

THE QUEST FOR 3H: TOWARDS A HOLISTIC SECONDARY EDUCATION IN KENYA

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The quest for educating the head, heart and hands is an imperative of the 21st century education. Many educationists believe that high-quality and successful changes in education can be achieved by introducing a culture of learning which espouses the holism and integrity of human beings. Such changes are especially relevant in the context of lifelong learning which integrates all three domains of learning: cognitive (head), affective (heart) and psychomotor (hands). Relevant literature and studies were reviewed to examine the concept of holistic education, the importance of holistic education in 21st century learning, the barriers to holistic education and how teachers and the community can enhance holistic education in secondary schools in Kenya. The study revealed that holistic education is important in that it is in tune with each child's unique needs and skills, and prepares the child to become a well-rounded adult. However, the study also revealed that holistic education is hampered by among others: examination oriented teaching, high pupil-teacher ratios, lack of awareness of the holistic approach, and attitudinal barriers within stakeholders. The study further revealed that the teachers and the community can enhance holistic education through collaboratively providing a supportive learning environment.

Keywords: Holistic education, 21st century education, lifelong learning, supportive environment, barriers, stakeholders

Introduction

The quest for educating the head, heart and hands is an imperative of the 21st century education. Many educationists believe that high quality and successful changes in education can be achieved by introducing a culture of learning which espouses the holism and integrity of human beings. Such changes are especially relevant in the context of lifelong learning which integrates all three domains of learning: cognitive (head), affective (heart) and psychomotor (hands).

Background of the Study

This paper addresses the issue of the quest for the provision of holistic education, that is, education of the “head, heart and hands” within the context of providing lifelong education to the 21st century learners. The notion of head, heart and hands learning dates back to Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, a Swiss pedagogue and education reformer, who first emphasized that teaching should be a unity of the head, heart, and hands, that is, a unity of the cognitive (head), affective (heart) and psychomotor (hands) domains of learning. Contrary to the latest insights about the functioning of

the human brain and learning styles, practical teaching still focuses on the cognitive development of the student while ignoring the affective and psychomotor domains.

However, the question arises: are cognitive skills indeed the most important part of education, especially in the 21st century? Should not schools, as Hannaford (2007) also asks, be more concerned about thinking, creativity, and the application of knowledge to real life situations?

Finally, is not the main rallying cry of contemporary education for “school [that] is not preparation for life, but a part of life.” (Hannaford, 2007, p. 13). Modern education should not restrict its focus to the mere attaining of prescribed learning outcomes. It should address the whole person and his/her physical, mental and psychological development (Brühlmeier, 2010).

Statement of the Problem

Although there has been marked progress towards realizing universal primary education (UPE), and increasing access to secondary, the Government faces various challenges in providing quality education, which may hamper realization of Kenya Vision



2030. A desirable education system should nurture and develop human potential through a holistic implementation of the set curriculum (Republic of Kenya, 2014).

Preliminary investigation as per reviewed literature reveals that education system in Kenya has traditionally emphasized academic specialization, there is too much emphasis laid on passing examinations whereas technical, vocational and other talents, skills and aptitudes are given secondary priority. The learning in Kenya focus so much on cognitive domain (head) and other domains (heart) and psychomotor (hands) are not so much emphasized. The question arises: are cognitive skills indeed the most important part of education, especially in the 21st century?

Learning focused on the cognitive leads us to the situation that today “we have experts, but we have few thinkers” (Epstein, cited in Hannaford, 2007, p. 15). The sessional paper no. 14 on Framework for Reforming Education and Training in Kenya (MOHEST, 2012) advocates an education system that bridges the gap between the rich and poor. Provision of quality education remains a major issue across the entire spectrum of education sector, and will be the focus of Government's attention in the medium term.

As a result, education in secondary school may fail to achieve Kenya's national goals of education such as promotion of self development and fulfillment, promotion of social, economic, technological and industrial needs for national development and provision of sound moral and religious values. Therefore, without interventions by the proprietor, the said vices are likely to continue and retard the achievement of holistic education in Kenya. Need arises therefore to examine the quest for 3H: towards a holistic secondary education in Kenya.

Research Questions

1. What is holistic education?
2. What is the importance of holistic education?
3. What are the barriers to provision of holistic education?
4. How can teachers and the community enhance holistic education in Kenya?

