

REVIEW 8.4.4 CURRICULUM WITH SOCIAL JUSTICE IN MIND: ARTICLE BY DR.NJERU

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The question of the quality and state of education in Kenya is a major concern to many of us today. As Philip Ochieng lamented in his “Fifth Column” (Sunday Nation, January 17, 2015), “What masquerades as education swallows up a huge percentage of our national savings every year. But what we churn out of the classroom every year are youngsters who are barely literate concerning almost all social questions, individuals barely skilled in social service, social impartment and social management.”

In the same Sunday Nation, Dominic Wamugunda also noted in his column: “My Thoughts”, that “if we were to do our education right, ... We would not only produce a workforce that carries forward the development of this nation but would also have empowered individuals who have the capacity to deal critically with realities that surround them”. Our Kenyan system

has traditionally used a grading system in the examinations to categorize learners into those who have “passed”, and those who have “failed”.

And while those who earn high marks are celebrated shoulder high by parents and teachers in front of cameras for the world to see, those who do not earn the high marks disappear into oblivion.

As I write this article, a few are celebrating the placement of the *crème de la crème* into the few national schools in the country. There is, however, little said of the thousands of children who did not make the grade. Those who, according to the system, “failed”. It is “shauri yao” (their own business).

But this is where the problem lies, categorizing children and branding some as “failures”. I do not believe that any child is a “failure”. Rather, the system has failed them. As many people have often complained, ours is a system that is totally academically-oriented, with learners forced to “cram” material that they are not able to make use of outside the classroom.

It is a system that does not boost the creative and artistic mind; it is a system that does little to boost the young entrepreneurial mind; it does little to encourage those that are athletic at heart. It is a system that does not discriminate between a student who attends a school that has an abundance of resources and one who learns under a tree.

Yet in real life, we often come across stories, documented or not, of many that according to the system had “failed” in K.C.P.E. or K.C.E., but who are now successful farmers, businessmen and entertainers among others. These are proof that what has failed is the system, not them.

As we review our curriculum, we need to address these issues. It cannot be business as usual where “one shoe fits all”. The academic career is only one shoe. The education system must create other “shoes” where others can fit. Then, when the education system has critically addressed the needs, abilities and interests of our learners, when every learner is viewed as a potentially successful individual, we could claim to have

achieved some semblance of Social Justice in our education system, and in our society in general.

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