



A Critique of Kenyan Basic Education in Promoting Values

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Abstract

The primary aim of education is to equip learners with knowledge, skills, and attitudes; however, numerous studies, particularly within the context of Kenyan basic education, have predominantly focused on the broader goals of education. Despite this, there exists a notable gap in research that delves into the critical function of education in society, particularly concerning its moral, factual, aesthetic, and prudential aspects. This investigation seeks to examine the practical dimensions of education, with a specific emphasis on its moral and prudential functions in fostering disciplined, ethical, and competent individuals, thereby highlighting the significance of sound judgment. The research utilizes secondary sources and documentary analysis as its main methods for data collection, systematically gathering, organizing, and conceptually analyzing the information while critically evaluating it through established methodologies, theories, and frameworks to achieve the study purpose. The insights gained from this analysis have led to the development of key theoretical propositions and premises that form the foundation of the study's analytical and argumentative structure. The theoretical frameworks presented have significantly contributed to the formulation of an explanatory theory that underpins the findings and conclusions of the study. This has enabled a thorough evaluation of the essential functions of practical education, discipline, values, and skill acquisition in an individual's life, alongside the broader societal ramifications of the fundamental objectives of education. This study advocates for further exploration in the domain of aesthetics and moral education with the main focus on pedagogical issues encountered by educational institutions during the fourth industrial revolution driven by technology.

Keywords: Basic Education, Self-Regulation, Aesthetic Judgment, Value Education, Critical Judgment

Introduction

In a world occasioned by evolving policies and globalization, value education is seen as a crucial societal element for advancement (Edwards et al., 2022). Value education plays an important role in developing discipline, order, and aesthetical attributes, nurturing talents, and promoting harmony within diverse groups. The concept of value education

encompasses various social and ethical dimensional frameworks (Iksal, Hayani, & Aslan, 2024). It is only education that can foster discipline, talents, and social cohesion (Sarbaitinil et al., 2023). There's an increasing expectation for educational institutions in the current landscape to be aligned to develop value education and, in turn, promote a harmonious society. This study seeks to address the effectiveness of Kenya's basic education to foster prudential and ethical values among learners.

The Background of the Study

According to Westphal's (2020) and Kant's (1791) theory of enlightenment through critical judgment and this study, individuals make use of judgment to determine their position in the universe. Elements being judged include factual, moral, aesthetic, and prudential (Ostaric, 2023). The reflective judgment of each individual is fundamentally rooted in their practical judgments, which include both prudential and moral considerations (Wallace & Kiesewetter, 2024). As moral agents, individuals are committed to prudential values through their inherent capacity for judgment (Slote, 2023). For individuals to attain a rational understanding of themselves within the educational context, the development of prudential or aesthetic reflective judgment is essential (Ostaric, 2023). This study underscores the critical influence of education on both individual well-being and the collective welfare of society, facilitated through either aesthetic or prudential reflective judgment. Westphal (2020) interprets Kant's definition of judgment as the ability to relate specific instances to universal principles through logical reasoning. Marabini (2022) further suggests that if universals are derived from the capacity for judgment through prudential or aesthetic reflection, it becomes possible to conceptualize particulars in relation to universals or vice versa. Within this framework, moral and aesthetic considerations are particularly significant to the process of judgment, guiding reflections on ethical and aesthetic matters as well as practical decision-making. Moral and aesthetic inquiries provide a transcendental principle that serves as a guiding law. Utilizing the theory of critical judgment, this study aims to analyze, assess, and articulate the beneficial roles that education plays in cultivating capable, ethical, and disciplined global citizens in Kenya's basic education.

Purpose of the Study

To perform a critical study of Kenya's basic education to establish its critical function in developing disciplined, ethical, understanding, and talented people for harmonious living in society.

Significance of the Study

Education serves a crucial function in fostering peaceful coexistence within society, underscoring the necessity of incorporating prudential and aesthetic contemplation into the educational process. Individuals at all educational levels and most especially in Kenyan basic education who cultivate qualities such as understanding, self-regulation, ethical conduct, cultural awareness, and discipline are likely to emerge as responsible global citizens, thereby contributing to the flourishing of harmonious communities.

