International Journal of Social Science and Human Research

ISSN (print): 2644-0679, ISSN (online): 2644-0695

Volume 09 Issue 03 March 2026

DOI: 10.47191/ijsshr/v9-i3-84, Impact factor- 8.361

Page No: 2418-2421

A Philosophical Analysis of Why Tanzania Needs Technical Education: Relevance and Justification

Francis Kisandu

Assistant Lecturer at Mbeya University of Science and Technology (Mtwara Campus)

ABSTRACT: Let's talk about technical education in Tanzania-not just as another economic tool, but as something deeply connected to who we are and who we want to become. This study digs into the big philosophical questions around technical education, weaving together ideas from pragmatism, utilitarianism, existentialism, and African philosophy. The main point? Technical education isn't just about jobs or industry. It's a moral and developmental must-have.

Looking back, Tanzania's approach to technical education has changed a lot, from colonial times to the independence era and beyond. Julius Nyerere's vision of Education for Self-Reliance and the broader Ujamaa movement reshaped how people thought about learning and community. Today, though, the country faces some real challenges-policies that fall short, social attitudes stuck in the past, a curriculum that doesn't always fit, and a system too focused on exams.

Drawing on thinkers like John Dewey, Amartya Sen, and leading African educators, this paper argues that technical education is at the heart of dignity, self-reliance, and real, lasting progress. The recommendations here aim to shift Tanzania's education system toward hands-on skills, while still nurturing creativity and critical thinking.

KEYWORDS: Technical education, philosophy of education, Tanzania, self-reliance, human development, vocational education, pragmatism, Ujamaa.

INTRODUCTION

Technical education really matters in Tanzania. People see it as a driving force behind both social and economic progress. In this paper, I dig into the ideas and history that shaped technical education here-why it started, why it matters, and what keeps it going today. I look at its roots in philosophies like pragmatism, utilitarianism, existentialism, and African philosophy, especially when it comes to hands-on learning. You'll also find a look at the social, economic, ethical, and moral reasons behind technical education, the hurdles it faces, and why it still matters now. All in all, this review highlights how technical education helps shape Tanzania's future and pushes both society and technology forward.

1. Clarifying the Big Ideas

1.1 Philosophy in Education-What's That Mean?

Philosophy of education is about stepping back and really thinking about why we educate, how we do it, and what it all means. It's not just about stuffing heads with facts. It asks: What's worth knowing? What values matter? What kind of people do we hope to shape? John Dewey said it best- education isn't just preparation for life; it's life itself. The real test isn't just who scores highest on a test, but who grows as a person and helps society move forward.

1.2 What Exactly is Technical Education?

Technical education is all about learning practical skills-stuff you can use. Think trades, technology, industry. In Tanzania, it covers everything from vocational schools to hands-on training programs, usually under the umbrella of TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training). It's about more than just theory; it's about knowing how to do things that matter in the real world.

1.3 Why Talk About Necessity?

When we say something is "necessary" in education, we mean it's essential-something we can't do without if we want people and society to grow, thrive, and stay stable. Amartya Sen's idea is simple: real development means expanding people's freedoms and what they're able to do. Technical education is necessary when it gives people new ways to be productive and independent.

1.4 How Education, Skills, and Human Development Connect

Education isn't just about making people more "employable" or filling jobs. It's about unlocking potential. Sure, learning skills boosts productivity and job prospects, but it's also about creativity, agency, and the power to act. Technical education brings knowledge and action together-it's where thinking meets doing.

2. The Philosophical Roots of Technical Education

2.1 Pragmatism: Learning by Doing

John Dewey's pragmatism says learning only really sticks when you do something with it. Technical education fits perfectly here- it's hands-on, it's messy, and it's all about solving real problems.

2.2 Utilitarianism: Education That Works for Everyone

If you judge education by how useful it is for the most people, technical education looks like a winner. It builds the workforce, grows the economy, and helps the whole country move forward- especially in a place like Tanzania, where practical knowledge can change lives.

2.3 Existentialism: Owning Your Future

Existentialist thinkers focus on freedom, responsibility, and authenticity. Technical education gives people the tools to strike out on their own, start businesses, create jobs, and live on their own terms.

2.4 African Philosophy of Education: The Power of Community

African educational philosophy is all about the group-solidarity, working together, and building up the community. Nyerere's Education for Self-Reliance, rooted in Ujamaa, made technical education part of everyday life, not just something learned in a classroom. It wasn't about individual success alone, but about everyone pulling together toward common goals. Technical education isn't just about learning skills-it's about working together and building up the whole country.

