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Amukowa, Wycliffe

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The 21st Century Educated Mount Kenya University Graduate and its Implications for the Practice of Higher Education

By

Wycliffe Amukowa

Senior Lecturer, School of Education
Mount Kenya University, Kenya

Abstract

The objective of this paper is to serve as the seed around which further thought on the role of the university education grows. By seeking an understanding of the 21st Century Educated Mount Kenya University graduate, the paper elucidates the role of the universities and their appropriate pedagogical approaches. In this regard, the essence of this paper is an endeavour into university's best practices and the place of its products (graduates) into the society.

Keywords: Education, University, Person, Authentic, Temptation

1. Introduction

Michigan State University and Harvard University School of Education have set pace in discussing who their educated graduates should be. Michigan State University (www.msu.edu/unit/provost/Educated_Person.htm) in asserting that it is committed to graduating an educated person posts that an educated person is someone who has learned how to acquire, analyze, synthesize, evaluate, understand, and communicate knowledge and information. An educated person has to develop skills that respond to changing professional requirements and new challenges in society and the world at large. He or she must be able to take skills previously gained from serious study of one set of problems and apply them to another. He or she must be able to locate, understand, interpret, evaluate, and use information in an appropriate way and ultimately communicate his or her synthesis and understanding of that information in a clear and accurate manner.

Harvard University Graduate School of Education (<http://www.gse.harvard.edu/news-impact/2012/04/watch-the-askwith-forum-live-defining-the-educated-person/> *Defining the Educated Person*) posts that to be considered educated students should leave school with a deep understanding of themselves and how they fit into the world, and have learned what some call “soft skills” – complex problem-solving, creativity, entrepreneurship, the ability to manage themselves, and the ability to be lifelong learners.

According to the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA) (2003), becoming an educated university graduate requires an understanding of one's place in the world—cultural as well as natural—in pursuit of a productive and meaningful life. And it requires historical perspective so that one does not just live (...) born one day and gone the next, but as part of that “social contract” that binds our generation to those who have come before and to those who are yet to be born.

This paper holds that an understanding of an educated university graduate as in the case of Michigan State University and Harvard University Graduate School of Education, one hand defines the role of university graduates in the society, while on other hand sets parameters within which university learning takes. This is to say that in order to have a graduate with particular qualities; such a person should have undergone instruction that is suitable to attain such a desired end. It is in this regard that this paper sets out to discuss the 21st Century educated Mount Kenya University graduate.

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Mount Kenya University

According to (<http://www.mku.ac.ke>), Mount Kenya University (MKU) is the leading private university inclined towards Science and Technology programmes in Kenya. The essence of MKU is the discovering possibilities and potentials for students fresh out of high school, transfer students, returning students pursuing advanced degrees and faculty and staff who are passionate about their fields. The university targets at providing science and technology education as a major vehicle for attaining and sustaining industrial development of Kenya which is consistent with the overall needs of university education in Kenya.

The idea behind the establishment of MKU dates back to 1996 when the precursor of the University, the Thika Institute of Technology was founded as a Computer Outreach Program. At this point in time in Kenyan history, the development of Information Communication Technology (ICT) both Mobile Telephony and Computer Technology had started gaining an upward momentum in rural and urban centres. In the year 2000, the Institute developed into a commercial college offering management and computer training programmes. Later in the year the Ministry of Education Science and Technology recognized the institute as a full fledged institution of higher learning and granted it a full registration approval.

In order to remain relevant with the training needs of the society, the institute initiated training programmes in the fields of paramedical, Information Technology, and Business and Entrepreneurship education in the year 2002 (<http://www.mku.ac.ke>). In the year 2005 the Institute became the first private institution in Kenya to be allowed to train Pharmaceutical Technologists by the Pharmacy and Poisons Board of the Ministry of Health. In the year 2006 the Commission for Higher Education (CHE) validated and approved the institute's request for collaboration with Jomo Kenyatta University of Agricultural Technology to offer both Diploma and Degree programmes. The Institute continued to work closely with the Commission for Higher Education in line with the stipulated guidelines for establishing a privately funded university. After fulfilling all the requirements as stipulated in the guidelines of establishing a privately funded university (1989 rules), the Commission for Higher Education issued MKU with the authority to establish a full fledged privately funded university with Thika Institute of Technology as its precursor/forerunner.