Literature

Understanding of Discipline, Ethical Conduct and Talent

Discipline serves as the fundamental assurance for both the existence and progression of society; without it, societal structures risk disintegrating into isolated individuals lacking meaningful connections and the ability to coordinate collective actions. A society's survival and advancement are contingent upon the presence of a certain level of discipline, with its development being significantly influenced by the degree of this discipline (Brunson et al., 2025). When societies share a common developmental philosophy, their ability to function harmoniously is enhanced by a shared discipline; conversely, disparities in disciplinary frameworks can result in contradictions and conflicts. Ethical behavior, or morality, represents the internal discipline of individuals, encompassing a framework of rules and principles that guide judgments of good versus bad and right versus wrong in personal conduct. This ethical foundation is essential for fostering a harmonious society. It is the presence of shared ethical standards, or at least compatible variations of them, that enables societies from different civilizations to interact harmoniously; in contrast, the lack of ethical guidelines or the existence of fundamentally incompatible ethical systems can lead to discord and strife.

Foundations of Discipline in Education

Discipline is often characterized as a form of training that fosters obedience and increases productivity. It is frequently described as a regulated form of behavior. Within educational settings, discipline encompasses the management of student conduct to create an environment that is conducive to effective teaching and learning. Students are anticipated to adhere to specific behavioral standards aligned with institutional rules and regulations, thereby facilitating the learning process (Molenaar, 2022). The concept of discipline can be understood as a systematic approach to regulating behavior, which involves implementing appropriate responses to instances of misconduct. Effective discipline management includes strategies that monitor and rectify inappropriate behaviors,

thereby promoting a positive learning atmosphere. It is essential for students to exhibit appropriate behavior within the school context, as disruptive conduct can jeopardize their educational opportunities. Regrettably, some students especially in Kenyan basic education stray from established behavioral norms, highlighting the need for effective discipline management in educational institutions (Kaluma, 2023). The overarching goal of discipline management is to instill lasting behavioral changes that contribute to a supportive learning environment.

Education for Ethical Conduct and Morality

Komariah and Nihayah (2023) emphasize the crucial role of education in promoting ethical behavior and self-discipline. The school environment plays a pivotal role in shaping the moral values and self-regulation of children. In today's rapidly evolving society, particularly in Kenyan basic learning institutions, there is a pressing need to nurture ethical conduct and discipline, especially in light of the challenges posed by new technologies. It is vital to prioritize this aspect of education, as the principles of ethics, morality, and discipline are most effectively instilled during childhood rather than being enforced later in life. Therefore, integrating the cultivation of ethical behavior and discipline into educational curricula from an early age is essential.

Moreover, educated individuals have a responsibility to promote ethical behavior and discipline among those who may not have had formal educational opportunities. Education serves as a key mechanism for discovering and developing inherent talents and abilities. It is crucial for educational systems to actively identify and nurture the natural gifts of individuals, as these talents may otherwise remain unrecognized and undeveloped. Many individuals may have potential in various fields such as music, dance, art, and sports; however, it is through education that these abilities can be acknowledged and enhanced (Gagné, 2023). Thus, it is imperative to make concerted efforts to improve educational opportunities that support the growth of individuals' innate skills and capabilities or values.

In contemporary society and especially in Kenya's basic education, it is imperative for educated individuals to assume the responsibility of nurturing talents and abilities in those who lack formal education (Eynon, 2021). Education should serve as a fundamental pillar in fostering a cohesive society, and bridging gaps among diverse cultures, religions, and languages. However, there are instances where education is exploited to exacerbate divisions within society. Notably, some educated individuals have been observed inciting violence and animosity among different cultural and religious groups. Thus, it presents a significant challenge for those who are educated to promote unity among individuals from various backgrounds, ultimately contributing to the establishment of a harmonious society. It is essential for educated individuals to actively work towards ensuring peaceful coexistence among all members of the community.

