue requires two people to speak to each other on equal terms. In education this equality points to mutual respect as the basis for dialogue. In this study this dialogue is firmly founded in the implicit methodologies of teaching Kiswahili composition writing.

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