

An Autobiographical Essay: *My Journey of Growth and Learning*

The journey of an individual is shaped by many interconnected factors, including personal background, cultural identity, education, and lived experiences. This essay provides an opportunity to reflect deeply on these factors and examine how they influence one's growth, values, and future aspirations. It is a reflective and analytical account of how my experiences have shaped my character, academic development, and professional direction.

Born and raised in Kenya, my journey from a semi-urban upbringing in Mweiga, Nyeri County, to pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Information Technology at Dedan Kimathi University of Science and Technology, has been marked by growth, challenges, and continuous learning. Each stage has contributed unique lessons that continue to influence my worldview and ambitions.

Chapter 1: The Philosophy of Self-Reflection

Academic Autobiography

Analyzing personal experiences within a broader social and cultural context, fostering self-awareness and critical thinking.

African Academic Tradition

Identity is communal, with individual progress linked to family, community, and society. Success is a shared victory.

Formative Challenges

Financial limitations, academic pressure, and social expectations strengthened determination and problem-solving abilities.

Engaging in self-reflection has allowed me to understand how early life experiences laid the foundation for my academic and professional interests. Through this reflective process, I have identified recurring themes in my life, including resilience in the face of financial constraints, adaptability during periods of uncertainty, and commitment to education as a tool for transformation.

This essay balances personal experience with scholarly reflection to demonstrate how my background, values, and education align with my aspiration to use technology—particularly data science—for development in Kenya and Africa.

Chapter 2: Roots, Family, and Early Socialization

I was born in 2005 in Mweiga, Nyeri County, a semi-urban area known for its strong cultural heritage and hardworking people. Growing up here exposed me to both traditional African values and the realities of a modernizing society, playing a crucial role in shaping my identity and outlook.

My family, the first and most influential institution, provided the foundation for my values, discipline, and attitude toward education. My father, Charles Gitahi, a mechanic, taught me the importance of patience, consistency, and problem-solving. Observing his dedication showed me that success is achieved through persistence and hard work.

My mother, Lucy Muthoni, emphasized moral discipline, respect, and responsibility, instilling values of integrity, honesty, and humility. Growing up with my siblings, Emmah and Grace, fostered cooperation, sharing, and mutual accountability, reinforcing the African value of collective responsibility.

Early socialization within my family and community reinforced the belief that education is a pathway to personal growth and societal improvement, laying the groundwork for my academic journey and instilling a strong sense of purpose.



Chapter 3: Cultural Identity and the Value of Education



Kikuyu Values

Emphasized hard work, perseverance, respect for elders, and communal responsibility.



Education as Transformation

Viewed as a collective investment and a source of pride and hope for the entire household.



Resilience

Financial limitations and limited resources strengthened determination, teaching perseverance and discipline.



Moral Development

Respect for elders and communal living fostered humility, cooperation, and empathy.

My cultural identity, as a member of the Kikuyu community, has profoundly shaped my attitude toward education, discipline, and personal responsibility. These values were not abstract ideas but practical principles reinforced through everyday interactions within my family and the wider community.

This cultural perspective motivated me to remain committed to my studies even when circumstances were challenging. I learned that perseverance and discipline were essential for overcoming obstacles. As I grew older, I appreciated the connection between culture and modern education, influencing my aspiration for an ethically grounded and socially relevant career in technology.

Chapter 4: Formative Education at Mary Mother Academy



My formal academic journey began at Mary Mother Academy, where I acquired foundational knowledge and developed essential learning habits. This stage marked my first structured interaction with formal learning, playing a critical role in shaping my academic discipline and curiosity.

At Mary Mother Academy, I was introduced to basic academic skills. The structured environment taught me the importance of routine, responsibility, and respect for academic rules. Despite financial challenges, I remained motivated to learn, relying heavily on personal effort and discipline. This encouraged self-reliance and problem-solving skills.

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Essential Skills

Developed reading, writing, numeracy, and strong time management skills.

2

Problem-Solving

Fostered curiosity in problem-solving activities and logical reasoning, laying groundwork for IT interest.

3

Moral Foundation

Emphasized honesty, respect, and responsibility, preparing me for ethical demands of higher education.

Chapter 5: Secondary Education—The Crucible of Kiriti Secondary School

The transition to Kiriti Secondary School marked a major turning point, demanding higher independence, discipline, and responsibility. This period focused on both academic learning and character formation, solidifying the understanding that education is a long-term investment.

Academic Rigor

Adapted to a more demanding academic environment with increased workload and higher expectations. Learned effective time management for multiple subjects and examinations.

Diverse Environment

Interacting with students from varied backgrounds broadened my perspective and improved social skills, fostering cooperation, respect, and tolerance.

Self-Reflection

A C+ in KCSE led to deep self-reflection, reassessing strengths and understanding that academic success encompasses resilience and determination beyond grades.



Academic Interests & Personal Growth at Kiriti



Physics

Appealed to analytical thinking and curiosity about how the world works, strengthening interest in technical fields.



Business Studies

Introduced economic concepts and entrepreneurship, providing insight into organizational operations and resource management.



English

Played a critical role in developing communication skills, improving ability to express ideas clearly and analyze texts critically.

Secondary school played a vital role in shaping my discipline and work ethic through strict schedules and academic expectations. I developed leadership qualities through group activities and learned valuable lessons about perseverance and self-management, preparing me for higher education.

Chapter 6: The Global Pandemic as a Personal Turning Point

The COVID-19 pandemic marked one of the most challenging and transformative periods of my academic journey. Prolonged school closures and uncertainty significantly disrupted my secondary education, requiring immense resilience, discipline, and adaptability.



Self-Directed Learning

Without daily lessons, I took full responsibility for my learning, planning study schedules and revising independently, strengthening self-discipline.



Technology's Role

Witnessed firsthand how digital tools enabled continuity in education and daily life, deepening my interest in Information Technology.



Emotional Growth

Social isolation and uncertainty fostered introspection, teaching me to manage stress and adapt to rapid change.

The pandemic served as a turning point, reshaping my attitude toward education and personal development. It strengthened my determination to pursue higher education and develop skills relevant in a rapidly changing world.

Chapter 7: Higher Education—Dedan Kimathi University of Science and Technology (DeKUT)

Admission to DeKUT in 2022 was a defining milestone, symbolizing academic progression and personal validation. University education demanded a fundamental shift towards independence, self-motivation, and intellectual maturity, challenging me to take ownership of my academic growth.

The Choice of Information Technology

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<p>Personal Interest</p> <p>Natural inclination toward problem-solving and logical reasoning; programming and systems design offered structured analysis.</p>	<p>Social Awareness</p> <p>Kenya's digital transformation highlighted technology's essential role for national development, especially in mobile money and e-governance.</p>	<p>Social Impact</p> <p>Viewed IT as a tool to address challenges like unemployment and inequality in Africa, strengthening commitment to the course.</p>

The academic environment at DeKUT, with its diverse computing areas and practical labs, has been transformative. It has equipped me with technical knowledge, critical thinking skills, and ethical awareness, shaping my academic identity and future ambitions.

Chapter 9: Vision for the Future and Conclusion

My vision for the future is shaped by both individual ambition and a deep sense of social responsibility. I aim to become a Data Scientist, particularly in the financial and digital services sector, leveraging data for meaningful change within Kenyan and African society.



My journey—from Mweiga to DeKUT—has fostered significant personal growth and academic maturity. I am prepared to apply my knowledge, skills, and values toward contributing positively to Kenya's digital future and the advancement of the African continent.