This research, along with the findings of Gardner (2021), emphasizes that education is an essential human right; nevertheless, the availability of quality education remains uneven mostly in Kenyan basic education due to factors such as wealth inequality, gender disparities, varying levels of development among nations, and political influences. Quality education encompasses a relevant curriculum, well-trained and skilled educators, a supportive learning environment, and sufficient resources and facilities. It plays a crucial role in fostering competence, achieving success, and contributing to the economic, health, political stability, and overall progress of a nation. Furthermore, education is vital for cultivating personal and societal discipline, and ethical behavior, and for nurturing individual talents, ultimately leading to a peaceful society devoid of violence, characterized by safety and security (Hossain, 2023). Socrates posits that the value of education of youth is essential for any anticipated public good in the future (Westheimer, 2024). The formation of values, attitudes, and behaviors occurs predominantly in the early life of learning, underscoring the profound influence of education. It is instrumental in shaping character, morals, and conduct, thereby promoting an ethical, disciplined, responsible, and progressive society (Westheimer, 2024). Before examining the role of education in fostering discipline and ethical behavior, as well as enhancing talent and ensuring safety and harmony, it is crucial to analyze the socio-political context of a country especially Kenya and the status and function of its educational system. Achieving global peace and security necessitates international collaboration and shared responsibilities.

This research, supported by Gardner (2021), posits that educational systems must prioritize the moral development of students. The moral education provided in colleges is a vital aspect of national educational frameworks, significantly influencing students' growth throughout their lives. Education serves as the primary avenue for value cultivation and is the most potent means of enhancing individual capabilities, with education, discipline, ethics, and societal harmony being interconnected. The research undertaken by Abulibdeh, Zaidan, and Abulibdeh (2024) supports these conclusions, highlighting the importance of discipline and ethics in the formative stages of value development. These elements are vital for individuals to understand their worth and their roles within society. The nurturing of suitable discipline and ethical standards is imperative for the constructive evolution of values, which in turn facilitates significant contributions to society. In the contemporary context of the 21st century and the digital era, humanity confronts an unparalleled dilemma characterized by "development versus disaster," which calls for a profound transformation in global educational practices. Concurrently, community development plays a vital role in addressing this challenge, ensuring that education remains effective and efficient. Thus, the societal context is integral to the educational journey of community members or emerging talents.

Value education aimed at fostering social discipline cultivates citizens who are politically loyal to the governing authority, a process that historically necessitates

extensive, top-down propaganda to influence the youth (Heberer, 2023). Conversely, moral education focused on personal ethical conduct seeks to develop individuals who are ethically aware, which typically involves honoring and safeguarding the inherent qualities of young people. Morality serves as a defining feature of humanity, with individuals sharing similar moral values forming a community, while those with differing moral perspectives may face exclusion or hostility (Laine, 2021). Consequently, value education is intricately linked to social interaction, belief systems, and cultural norms. In the context of community development, a broadly accepted moral framework serves to unify diverse social groups into a cohesive human community, necessitating a universal approach to understanding human nature.

Nurturing Value Education

The primary objective of education should be to cultivate values that contribute to societal progress, thereby facilitating social advancement. This educational framework should emphasize the development of individual skills while also strengthening social ethics to foster a cohesive community. Any philosophy of education must first teach objectives related to developing value education that aligns with societal norms. In a similar vein, Swrgiary (2024) notes that education must provide the dual responsibility of developing values by fostering a sense of civic duty and societal harmony. It is crucial to focus on social roles at micro and macro levels to cultivate values and a harmonious society. Those managing and governing educational institutions ought to integrate the principles of social roles and equity to promote education access for all. To do this, it calls for one to develop strategies that mitigate any disparity in access to education opportunities. Equity in education should be maintained across all education levels, from early childhood education or basic education to university education. Education, in addition, must foster public responsibility through consciousness, instilling core values, and promoting public awareness.

