

Existential Interrogation of 8-4-4 System Of Education

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ABSTRACT

When the 8-4-4 system of education was introduced in Kenya, it was seen to be visionary and could capture the country's aspirations. However, the system has been a subject of debate since its inception. While the commissions mandated to explore the underlying problems generated profound contributions towards its improvement, more issues arose, prompting the change of the curriculum. It is on this backdrop that the research sought to interrogate the system using existentialism by examining: the challenges of the 8-4-4 system of education and to study the implications of existentialism to 8-4-4 system education. The study is library-based. Existential and critical philosophical methods were used to analyze the data. The findings show that the 8-4-4 system has not achieved its intended objectives because of problems associated with underfunding, over-enrollment, overloaded curriculum, commercialization of education, examination malpractices, overemphasis of examination, and strikes. Existentialism in education can remedy the situation by incorporating its insights for reforms in the aims and objectives of education, curriculum, instructional methods, and the right concept of a student and the teacher. However, the study recommends that the Kenyan education system be strengthened by inducting all the stakeholders on the real philosophy of education in Kenya.

Keywords: Existentialism, Interrogation, 8-4-4 Education System.

I. Introduction

Existentialism is a contemporary school of philosophy that developed in the 19th century and became prominent in continental European thought in the 20th century. This philosophy developed as a revolt against the traditional philosophy such as rationalism and empiricism, which was taken to be too abstract and remote from the concrete human experience. The term "Existentialism" has been used as a catch term describing all those philosophers sharing the belief that philosophical thinking begins with the human subject, not merely as a thinking subject, but the living individual who acts and feels. Some of the prominent existential thinkers include, Soren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, Martine Heidegger, Jean Paul Sartre,

Karl Jaspers, Gabriel marcel and albert Camus. The main philosophical position of existentialism, among many others, is "existence precedes essence", Sartre (1946). This implies that for human beings, existence is given, and therefore one spends his life creating meaning (essence).

Despite the fact that the main aim of existential philosophers has not been to develop the theories of education such as teaching and learning, their insights have been found to be very beneficial in studying the problems of education from a philosophical perspective. In this endeavor, education becomes the subject matter, while existential philosophy becomes the method. Philosophers of education have applied existential philosophy to education in terms of aims, forms, methods, and results of education both as a process and field study. This further clarifies what education should be, the dispositions it should cultivate, how and in whom it should do so, and the desired forms it should take.

A. Statement of the problem

When the 8-4-4 system of education was introduced in Kenya in 1985, it was seen to be visionary and would address the concern that basic education was lacking the necessary content to promote widespread sustainable (self) development (McGrath (2002). It was therefore assumed that the system would equip the learners with the necessary employable skills, especially for self-employment in the informal sector. However, the system has been a subject of public debate due to its unsatisfactory outcomes leading to the formation of various commissions mandated to explore the underlying problems that need to be addressed. It is on this background that this study investigated the Kenyan 8-4-4 system of education using the existential philosophical premises.

B. Objectives of the study

This paper was guided by the following objectives:

- I. To find out the challenges facing the 8-4-4 system of education.
- II. To study the implications of existentialism to the 8-4-4 system of education.



C. Methodology

This study is library-based, and critical, speculative, and existential methods of philosophical investigations have been used.

a) Literature Review.

1.2.1. The background and existential premises.

1.5.1.1. Development of Existentialism.

Existentialism basically means the study of existence. Macquarie (1972) explains that existentialism is a term that applies to the work of a number of 19th-century philosophers, who, despite having varying differences in their philosophies, generally focused on issues of the condition of human existence, individual emotions, actions, responsibilities, and thoughts of meaning and purpose of life. Existentialism attempts to make human life authentic and possible in a meaningless world.

Existentialism developed as a trend of thought in Europe after World War II (1939-1945). At this time, people felt threatened by material and spiritual destruction. Seemingly, the circumstances of this period made people be critical of the systems that guided people at this time. The material security manifested by technological advancement was reducing individuals to rhythms of machines. Consequently, the scientific and industrial revolutions made the society increasingly secular, making spiritual death a reality and existence seen to be pointless due to experiences of worthlessness and meaninglessness of life. Philosophy as a system of thought was never spared either. The traditional philosophy was seen to be too abstract and remote from concrete human experience and, therefore, unable to address important qualities of human existence such as love, sickness, despair, and death. Persons became pronouns, subjects became objects, and I became it. Dehumanization became a new feature in society in all aspects. Existentialism recognized this problem and attempted to address it.