3. Historical Development of Technical Education in Tanzania

3.1 Technical Education in the Colonial Period

Back when Tanzania was under colonial rule, vocational training mostly served colonial goals. Africans got trained for lower-level technical jobs. It was all about keeping them in support roles, not giving them much room to think for themselves or innovate.

3.2 Post-Independence Philosophy: Education for Self-Reliance

Independence changed everything in 1961. Julius Nyerere reimagined education, tying it directly to national self-reliance. Suddenly, learning wasn't just in classrooms-it was out in the fields, in production, and out in the community (Ishumi, 2025).

3.3 Evolution of Vocational and Technical Curriculum

Over time, reforms expanded vocational centers and sparked new policies from the Ministry of Education (Tanzania Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, n.d.). Recent research (Nguliamali & Temu, 2025) shows institutions are making progress, but there's still a gap between plans and what actually happens on the ground.

4. Social and Economic Justification of Technical Education in Tanzania

4.1 Employment Creation

Technical education really shapes the job market in Tanzania. It gives people hands-on skills that actually matter out there. Unlike traditional academic paths, which tend to funnel students toward a handful of office jobs, technical education opens doors in all sorts of fields-construction, agriculture, car mechanics, electrical work, hospitality, mining, IT. You name it.

Take graduates from the Vocational Education and Training Authority (VETA), for instance. Lots of them set up small businesses- welding, tailoring, carpentry, fixing cars. In cities like Dar es Salaam, Mwanza, Mbeya and Arusha, you'll see thousands of young people running informal shops for metalwork and electronics repairs. These aren't just jobs; they're engines for more jobs. Out in the countryside, technical training in things like irrigation, agro-processing, or livestock care helps people start their own businesses and boosts farm productivity.

Entrepreneurship matters a lot here because the formal job market just can't keep up with the number of young people looking for work. Technical education steps in, giving people the tools they need to work for themselves instead of waiting around for government jobs. It flips the script- turns job hunters into job creators.

4.2 Industrialization and National Development

Tanzania's push to become a middle-income, industrialized country hinges on technical know- how. You can't build factories or big projects without skilled people-technicians, machinists, electrical engineers, production managers. Without these skills, infrastructure and industry just don't work.

Look at the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) or the Julius Nyerere Hydropower Project. These projects need people who know how to handle advanced machines, electrical systems, and heavy- duty mechanics. Relying too much on foreign experts isn't just expensive-it puts the country's growth in someone else's hands.

Industrialization isn't only about more buildings and machines. It's about building people up, too. Technical education means Tanzanians can design, fix, and even invent new technology-instead of just being customers for whatever comes from overseas.

4.3 Addressing Youth Unemployment and Poverty

Youth unemployment is a stubborn problem in Tanzania. Every year, thousands finish school or university and hit a job market that can't take them in. The big issue? Many don't have the practical skills employers want.

This is where technical education really makes a difference. It teaches skills that match what's actually needed right now. For example, solar installation training fits perfectly with rural electrification efforts. Skills like mobile phone repair, motorcycle

maintenance (bodaboda services), and food processing open up real paths to making a living.

When young people pick up these skills, they're less likely to get stuck in poverty. Poverty isn't just about money-it's about not having the tools or options to shape your own life, as Sen pointed out back in 1999. Skills give people more control and let them participate fully in society.

4.4 Skills Development for Economic Growth

If Tanzania wants to keep up and compete globally, it needs people who can innovate, problem- solve, and drive productivity. UNESCO pointed out in 2016 that technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is basically the backbone of real economic progress.

You see this in mining, tourism, agribusiness, telecoms-all these sectors demand technical expertise. Take mining in Geita: you need people trained in geology, running machines, and staying safe on the job. Or look at tourism in Serengeti National Park-eco-tourism management isn't just a buzzword; it's a technical skillset.

A workforce with real skills gets more done, draws in investment, and makes the whole country more competitive. Technical education isn't a side note-it's central to the whole story of economic change.

5. Ethical and Moral Justification

5.1 Human Dignity and Self-Reliance

There's a deep connection between dignity and being able to do something useful. When people have skills that let them earn a living, they gain independence and a sense of worth. On the flip side, depending on others-whether it's family, charity, or foreign experts-can chip away at both personal and national pride.

Julius Nyerere's idea of self-reliance wasn't just about survival. He believed education should prepare people to contribute and stand on their own two feet, making the whole society stronger.