Education's Role in Building a Harmonious Society

Education is essential in fostering a more unified society by imparting shared values among its constituents. The complex and ever-evolving nature of human society includes a wide array of socio-political institutions, economic frameworks, cultural differences, and other facets of social life. Research conducted by Karaca (2022) alongside this study highlights that the intricacies of modern society have given rise to numerous fields of knowledge, each concentrating on specific areas of expertise. The pursuit of knowledge is frequently motivated by the varied requirements of humanity, illustrating the interconnectedness of the social networks individuals establish. The development of civil

society can be interpreted as a reaction to the diverse needs of individuals, reflecting the inherent complexities of human nature. Each society strives to attain peace and harmony in its distinctive way, with a harmonious community characterized by stability, mutual assistance, coexistence, equitable progress, and shared values (Akhtar, 2024). The establishment of such a society necessitates the cultivation of disciplined citizenship, adjustments in lifestyle, and shifts in values. Consequently, education is deeply rooted in the essence of human nature, and the progress and transformation of any society hinge on addressing the varied needs arising from the complexity of human existence. Ultimately, the interrelationship between society, education, and morality is grounded in the fundamental aspects of human nature.

Humanity is guided by an intrinsic moral framework that influences its behaviors and decisions. This framework includes the distinctions between right and wrong, good and evil, as well as concepts of justice, fairness, honour, and shame, which collectively serve as foundational principles for human conduct. As a result, education is fundamentally a moral pursuit, significantly contributing to the spread and nurturing of ethical values. The incorporation of ethics and professionalism into educational methodologies especially in basic education is vital for promoting personal growth and enabling societal change. Ultimately, the aim of education should be to develop individuals capable of imparting both cultural insights and specialized knowledge within their respective domains. This study aims to evaluate global education systems and most especially Kenya's basic education through the perspective of Kantian critical judgment theoretical framework, analyzing literature in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Theoretical Frameworks and Philosophies

Promoting value education among learners most especially at the basic educational levels represents significant challenges facing humanity in the present day. There is a general agreement on the critical role of education in tackling these challenges; nonetheless, there are differing views on the most suitable educational approaches and the related issues. It is vital to elucidate the role of education in these initiatives while also exploring the historical evolution of educational practices and their complexities. In today's environment, marked by various tensions and ongoing conflicts, an overemphasis on a singular educational model has often led to the sidelining or outright neglect of other valuable knowledge systems. Consequently, it is imperative to conduct a comprehensive examination of the diverse educational experiments throughout history to recognize their contributions to these significant efforts and the insights they offer. Research by Giroux (2024) underscores that by analyzing these historical educational frameworks, we can gain a deeper understanding of how different educational paradigms have shaped societal advancement and influenced contemporary debates on pedagogy and learning

methodologies.

Method

In the current realm of digital education and online learning, there exists a significant shortfall in the development of values that span multiple aspects of life. Fundamental values such as discipline, ethics, and aesthetics, which are vital for enhancing individual potential and encouraging social unity, seem to be inadequately nurtured among learners in the 21st century, particularly within Kenya's basic education system. This research seeks to investigate several key questions: What is the significance of value education for students in today's context? How do philosophical perspectives, particularly those of Kant regarding critical judgment, inform our understanding of value considerations? The current review synthesizes existing online literature, scholarly articles, pertinent reports, and books. The gathered materials were systematically analyzed through the Value Judgement (VJ) model, emphasizing a framework that highlights the ethical dimensions necessary for discussing the role of ethics within the educational system, as interpreted through Kantian philosophy. The research further involved a methodical examination of relevant documents and statements, critically evaluating the opportunities and challenges that educators encounter in this digital age. The analysis of premises and categories yielded explanatory statements that align with the study's objectives, and the Value Judgement model is illustrated in the accompanying figure.