Existentialism became popular in the years following World War II and strongly influenced many disciplines such as theology, psychology, drama, and art. Flynn (2006) observes that existentialism continues to defend individual freedom, responsibility, and authenticity in the midst of various forms of determinism, conformism, self-deception, technologist, and the like prevalent in our day.

1.5.1.2. Existential philosophical premises.

Existentialism integrates several philosophical themes. These themes, among others, include subjectivity, freedom, authenticity/ inauthenticity, responsibility, and anxiety. Not all these themes were discussed by every individual existentialist, and they are not entirely consistent with one another.

(a) Subjectivity.

According to Soren Kierkegaard, truth is subjective, Bhadra (1990). By probing into the depths of one's subjectivity, an individual is able to discover the truth of one's being. Subjective truth is about one's individual

values and existence. Personal experiences and one's own convictions are therefore important in achieving the desired truth.

(b) Freedom

Existentialists posit that man is free to choose, and the choices he makes are undetermined by external conditions. Jean-Paul Sartre says that human beings are not only free but condemned to be free. Freedom is, therefore, a human being's raw material and freedom of choice has the cost of commitment and responsibility.

(c) Authenticity.

The concept of "authenticity" was first developed by Martin Heidegger in his work *Being and Time* (1927) though alluded to in the works of Martin Heidegger. Authenticity is about an individual choosing his own way of existence and remaining committed to it. Soren Kierkegaard regards religious faith as the highest form of commitment. On the other hand, inauthenticity is the denial to live in accordance with one's freedom through pretense or convincing oneself that some determinism is true.

(d) Responsibility.

Existentialists agree that everyone bears responsibility based on their choices. This is supported by the premise that in existence, human beings create meaning with the help of their freedom. In this connection, everybody is responsible for the quality of his life.

(e) Anxiety.

The term anxiety is sometimes called angst. Existentialist philosophers agree that anxiety is a metaphysical experience that reveals the deep truths about the nature of human beings. Anxiety compels an individual to confront with responsibility false securities, illusions in pursuit of authenticity. This is because anxiety is often linked to feelings of insecurity and uncertainty.

1.5.2 Education and existentialism

1.5.2.1. Education.

Some people view education as activities of teachers and students as they occur in the classroom environment of institutional situation. But what is real education? Philosophical interrogation of the concept 'education' helps in understanding its deeper meaning and the underlying idea. According to R. S. Peters (1966), for any phenomenon to be termed education, three conditions or criteria must be fulfilled. These are transmitting something worthwhile to the people, transmitting knowledge or understanding, and use of the appropriate methodology in transmitting something worthwhile. Education, therefore, can be understood to mean the process of transmission and assimilation of something worthwhile and also knowledge and understanding through some acceptable methodology. On the other hand, Njoroge and Bennaars (1986) insist that education is a multidimensional concept characterized by unity and plurality. These dimensions are cognitive, normative,

creative, and dialogical. R.S. Peters associated the aim of education with producing an “educated person”. Njoroge and Benaar’s dimensions, therefore, would imply that an educated person is the one who has assimilated something worthwhile, has acquired knowledge and understanding, and is capable of being free and creative in the society.

1.5.2.2 The relationship between existentialism and education.

Many great philosophers have also been educationists. Socrates used the method of questioning and cross-questioning (Socratic Method). Jean-Paul Sartre defined the educational significance in literature. Fredrick Nietzsche wrote a polemical essay on educational institutions, while Karl Jaspers published a book on the idea of the university. The philosophy of existentialism, therefore, has a lot of contributions to education. Existential insights can be incorporated into educational ideologies, policies, and curricula.

II. The 8-4-4 System of education and its existential challenges.

The 8-4-4 system of education in Kenya is comprised of 8 years in primary, 4 years in secondary, and 4 years in university (or college). This system was designed to equip the learners with skills that would enable the school leavers, including the dropouts, to secure employment in the formal sector or become self-reliant and better-oriented self-employment (Ministry of Education, (1984). Despite the government’s huge investment in education, the reality is that there are more and more college and university graduates experiencing problems both in entering the graduate labor markets as well as making themselves employable. According to the World Bank data, Kenya is ranked as having the highest unemployment rate in East Africa. This is an indication that the country’s formal sector lacks the capacity to absorb the huge number of job seekers and the graduates who join the workforce every year, giving rise to high informal employment, especially the category of casual jobs.

The existential challenges facing the 8-4-4 system of education are interrogated as follows:

a) Inadequate funding.