Mount Kenya University envisions being a centre of excellence in training, research and innovation in Science & Technology in Africa. Its Mission is to attain world class standards in training and innovation for sustainable individual prosperity and social development while its philosophy is to harness knowledge in applied Sciences and technology for the service of humanity. With regard to Academic Character, MKU posts that with an emphasis of Science, technology and humanities, it offers an all rounded education including moral and professional education to all persons irrespective of religion, race, gender or political affiliation, social or cultural background. It endeavors to develop well trained man power equipped with technological scientific knowledge and capacities from certificates, diplomas, under graduate and postgraduate degree courses

From its website (<http://www.mku.ac.ke>) Mount Kenya University posts that it provides a stimulating learning environment through an innovative student-based and quality driven approach to teaching and learning:

(...) We ensure that our students enjoy a rich, highly interactive and personalized learning environment which is essential in the realization of one's potential and preparation for the future. Those who choose Mount Kenya University get access to wide range of courses that form a springboard to a sea of opportunities. We seek to promote a record of achievement and success in academic excellence and job prospects. To help you realize your life-time agenda, we have invested heavily in facilities and staff

(http://www.mku.ac.ke/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=185&Itemid=264).

Mount Kenya University is in the forefront of using Information and Communication Technology to support learning and teaching. In this regard, MKU posts that:

We have thus blended the use of e-learning with strong traditional learning and teaching values to give you flexible and dynamic learning experience. Our aim is to become a leading centre of academic excellence and a preferred destination for all those who aspire for an academically fulfilling experience. As a student of talent and ability, you will be exposed to programmes that present a sound theoretical foundation and a strong practical background (http://www.mku.ac.ke/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=185&Itemid=264).

The Idea of an Educated Person

A discussion of an educated graduate could be well grounded on the understanding of an educated person. This way, an educated Mount Kenya University graduate will need an interface with the wider educated person, before having a unique niche envisaged in the university's vision, mission and philosophy. According to Schofield (1972), in ancient Greece, an educated person was one who was mentally and physically balanced while in Rome an educated person was one who was a good orator and also excelled in military training. In the Middle Ages England, an educated person was either a lord or priest. Aubery (1999) avers that the educated person (man) is to be discovered by his point of view, by the temper of his mind, by his attitude towards life and his fair of thinking. He can see, he can discriminate, he can combine ideas and see whether they can lead, he has insight and comprehension. He is more apt to contribute light than heat to a discussion and will oftener than not show the power of uniting elements of a difficult subject in a whole view. Peters (1972) held that an educated person is one who possesses a considerable body of knowledge together with understanding. He/she has developed capacity to reason to justify his/her beliefs and conduct. The educated person is one who is capable; to certain extent, of doing and knowing things for their own sake.

Mohanan (<http://www.cdtl.nus.edu.sg/publications/educated/intro.htm>) argues that to be considered educated, a person should have undergone a process of learning that results in enhanced mental capability to function effectively in familiar situations in personal and intellectual life, as well as to adapt to novel situations. This way, an educated person should possess knowledge needed for making informed rational decisions and inferences on familiar and novel situations in personal and intellectual life. In addition an educated person should be able to do certain things. When faced with familiar as well as novel situations, an educated person should be able to perform required tasks, make informed decisions and arrive at informed conclusions. An educated person should have the capability to enhance and modify his/her knowledge and thinking abilities on an ongoing basis so as to cope with novel situations and to cope with them in a more successful manner. An educated person should be capable of independent learning that facilitates coping with and adapting to the changing environment and be capable of using language clearly, precisely and effectively for epistemic purposes.

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Balogun (2008) observes that in Africa, the notion of an educated person has been largely patterned after the Western conception. Thus, it is no surprise that such conceptual model fails to achieve its purpose in African societies. This increase on the emphasis of education has failed to bring about a commensurate increase to individual and national development. Balogun (2008) points out that although today in Africa, there is more enrolment of pupils in educational institutions at different levels, more funds disbursed into that sector by governments and private initiatives, these still have resulted into low evolution of educated personnel in Africa. Balogun (2008) puts it:

Enmeshed in this predicament, scholars and those who care about the future of Africa education have written volumes, indicating and attributing the failure to personnel factors. However, unknowingly to them, they do not suspect that the Western model of education, which they have uncritically assimilated, cannot facilitate the development and evolution of educated personnel in Africa (Balogun, 2008:9).

