

This paper examines the challenges that have confronted pre-vocational education in Kenya during the colonial and post-colonial periods. Using a fundamental historical viewpoint that past experiences are important in shaping human activities, the paper argues that the practical reforms in education during the post-colonial period were not embraced whole-heartedly, given the subjects' troubled past. The paper starts off by pointing out that initial attempts to scrap pre-vocational subjects soon after independence were abandoned partly due to the school-leaver unemployment problem. This is then followed by a historical examination of pre-vocational education in Kenya and African resistance during the colonial period. Analysis of the 8:4:4 pre-vocational reforms show that the people's attitudes towards these subjects were not so different from the pre-colonial ones. Apart from this, the system faced serious problems during implementation due to insufficient facilities, ill-prepared teachers and the backwash effect of examinations among others. Consequently, 8:4:4 failed to meet its pre-vocational objectives of preparing learners for self-employment and re-orienting them to practical careers.