Starting from January 2018, the government of Kenya committed itself to provide free primary education and free day secondary school education leading to a 100 percent transition rate from primary to secondary school, Kaviti (2018). Despite this commendable commitment, the government is still, as it used to be the case, is experiencing serious challenges of inadequate funding to the education sector. The government can’t still hire enough teaching force in all levels of education. Every year, the government has been delaying the release of capitation funds for ongoing school infrastructural development programs and other money to support free basic education. This delay has complicated the payment of suppliers, including challenges in meeting maintenance expenses and other related hidden costs. Many public

schools, especially those in marginalized areas, lack proper classrooms, inadequate playgrounds, dignified toilets, and provision of water and electricity.

The funding challenge has hindered the attainment of the national goals and objectives. Underfunding has led to an increase in tuition fees, the introduction of new levies to learners, and the temptation of teachers to conduct illegal private tutorials for extra pay. The learners who are unable to pay the fees are more likely to defer, suspend learning or drop out of school or college before finishing. The learners who face these challenges end up missing an opportunity to be empowered by education and to become what they are capable of. Furthermore, due to underfunding, the teaching staff are more likely to agitate for salary increments and other related allowances. If this is not addressed, strikes are more likely to be experienced, leading to disruption of the academic calendar, increase in dropouts and drop in academic performance.

b) over-enrollment

In the recent past, the Government of Kenya, through the 2010 Constitution, made basic education free and compulsory. This provision is in line with the Kenya Vision 2030, which stated that the Kenyan Government envisages reducing literacy by increasing access and raising the quality and relevance of education, Government of Kenya (2007). However, with the free primary, free secondary school tuition, and 100 transition rate from primary to secondary schools, growth in student population both in primary and secondary schools has been experienced across the country.

c) Commercialization of education.

Borghain (2016) defines commercialization of education as a tendency that gives emphasis on, to make education profitable as well as business-oriented. In this case, “knowledge” becomes economized for the purposes of making it a valuable commodity that is subject to a commercial transaction. This means that education becomes an object of business.

The 8-4-4 system of education in Kenya has been a victim of this challenge of commercialization. This is characterized by holiday tuitions in basic education (which has been banned but still done), week-end remedial, examination coaching before national examinations, home coaching by contracted teachers, buying off the purported examination materials by rogue parents and candidates, and big monetary rewards for performing schools and teachers by politicians. While those who defend the legitimacy of the practices argue that all is done with the intention of motivating schools and teachers and championing health competitions among schools, the reality remains that all these activities are motivated by money. Furthermore, many private schools which post very good academic performance are owned by entrepreneurs who are “business” oriented and are driven by profit and not education per se. Some shrewd managers of such private schools porch bright students in other

schools and even promise them bursaries and gifts for purposes of posting excellent results in KCPE and KCSE examinations. At tertiary and university levels, commercialization of education is perpetrated through a high appetite for public prominence and media recognition. They also get tempted to use hook and crook methods to get high enrollment of students leading to financial benefits for institution owners and managers. Some institutions, especially private ones, use fancy names to attract unsuspecting students, while others are given high marks and rarely fail so as to attract many students with the hidden agenda of economic gains. The worst form of education commercialization is sex for grades where rogue male lecturers solicit sex from female students and, after gratifying themselves, doctor the victim's results and give them money to silence them.

Strictly speaking, the commercialization of education changes the whole concept of education in terms of its real goal and objectives. Commercialization reduces the whole concept of education to an activity of business where the ultimate end is making it a product that is commercially successful. In this case, the learner is reduced to a marketable commodity. In this scenario, the teacher's role is reduced to that of an employee who is no longer an important participant in making critical decisions that advocate for the best interest of the learner. The teacher's creativity is also killed since they are directed to use sophisticated programs and methods to sell the marketable commodity called education.

d) Curriculum overload

Kaviti (2018) points out that the 8-4-4 system curriculum was overloaded with content geared at only passing national exams. The overloaded curriculum is too broad, the syllabus contains too many items, the lesson content is sometimes repeated, and the teaching and the learning depend too much on textbooks. A voluminous curriculum, therefore, makes teaching and learning more quantitative rather than qualitative.