According to Balogun (2008) an educated person in the context of contemporary African understanding shows evidence of well-integrated personality; he or she is morally conscious of his or her actions and shows evidence of responsibility in the social welfare of others. He or she is a person of all season, who is cultured and broadminded; socially sensitive of his or her crucial role in the developmental process, and embraces socialism rather than individualism stressed by Western idea of educated person. Such a person is thus related with society and is an evidential embodiment of societal values with his or her physical body, mind and spirit fully developed to the fullest capacity to ensure the survival of his or her society. In this regard, Balogun (2008) maintained that:

(...) the educated person in the African context is one who shows evidence of a well integrated personality, meaning being economically prudent, socially and politically competent, morally acceptable and intellectually and culturally sophisticated. Being economically prudent means being economically efficient in the sense of possessing skills and knowledge that earns a means of survival as well as making a contribution to the common good. Hence a socially and politically competent person is one who has the ability to participate and does participate in decisions as affecting his or her life and others in his or her community. And being ethical, is a function of behavioural dispositions in which makes a person act morally in line with cultural values and norms of society, thus intellectual and cultural sophistication are meant to make the person socially aware of not only the developments in the environment, but also to observe the cultural norms of the society. And thus, a synthesis of all these qualities makes for a true African understanding of the idea of educated person (Balogun, 2008:9)

In the African conception, an educated person according to Akinpelu (1969) can be described as one who combines expertise in some specific economic skills with soundness of character and wisdom in judgement. One who is equipped to handle successfully the problems of living in an immediate and an extended family; who is well versed in the folk-lore and genealogies of the ancestors; who has some skills to handle minor health problems and where to obtain advice and help in major ones; who stands well with the ancestral spirits of the family and knows how to observe their worship; who has the ability to discharge social and political duties; who is wise and shrewd in judgement; who expresses self not in too many words but rather in proverbs and analogies leaving hearers to unravel his or her thought; who is self controlled under provocation, dignified in sorrow and restrained in success; and finally and most importantly, who is of excellent character.

Defining the 21st Century Educated Person

Amukowa and Ayuya (2013) have broadly discussed the qualities of the 21st century educated person. With focus on the African people the two scholars hold that the 21st Century educated person is one who authentic, attentiveness, committed to principles and has self-regulation and confidence.

Authentic

Being authentic implies that the Twenty first Century educated African person is one who sticks to his or her decisions. Such a person sticks to what he or she judges to be good. According to Sartre (1958), authenticity has to be earned by an individual. Sartre says that: "I am my own authenticity only (...) under the influence of conscience. I launch out towards death with resolution and decisions, as towards my own particular possibility." (Sartre 1958, 246). An authentic person has the seriousness that would make him or her realize his or her potentialities. An authentic person heeds the voice of conscience and believes in himself/herself.

Attentiveness and Commitment to Principles

Amukowa and Ayuya (2013) discuss that a person who is attentive and committed to principles is not easily distracted. This person concentrates on the task at hand, and has self control. Attention with effort is all that any case of volition implies. The essential achievement of the will is to attend to a difficult object (James 1952: 814). These states are characterized by the presence of strong feelings that distract one's will from proper judgment and consequent commitment to action, that is, from engaging in the action that is consonant with sound judgment. The 21st Century educated person supersedes distractions from temporary pleasures and those of improper judgment.

Temptations

Although humankind is conceived of as rational, sometimes in the face of difficulties they have a tendency to opt for the easy course of action. If they find that the principle that they have enacted for themselves is difficult to live up to, they choose the easier course of action, rather than the hard course of action though perhaps with greater good. Aristotle says that a person who is weak goes through a process of deliberation and makes a choice; but rather than act in accordance with his reasoned choice, he acts under the influence of passion (Aristotle 2000, 1125). Coupled with the, the functionality of alternatives presenting themselves one could easily abandon commitment to principles. This could well be seen as an act of temptation. The 21st Century educated person is one who resists temptations.