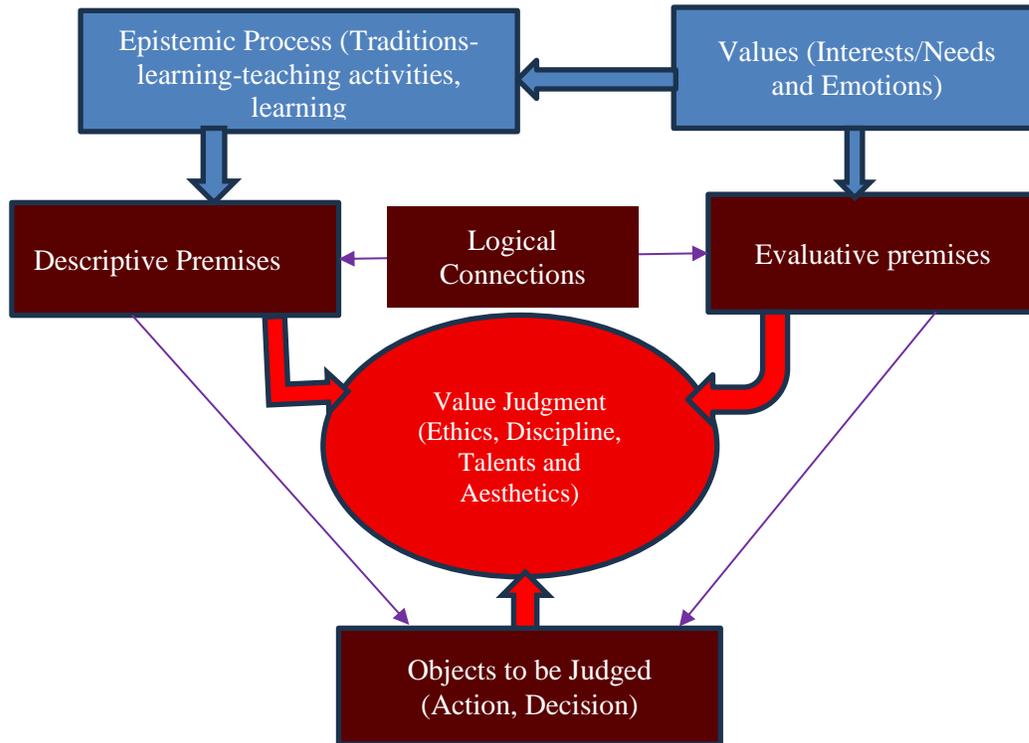


Figure 1: Value judgement model (adopted from Mertz et al., 2023)

Components of value of judgment(s) are descriptive premise(s), logical connection(s), evaluative premise(s), and object to be judged (actions and decisions). Factors influencing the components of the value judgment(s) are emotions, interests/needs/wants, and epistemic processes that include teaching-learning activities and learning resources/infrastructures.

Analysis and Results

Immanuel Kant (1791) posits that the existence of humanity within the world is contingent upon the attainment of education, emphasizing that the most significant aspect of this education is the mastery of values or ethics and aesthetics. Kantian education is intrinsically linked to the broader themes of human destiny, moral development, and self-discipline. The research conducted by Atenas, Havemann, and Timmermann (2023) on data ethics reinforces this perspective, highlighting a contemporary deficiency in the education of humanity and discipline in Kenya's basic education, which can be addressed

through the incorporation of values in basic education curricula. By imparting value education to younger generations, society can equip them with the necessary skills to navigate their social environment, particularly in terms of understanding their rights and making informed decisions. It is essential for individuals to engage in self-improvement, as this journey deepens their comprehension of their abilities, aspirations, and life objectives, ultimately enhancing their prospects for success. Furthermore, it is feasible to develop an educational framework that is attuned to the inherent traits and specific needs of each student, thereby ensuring that education is tailored to foster personal growth and fulfillment.

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly transformed the educational environment, leading to the integration of digital technologies and artificial intelligence (AI) tools into both teaching and learning processes. This shift has raised concerns regarding the potential erosion of fundamental human values such as morality, ethics, and aesthetics as reliance on AI and digital platforms grows. The rise of ethical challenges, behavioral issues, and matters related to talent development and decision-making necessitates urgent attention within the educational paradigm. The contemporary educational landscape is marked by a dynamic balance between freedom and discipline, heavily influenced by the pervasive use of technology and AI. This situation underscores the importance of instilling discipline and values in students, equipping them to navigate their academic pursuits while engaging with computers, information technology, and AI-driven social networks. The significance of ethics in education, particularly in relation to technology, is critical, as the principles of technological ethics and aesthetics have emerged as essential components of the educational framework in the 21st century. Self-directed and intrinsically motivated learners require a value-based framework to effectively navigate their educational experiences.