The overstretched curriculum has made the 8-4-4 system of education is expensive in terms of the provision of a learning and teaching workforce. Such curriculum also exerts a lot of stress and anxiety on both teachers and the learners because of inadequate time to cover the syllabus, revise, and prepare for examinations. The situation is worst in institutions with a shortage of personnel to deliver the curriculum. This is because the lessons are numerous, the required textbooks are many, and the content is voluminous, making it hard for the learners to grasp. In such a case, learning becomes boring while the slow learners can easily despair. Overloaded curriculum, in essence, end up reducing education to teaching of curriculum for examination performance and nothing beyond to equip them with morals and skills that make them fit and function well in the society.

e) Examination malpractices

Philemon (2007) describes examination malpractice as a deliberate act, wrongdoing contrary to official rules and is designed to place a candidate to unfair advantage or disadvantage; it is a careless, illegal, or unacceptable behavior by a candidate in a formal test of his knowledge or ability in a particular subject. Examination malpractice is, therefore, an irregularity through cheating or a form of plagiarism for the purposes of getting grades. The Kenyan 8-4-4 system of education has been marred by examination malpractices in schools, colleges, and universities. In 2011, in his speech of releasing KCSE, the Minister of Education acknowledged examination malpractices and acknowledged that examination irregularities are a threat to credibility to our nation's examination and are a major concern to the Ministry of Education. Some of the notable examination malpractices in Kenya include examination leakage, assistance by teachers and foreigners, sneaking into examination room's foreign materials like books or pages of textbooks and calculators, impersonation, collusion, notes in the palms, shirts, and thighs, swapping of scripts and doctoring of results. There are cases where parents aid and abet examination malpractices implicitly or explicitly.

In reality, the main purpose of the examination is to evaluate the learners by finding out the knowledge they have synthesized within a given duration in accordance with the desired objectives. Thinguri (2015) notes that the main purpose of the national examination is to improve intelligibility, efficiency, and effectiveness in making decisions about people. Furthermore, examination evaluates the teaching strategy. Examination malpractices, therefore, are wrong, and the examination administration, therefore, should be conducted with the highest level of integrity if its purpose is to be achieved.

f) Examination oriented system

Mackatiani (2017) argues that the 8-4-4 system of education follows the exam-oriented model. In the exam-oriented model, emphasis is put on examinations, testing, the passing of exams, and high mean scores. Consequently, the passing of exams is seen as a sign of school efficiency. Those who pass exams are assured of good secondary schools and prestigious courses in the university, while those who fail are considered useless and the system wastage. The manifestation of the emphasis of the examination in the 8-4-4 system of education includes frequent, continuous assessment tests, frequent random assessment tests, extra tuition, remedial teachings, and a lot of assignments. Parents hire private tutors to teach private tuition over the weekends and holidays. The examination candidates are drilled to pass the exam through revision of mock papers from schools that post excellent performances and cramming of the content. On the other hand, the teachers and schools are expected to post good results, and in turn, the parents and the teachers pressurize the learners to produce good results. Other school activities are neglected, such as extracurricular activities, so as to create time to study longer for purposes

of passing exams. Consequently, some teachers are forced to use unscrupulous methods of registering weak candidates in other schools if they are not willing to repeat.

Such a system, in reality, oppresses both the learners and the teachers since the emphasis is passing exams and no opportunity to acquire holistic education. This model kills critical thinking, which requisite is for innovation since the student is only interested in a correct answer. This scenario denies the learners an opportunity to develop technical competencies and problem-solving skills. The examination-oriented model also leads to unhealthy and cut-throat competition among the learners, schools, counties, and regions leading to rivalry and enmity. The learners tend to view the competing schools as enemies and rivals, which in essence defeats the real logic of education. Examination emphasis also leads to reduced choices in the curriculum for the individual learners since the motivation is to pass exams. This is because elective subjects are chosen because not the learner loves the subject but since one can manipulate to get a good grade and to be celebrated.

g) Student's unrest.

School strikes culminating in the burning of schools and loss of lives have been a common phenomenon in Kenya. According to the Wangai report, Ministry of Education (2001), the period from the 1990s through to the 2000s saw an increase in both the frequency and intensity of student protest. Several commissions have been formed to investigate the incidences. Even with the implementation of their recommendations, the problem still persists. The given causes of these unrests include; blind freedoms due to loss of value systems, peer pressure, tensions, high handedness and examination pressure due to multiplicity of exams, fear of exams, and examination-oriented curriculum.

The existence of various types of student unrest is a manifestation of existential crises in Kenya's 8-4-4 system of education. An education environment with frequent strikes threatens the learner's endeavor to self-realization and self-actualization. This is because such an environment demotivates and kills the learner's freedom to make the right choice in life and to flourish. Furthermore, strikes do not just happen. Factors such as poor food, inadequate accommodation, poor teaching staff, poor sanitary conditions, high handedness, and loaded academic programs should be addressed promptly. If not addressed, such factors reduce learning institutions to prisons where learners feel oppressed, enslaved, and dehumanized. De-schooling of the learners from glorifying violence as a way of communicating grievances needs to be done, and the use of dialogue should be promoted.