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From the parameters of the 21st Century educated person, a 21st Century educated Mount Kenya University graduate would defined as one who is authentic, attentive and committed to principles and resists temptations.

Authentic

Throughout the process of development, people adopt dispositions based on their experiences and societal norms, and their ideals are informed by these virtues. People attempt to live up to their ideals, but they are not always successful. Sometimes the habitual self takes precedence over the ideal self (Noddings 2002); sometimes the ideal self is obscured by the debased ideals of others around (Taylor 2001). People's ideals form part of their self or identity, and all are frequently changing, so it can be difficult to know whether their behaviour, self, identity, and ideals are consistent.

The assumption underlying authenticity is based on the need to care and be cared for, and the desire to reciprocate others' care which translates into self identity (Noddings 2002). This way, a 21st Century educated Mount Kenya University graduate would have to develop dispositions to care for himself/herself and those around them. He or she is a person who exercises ethics of care, a value disposition that calls for the development of one's self. Taylor (1989, 35) notes that one is a self only among other selves. A self can never be described without reference to those who surround it. The self is under constant negotiation, development, and change based on experiences, critical reflection and evaluation. Noddings says, "...the self *is* a relation...it is dynamic, in continual flux" (Noddings 2002, 99). Therefore, the ideal self is a construct we strive to live up to in our quest to be authentic: it is "that subset of the self regarded as best" (Noddings 2002, 108).

To yield a graduate who is authentic hence educated, the pedagogical practice at Mount Kenya University should rest on three principles. *First*, caring, authentic relations should encourage and cultivate dialogue, questioning, debate, and sound judgment, which are essential components of education. *Second*, teachers who base this type of encounter on an ethic of care do not attempt to wield power over students or coerce them into accepting certain points of view; rather, they are facilitators to the reflective process. *Third*, there are certain assumptions about what is desirable in this framework, and educators must take care to "continually inspect, reflect upon, and revise their own practices and attitudes" (Noddings 2002, 136), and aspire to be as authentic as possible in the light of their role as models for learners.

While calling for authenticity in education Freire (2005) noted that solidarity requires true communication, and the concept by which such an educator is guided fears and proscribes communication. Yet only through communication can human life hold meaning. The teacher's thinking is authenticated only by the authenticity of the students thinking. The teacher cannot think for her students, nor can she impose her thought on them. Authentic thinking, thinking that is concerned about *reality*, does not take place in ivory tower isolation, but only in communication. If it is true that thought has meaning only when generated by action upon the world, the subordination of students to teachers becomes impossible.

Those truly committed to liberation must reject the banking concept in its entirety, adopting instead a concept of women and men as conscious beings, and consciousness as consciousness intent upon the world. They must abandon the educational goal of deposit-making and replace it with the posing of the problems of human beings in their relations with the world. "Problem-posing" education, responding to the essence of consciousness—*intentionality*—rejects communiques and embodies communication. It epitomizes the special characteristic of consciousness: being *conscious of*, not only as intent on objects but as turned in upon itself in a Jasperian "split"—consciousness as consciousness *of* consciousness (Freire, 2005).

In the argument of Freire (2005), liberating education consists in acts of cognition, not transferrals of information. It is a learning situation in which the cognizable object (far from being the end of the cognitive act) intermediates the cognitive actors—teacher on the one hand and students on the other. Accordingly, the practice of problem-posing education entails at the outset that the teacher-student contradiction to be resolved. Dialogical relations—indispensable to the capacity of cognitive actors to

cooperate in perceiving the same cognizable object—are otherwise impossible. Freire (2005) calls for problem-posing education, which breaks with the vertical patterns characteristic of banking education, can fulfill its function as the practice of freedom only if it can overcome the above contradiction.

Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with students-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow. In this process, arguments based on "authority" are no longer valid; in order to function, authority must be *on the side of* freedom, not *against* it. Here, no one teaches another, nor is anyone self-taught. People teach each other, mediated by the world, by the cognizable objects which in banking education are "owned" by the teacher.

The role of the problem-posing educator is to create; together with the students, the conditions under which knowledge at the level of the *doxa* is superseded by true knowledge, at the level of the *logos*. Whereas banking education anesthetizes and inhibits creative power, problem-posing education involves a constant unveiling of reality. The former attempts to maintain the *submersion* of consciousness; the latter strives for the *emergence* of consciousness and *critical intervention* in reality Freire (2005).