Research, including findings from Tao & Tao (2024), indicates that in many educational settings, particularly at the elementary and secondary levels and in Kenya's basic education levels, the learning process is predominantly orchestrated by teachers. Instructors are responsible for designing learning activities and formulating inquiry questions, relegating students to a passive role where they are expected to complete assigned tasks and respond to questions crafted by educators or the curriculum. This instructor-centric approach to education limits the autonomy of learners, thereby hindering the development of self-discipline and undermining the cultivation of self-regulation and self-motivation. Furthermore, the educational landscape, particularly in Kenyan basic education, often lacks the essential values and discipline necessary for fostering talent. An educational system that neglects to instill values and discipline fails to create a harmonious learning environment conducive to personal and academic growth.

Transformative strategies for education in this era and the distant future are called for to impart learners' values and discipline. Most academics and their curriculums tend to

impart knowledge and skills to their learners. Knowledge and skills are important for learners to deal with the immediate challenges they face in education and life. Future education calls for learners who can reason critically and are self-regulated and self-motivated. Self-motivated, self-regulated, and critically reflective learners require critical and value judgment skills. These learners need values-interests, emotions, and wants on top of discipline to self-regulate and study effectively. Among interventions expected in this era of education are those of morality and discipline. The most important subject to be dealt with by academics in relation to artificial intelligence education is the ethical aspects of risk, discipline and risk management. specifically in relation. Hence, ethics and discipline are of importance in current and future education. However, ethics and discipline could be dealt with in education by employing an appropriate model that gives learners the freedom to define their learning pathways, and design and manage what to study, why and how to study.

In conclusion, a model of critical thinking must be designed to enhance the cognitive attributes of individual learners. This necessitates the development of an instructional framework that encompasses both teaching and practical application phases. Essential strategies that must be imparted include:

1. The process of clarification involves several key components that facilitate a deeper understanding of a problem. Initially, it requires questioning, which entails a critical examination of the underlying principles associated with the issue at hand.

2. Secondly, careful identification is done of the most compelling and relevant evidence that validates the argument. This necessitates a comprehensive evaluation of supporting and contradictory evidence, and an assessment of diverse opinions, standards, and critical factors that may influence the discussion. Detailed analysis of both arguments and counterarguments is necessary for the attainment of an informed evaluation of the topic under study.

3. It is vital also to clearly define the issue and identify its main objective. This is done by making adjustments between the evidence provided, the stated purpose, and the underlying values. Prior findings can be used to derive value-laden inferences without necessarily jumping to definitive conclusions. However, an adaptive and interactive approach to reexamining the issue is to be advocated to promote stronger understanding.

4. To clarify, the instructor's role is critical, the instructor guides critical brainstorming and questioning activities to improve students' categorization and understanding of the problem. Fundamental components of evidence collection, questioning, outlining, analysis and interactive thinking need to be taught to develop lifelong learning and promote critical thinking.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The importance of value education cannot be overstated in the context of student development. It is vital to investigate the significant effects that education can have on students' inner lives through the promotion of values. Evaluating the effectiveness of educational institutions in fulfilling their responsibilities and identifying systematic approaches to enhance students' appreciation for education is essential. This analysis emphasizes the importance of value education at the foundational level, particularly regarding its implications for future educational pursuits. The discourse presents various arguments in favor of incorporating ethical principles and disciplined behavior during the early stages of education in Kenya. Ethics and discipline are integral elements that should be embedded within educational settings and the wider context of life. The findings suggest that students in Kenyan basic education frequently face challenges related to self-management, self-motivation, and self-reflection. Those who struggle with self-control are less inclined to demonstrate self-discipline and, as a result, may not adopt ethical values. Value education is identified as a fundamental first step in steering children towards developing a constructive mindset and a positive attitude towards learning. Its incorporation into academic curricula is vital for fostering the growth of future learners and enriching their educational experiences. This raises important questions about how basic education can effectively encourage ethical values among students.

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