III. Implications of existentialism to 8-4-4 system of education in Kenya.

Existentialism per se emerged as a rejection of the traditional approach to education. Due to this line of thought, existentialism advocates for individuals who are

responsible for determining for themselves what is "true", "false", "right", "beautiful," or "ugly", Maheshwari (2011). The following are, therefore, critical contributions of existentialism to the 8-4-4 system of education in Kenya.

A. Aims and objectives of education.

The existentialist view is to educate the "whole person". Maheshwari (2011) argues that in this endeavor of educating the whole person proposes the unfolding of the individual as a whole in a situation in which he finds himself. To achieve this, the educators in the 8-4-4 system of education can expose learners to scenarios where they can assume responsible selfhood, realize the best they are capable of and unleash their potential. The learners should also be assisted to cultivate self and critical consciousness so as to be aware of their strengths and limitations and their place in their process of becoming. This will assist them in making authentic choices in their lives and in facing the consequences of these choices with responsibility.

Existentialists also believe that persons have feelings and emotions. Consequently, the 8-4-4 education aims and objectives should, in the long run, help the students to learn how to feel and to master their emotions by being sensitive to the learner's individual differences.

Existential education prepares learners to face tragic situations in life. The learners must be exposed to realize and to face the facticity of their existence. Such situations include sickness, depression, anxiety, and death. To do this, the teacher, for example, can prepare the learners to develop the right attitude and better understanding of death and to be aware of his death at every moment of his life. In this situation, the learner is assisted to enjoy each and every moment of life and to realize that death is not always negative, but it also has positive sides.

B. The concept of the school.

Reflecting on the concept of school in existentialism, Koirala (2011) posits that the school should provide an atmosphere where individuals develop in a healthy way. To achieve this, the Kenyan learning institutions should create enabling and conducive learning environments where individuals feel accepted, secure, loved, and motivated. This calls for adequate funding to run schools, hire enough teachers, and develop child protection policies to safeguard the safety of the learners and make learning enjoyable and not burdensome and oppressive.

Existentialism recommends a school organization with a framework of inclusion of extra-curricular activities. This is because such activities expose the learners to existential situations, which are very good for teaching and their development as human beings. Through extracurricular activities such as clubs and movements, learners get an opportunity to interact, learn the values of tolerance, respect, and friendship and engage in meaningful dialogues. The 8-4-4 system of education has

been observed to be too academic-oriented because of its examination-oriented model. In line with this existential thought, Kenyan schools, therefore, should emphasize the importance of extra-curricular activities and look for ways through which such activities balance with examinations.

C. The concept of curriculum.

Existentialism treats curriculum as the world of knowledge to be explored with the sole aim of self-examination, and self-realization. By accommodating a diverse curriculum, the individual learner's unique differences are catered for. Existentialists recommend a liberal curriculum, Power (1992), core subjects, humanities, scientific subjects, and mathematics, Azhar (2013). It should also include vocational and technical subjects. The liberal curriculum is advocated for since knowledge is dynamic and nothing is fixed, final, and absolute. A fixed curriculum can most likely hinder the learner's opportunity to create themselves accordingly, while a liberal curriculum lays the foundation for human freedom. This revolutionary approach rejects the traditional style of the curriculum, where the teachers pass on fixed and selected qualities of knowledge to the learners. A wide curriculum also gives the learners many options from which to choose in respect to their aspirations, conditions, and needs.

The curriculum of the 8-4-4 system of education is in line with this existentialist view. However, being an examination-oriented system, the curriculum has suffered drawbacks such as students taking reduced subject choices and elective subjects for purposes of manipulating grades and passing exams and giving more attention to science and mathematics subjects than humanities and arts because of the belief that these subjects are more superior and can guarantee employment. This challenges the achievement of the National Education goals and objectives.

D. The concept of a teacher.

According to Harper (1955), for the existentialist, a good educator is the one who knows he is educating individuals, not just man, and will use any method that will educate the whole man. Not even the whole man but his humanity as well. Contrary to the traditional concept of a teacher, existentialists posit that the best teacher is the home and the parents of the child, Azhar (2013). In a nutshell, the teacher should be a facilitator, a guide, a stage setter, a role model, and a protector of the learner.