Education as the practice of freedom—as opposed to education as the practice of domination—denies that man is abstract, isolated, independent, and unattached to the world; it also denies that the world exists as a reality apart from people. Authentic reflection considers neither abstract man nor the world without people, but people in their relations with the world. In these relations consciousness and world are simultaneous: consciousness neither precedes the world nor follows it. According to Freire (2005), in problem-posing education, people develop their power to perceive critically *the way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation. Although the dialectical relations of women and men with the world exist independently of how these relations are perceived, it is also true that the form of action they adopt is to a large extent a function of how they perceive themselves in the world. Hence, the teacher-student and the students-teachers reflect simultaneously on themselves and the world without dichotomizing this reflection from action, and thus establish an authentic form of thought and action.

Problem-posing education bases itself on creativity and stimulates true reflection and action upon reality, thereby responding to the vocation of persons as beings who are authentic only when engaged in inquiry and creative transformation. Problem-posing education affirms men and women as beings in the process of *becoming*—as unfinished, uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality. In this incompleteness and this awareness lie the very roots of education as an exclusively human manifestation. The unfinished character of human beings and the transformational character of reality necessitate that education be an ongoing activity. Education is thus constantly remade in the praxis.

According to Freire (2005), problem-posing education is revolutionary futurity. Hence it is prophetic (and, as such, hopeful). Hence, it corresponds to the historical nature of humankind. Hence, it affirms women and men as beings who transcend themselves, who move forward and look ahead, for whom immobility represents a fatal threat, for whom looking at the past must only be a means of understanding more clearly what and who they are so that they can more wisely build the future. Hence, it identifies with the movement which engages people as beings aware of their incompleteness—an historical movement which has its point of departure, its Subjects and its objective.

Freire (2005) informs problem-posing education, as a humanist and liberating praxis, posits as fundamental that the people subjected to domination must fight for their emancipation. To that end, it enables teachers and students to become Subjects of the educational process by overcoming authoritarianism and an alienating intellectualism; it also enables people to overcome their false

perception of reality. The world—no longer something to be described with deceptive words—becomes the object of that transforming action by men and women which results in their humanization.

Similarly, according to Noddings (2002), learning is most effective when educators and learners share the positions of “carer” and “cared-for” in the learning environment. Caring relations become paramount as each is called upon to trust the other, examine their own beliefs and actions, and support each other during this process. Just as caring relations are necessary to promote dialogue and self-reflection among friends or family, so are they necessary to promote the same actions between educators and learners of all ages. The fundamental aim of education is to help learners to grow in desirable ways. This is best accomplished by modelling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation. Modelling is very powerful, and it appears as a component in almost every form of education. To be effective it must be genuine; that is, an exemplar must not consciously exhibit one form of behaviour in the presence of the learners, and then - caught off guard - act in a way that contradicts what he or she has modelled. Modelling may be more effective in the moral domain than in the intellectual, because its very authenticity is morally significant (Noddings 2002, 287).

Teachers who care about their students and model authentic behaviour make students feel respected, trusted and worthwhile. As a result, students may be more motivated to take part in the learning process, knowing that their participation will be recognized and appreciated. According to Vygotsky (1978), if learning is a social and cultural process, establishing a caring culture in a classroom would enable learning to occur more effectively. In certain situations, cooperative or mediated learning can often accomplish far more than individual learning: effective cooperation and mediation rely on trust and personal connection, which can be established more easily within an ethic of care.

To inculcate and cultivate authenticity, educators must demonstrate and encourage students to understand that we require fundamental connections in order to realize our selves and identities. This will encourage students to participate in the creations of the society, value the common good, and see themselves as part of the community. In this way, educators can discourage students from adopting undesirable character and the prevalent fixation with self-fulfillment and personal freedom. In this regard Bai & Chinnery (2000) note that:

(...) it is only through caring that requires self-reflective participation of the self in the other (...) that the self overcomes its private egoist intention and orientation (Bai & Chinnery, 2000 :7).