Technical education really gets at the heart of what it means to be independent and responsible. Take a trained electrician in Mwanza, for example. When they start their own business, they're not just putting food on their own table-they're keeping the lights on for the whole community. Skill- based work carries a sense of dignity because it's about real ability, resourcefulness, and making a difference.

Social justice isn't just a big idea; it's about making sure everyone gets a fair shot at building a good life. In Tanzania, kids in rural places like Kigoma or Lindi don't always get the same access to solid technical training as those in cities. When we open up more technical colleges in these areas, more young people get the tools they need to earn a living, close the income gap, and move up in the world. Technical education isn't just about jobs-it's about leveling the playing field and letting more people join in the country's economic life.

The country, honestly, has a moral duty to give people an education that prepares them for real life. If schools turn out graduates who can't get hired or create work for themselves, that's a failure. Education has to match up with what society needs. Give students only theory, and you risk frustration, joblessness, and even unrest.

But there are hurdles. A lot of Tanzanian families still see technical education as second-rate compared to university degrees. Parents push their kids toward law or medicine, not trades. This attitude keeps enrollment in technical programs low. On top of that, technical schools need expensive gear-workshops, labs, machines-but many centers don't have what they need, so students can't get proper hands-on experience.

Curricula sometimes lag behind the real world. Technology moves fast, and schools don't always keep up. For example, while industries use digital automation, students might still be learning old mechanical systems. The education system leans heavily on theory over practice. Too often, students memorize facts but never get to use them, which flies in the face of what real education should be.

Now, look at where we are today. Technology is changing everything-digital skills, AI, renewable energy. To keep up with the region and the world, Tanzanian workers need to be sharp and adaptable. Building things that last-like solar power or water systems-takes technical know-how.

Employers aren't just looking for degrees anymore; they want people who can actually do the job. So, competency-based training makes a big difference.

Still, the education system puts academic pathways on a pedestal. Technical training is treated as a backup plan for kids who "can't cut it" in school. The whole setup is geared toward passing exams, not mastering real skills. There's a disconnect between knowing things and doing things. As John Dewey said, thought and action have to go together. Tanzania needs to reform its system to bring that balance back.

5.2 The Way Forward

So, what's the way forward? First, education policy should openly value productive, hands-on work just as much as academic achievement. Technical skills matter. Schools should weave practical subjects-like agriculture, coding, carpentry, and business-into the curriculum from the get-go. Reforms need to be grounded in ethics: focus on dignity, justice, and self-reliance, not just test scores.

And finally, technical education should encourage students to think and question, not just follow instructions. We don't need robots-we need creative, reflective people who can shape the future.

CONCLUSION

Let's be honest-technical education in Tanzania isn't just a good idea. It's essential. It fuels jobs, drives industry, and gives people a sense of purpose and dignity. If Tanzania wants real progress- development that lasts, and growth that includes everyone-then the education system needs a serious overhaul, rooted in strong philosophical thinking. We're talking about aligning what's taught in schools with what the country actually wants for itself: self-reliance and development that leaves no one behind.

This whole analysis makes one thing clear: technical education isn't a luxury for Tanzania. It's a social, economic, and ethical necessity, and it's deeply tied to the country's history. Ideas from pragmatism, utilitarianism, existentialism, and African philosophy all point in the same direction- technical education boosts dignity, makes people more productive, and helps the country stand on its own feet. If Tanzania is serious about building a fairer society and real, lasting development, technical education has to take center stage in both policy and how the country thinks about education.

REFERENCES

1) Baker, D. P., & Riddell, W. C. (2009). *Education for development: Educational achievement and economic growth*. World Bank.
2) Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and education.* Macmillan Publishers. Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Continuum.
3) Ishumi, A. G. (2025). *Julius Nyerere's education for self-reliance philosophies.* Education Journal.
4) Nguliamali, M. B., & Temu, E. B. (2025). *Vocational education and skills training in Mainland Tanzania: A historical review.* Open University of Tanzania Journals.
5) Noddings, N. (2012). *Philosophy of education* (3rd ed.). Westview Press. Sen, A. (1999). *Development as freedom.* Oxford University Press.
6) Tanzania Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. (n.d.). *Technical and vocational education and training policies.* Government of Tanzania.
7) UNESCO. (2016). *Technical and vocational education and training policy recommendations.* UNESCO Publishing.
8) World Bank. (2020). *World development report: Trading for development in the age of global value chains.* World Bank Publications.



There is an Open Access article, distributed under the term of the Creative Commons Attribution – Non Commercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/), which permits remixing, adapting and building upon the work for non-commercial use, provided the original work is properly cited.