In conceptualizing the concept of the teaching profession in Kenya, Mugambi and Ochieng (2014) observe that the teaching professions in Kenya fall short of true profession due to the low status of teachers compared to those of doctors and lawyers, due to reasons such as remuneration and poor terms, the short period of training and poor career prospects. Consequently, teachers facing such challenges can most likely become demotivated and therefore unable to deliver. Proper training and improvement of the teacher's welfare will save the face of the teaching profession in Kenya.

E. The concept of a student.

The question, "who should be educated" is paramount to existentialists. The existentialist understanding of a human being is that of "an open possibility", that is, a person who is in the process of becoming, but who is capable of actually becoming whatever he wants to be, Akinpelu (1981). In this connection, a student is the one who ought to be facilitated and has a critical role in shaping his own education and life. To achieve this, existentialism recommends giving the learner freedom, creating a good interpersonal relationship between the teacher and the learner, and avoiding any environment that oppresses and encourages cut-throat competition, harsh discipline, and constant phobia of examination failure. This will allow the learner to grow naturally and freely, enjoy subject to subject and not subject and object relationship and always enjoy his place as the center of learning.

To make the learners centers of learning who are motivated, the Kenyan 8-4-4 system of education should enforce full implementation of the ban of corporal punishment policy, emphasize professional guidance and counseling programs in schools, create child-friendly institutions and move away from examination oriented model.

F. The teaching methods.

Gutek (2005) explains that teaching methods are closely related to the objectives and goals of the curriculum and indicates the learning and teaching process during which the learner becomes familiar with special knowledge and skills included in the curriculum. On the other hand, Malik and Akhter (2013) insist that existential pedagogy embraces neither realism nor relativism, but rather, it supports sound methodologies for inquiry that are applied in any given situation. Consequently, existentialism recommends democratic method and indirect techniques, Koirala (2011), Socratic Method, Maheshwari (2011) and role-playing, Malik and Akhter (2013). Existentialism rejects outdated authoritarian methods where the teacher is the superior possessor of knowledge and the student the inferior empty vessel waiting to be filled, Malik and Akhter (2013). Existentialism also rejects group method or mass education since in the group method, the superiority of the group decision threatens the individual decision. In a nutshell, existentialist philosophers advocate for instructional methods which focus on learner-centered education.

Some teachers in the Kenyan 8-4-4 system of education still use traditional and outdated methods of teaching basically because of an examination-oriented curriculum. Such method methods include rote learning, cramming, drilling with elements of authoritarianism, and the learners are required to reproduce the facts stated in the textbooks and what they were taught by teachers during the examinations. A paradigm shift is therefore required

without any delay in the spirit of the existentialist democratic and learner-centered approaches.

IV. Summaries, conclusions, and recommendations.

The 8-4-4 system of education in Kenya was introduced in 1985 to replace the old system of 7-4-2-3, which was seen to be rigid, too academic, and lacking the relevant and appropriate content to promote widespread sustainable (self) development. Consequently, the 8-4-4 system of education was seen to be visionary and would equip the learners with skills that would enable the school leavers to secure not only employment in the formal sector but also to better orient towards self-employment and self-reliance. However, the system, since its introduction, has attracted public debates and concerns, necessitating the formation of various commissions to explore the underlying problems and to make recommendations for improvements. Despite these interventions, the outcomes have not been satisfactory.

To interrogate the 8-4-4 system of education against the above-given background, the philosophy of existentialism has been adopted. Existentialism is a philosophical thought that encounters existence in its wholeness and reflects on human reality in its concreteness. The philosophy of existentialism being a contemporary school of thought is very important in the education sector because it continues to defend individual freedom, responsibility and authenticity amid various forms of conformism, determinism, and self-deception.

The existential interrogation of the 8-4-4 system of education reveals that the system has been unsatisfactory and has not achieved its original intended vision of equipping the learners with necessary skills for formal and self-employment because of inadequacies occasioned by underfunding of education programs by the government, over-enrollment of learners against the required practices, overloaded curriculum, commercialization of education, examination malpractices, overemphasis of examination at the expense of other areas and strikes. Consequentially existential philosophies help to remedy the situation by carrying reforms that consider existentialist's thoughts on the aims and objectives of education, curriculum and instructional methods, and the right concepts of the teacher and the student. Education planners, administrators, and educators will find this study a useful resource, rich in progressive information necessary for educational reform agenda in line with the changing times. However, the study recommends that the Kenyan education system could be strengthened by inducting all the stakeholders on the real philosophy of education in Kenya

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