Attentiveness, Commitment to Principles and Resistance to Temptations

The graduates from Mount Kenya University will have to be attentive and remain committed to value principles that govern whatever career and professional path they pursue. They will need to be persons who are not easily swayed from ethics of their professions by simple temptations. Peter et al (2012) observed that an intention to stick to one’s heritage is associated with actual efforts in the intended directions. However, the link between intention and behavior is modest, largely due to the fact that people, despite having formed strong intentions, fail to act on them. Given this predicament, one wonders what people can do to facilitate the translation of intentions into behavior. This paper argues that, the person who abandons his or her principles lacks attention: other things easily distract him or her. This person lacks concentration on the task at hand, and is easily distracted through lack of self control. For this reason, the practice of higher education in the 21st Century should underscore the need to achieve self-control. This self-control would be useful in ensuring that graduates from the universities remain committed to their values in the wake of overtures that occur in daily lives. This calls for self-regulation.

An educated Mount Kenya University would be someone who has self-control and is favourable to self-regulation. Be in matters of professional conduct or general societal norms, a 21st century educated Mount

Kenya University graduate will heed self-control. According to (Carver & Scheier, 1982) Control Theory postulates that self-regulation is a process of comparing the current rate of goal progress (input) against the desired rate of goal progress (reference value) and acting on discrepancies as and when they arise (output). Baumeister *et al* (1994), self-control is a product of (1) social norms and standards according to which individuals should behave, (2) self monitoring and attention to one's own behaviors (i.e. comparing oneself to the standards), and (3) the individual's ability to alter his or her own behaviors (i.e. the capacity to change one's behaviors and conform to the standards). Problems in one (or more) of these ingredients leads to low self-control. Specifically, Baumeister *et al.* (1994) contend that conflicting sets of standards, the inability to monitor self-behaviors, and inadequate strength of self-stopping (i.e. the ability to exert both mental and physical resources in order to override impulses, habits or some other tendency) contribute to an individual's low self control which results in an individual's inability to control the major domains of the self, and leads to crime.

Elaborating on the causes of self control, Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) contend that low self control is a relatively stable trait established during childhood, and that it is the product of ineffective child rearing and ineffective socialization by parents. Specifically, these authors contend that in order to teach the child self control, someone must monitor the child's behaviors, recognize deviant behavior when it occurs and punish such behaviors. Thus, a parent who cares for his/her child supervises and monitors the child's behaviors, and corrects him when recognizing deviant or dangerous acts. Parents who fail to follow these child rearing practices encourage the development of the child's low self control.

Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) observed that Self-control is best realized when there is a social control mechanism within the community. Social control theories suggest that the underlying process that narrows individuals' tendencies to engage in crime are strong bonds to society. According to Durkheim (1897 [1951]), behaviors are the product of social integration and regulation. Social integration is the intensity of the collective life that circulates within a social aggregate. Accordingly, the more active and constant the intercourse among its members, the more powerful and unified is social integration. Regulation, on the other hand, is a social mechanism aimed at restraining the savage side in human nature. Society's inability to exert regulation upon its members may result in a breakdown of standards and values (Durkheim 1951).

According to (Loewenstein, 1996), people face a self-control problem when they perceive a conflict between the short-term and long-term outcomes of an action while Rachlin (1996) observed that in general, unfulfilled immediate wishes and desires are the short term costs of pursuing long-term goals. Short-term costs may thus pose a threat to long-term goals. This way, Counteractive control theory (CCT) posits that self-control efforts serve to overcome such threats. Yaacov and Fishbach (n.d) point out that this short-term costs affect action via two paths). Directly, these costs act to decrease the likelihood of acting according to long-term goals. Indirectly, however, short-term costs elicit counteractive control efforts, which, in turn, act to increase the likelihood of this action. As a result, the actual choice of a preferred action may remain unaffected by its short-term costs.

3. Conclusion

From its discussions, this paper concludes that the 21st Century educated Mount Kenya University graduate is someone completing a course at this university, who is authentic, attentive, committed to principles and resists temptations. Such a graduate endeavours authentic contributions in the field of specialization, thereby being someone who creates opportunities rather than seeking them. This way, higher education pedagogy should be one that underscores ethics of care, authenticity and connectedness and in the long yields emancipation of its graduates.

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