Findings

What is Holistic Education?

Holistic education is that education that integrates all three domains of learning: cognitive (head), affective (heart) and practical (hands) (Gazibara, 2013). The focus of holistic education is on wholeness, and it attempts to avoid excluding any significant aspects of the human experience. It is an eclectic and inclusive movement whose main characteristic is the idea that educational experiences foster a less materialistic and a more spiritual worldview along with more dynamic and holistic views of reality. It also proposes that educational experience promotes a more balanced development of – and cultivates the relationship among – the different aspects of the individual (intellectual, physical, spiritual, emotional, social and Aesthetic), as well as the relationships between the individual and other people, the individual and natural environment, the inner- self of students and external (Mahmoudi, Jafari, Nasrabadi, & Liaghatdar, 2012).

Head (cognitive domain of learning). The head “stores” all psychological and intellectual functions that allow us to understand the world and form rational judgments about certain things. More specifically, these processes include perception, memory, imagination, thought and language (Brühlmeier as cited in Mahmoudi et al., 2012). The head “stores” all psychological and intellectual functions that allow us to understand the world and form rational judgments about certain things. More specifically, these processes include perception, memory, imagination, thought and language (Mahmoudi et al., 2012). The cognitive domain is usually described “as what we know”, but it is in fact determined by knowledge, understanding, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation (2003 as cited in Gazibara, 2013). Since this domain is represented as predominant at schools, some room has to be given to the other two – affective and psychomotor – which are indispensable for the complete development of a student.

Heart (affective domain of learning). Jensen, as cited in Gazibara (2013) stresses that learning is not only a mental process, but that it is also influenced by our feelings. Emotions stimulate our learning and determine whether we are confident in this learning. Only when we have strong feelings about it do we believe something and give significance to it. The heart is, therefore, about affective function, emotions and feelings. Brühlmeier, as cited in Gazibara (2013), pointed out that the concept of the heart does not include only the diverse feelings that accompany our perceptions and thoughts, but, first and foremost, the

basic moral feelings of love, faith, trust and gratitude, plus also the activity of our conscience, our sense of beauty and goodness, the ordering of our lives according to moral values.

Hands (psychomotor domain of learning).

What one has in mind with “hand” is our practical activity in which manual dexterity and physical strength are combined with common sense and will power in productive action (Brühlmeier as cited in Gazibara, 2013). The psychomotoric area is responsible not only for physical skills, but also for precision, coordination and manipulation. According to researchers in learning styles, almost 85% of learners are kinesthetic learners, and yet the school program offers few techniques of kinesthetic learning, if any at all (Hannaford as cited in Gazibara, 2013).

Importance of Holistic Education

According to Oguta (2015) holistic education is important in the way that it calls into view from people an underlying veneration for life and a fervent love of learning. Robin, as cited in Oguta (2015), shows that what distinguishes holistic education from other forms of education are its goals, its attention to experiential learning and the significance that it places on relationships and primary human values within the learning environment. In the light of the above discussion it can be deduced that holistic education surpasses in all aspects the current education being offered in Kenya secondary schools.

Oguta (2015) asserts that any attempt to education need to assist students to be the most they can be. Maslow cited in Oguta (2015) talk about this as self-actualization. Education with a holistic approach viewpoint is concerned with the improvement of every person’s intellectual, emotional, social, physical, artistic, creative and spiritual potentials. It searches for commitment of students in the teaching and learning process and inspire personal and combined responsibility. Hence, holistic education provides a sure way of making learners achieve self-actualization which currently is not the case with the examination oriented curriculum. The material and content of other subjects in the curriculum should incorporate into classroom to fulfil the holistic objectives.

The other importance of holistic education can be seen in the approach of teaching various subject content such as English language which is said to have the ability at fulfilling the national goals of education as

well as the objectives of teaching and learning of the language which include: the development of mastery of language for expressing ideas, feelings and experiences and to develop the values, morals and character of the students Robin (2003).

In addition, the importance of holistic education can be seen in its purpose, which is to prepare students to meet the challenges of living as well as academics. According to Oguta (2015), parents in ever-increasing numbers are in search of alternative to ordinary education. Few parents could condemn the commitment to academic excellence that most schools and teachers have and work hard. Holistic education feels that meaningfulness is an important factor in the learning process. People learn better when what is being learned is important to them (Robin, 2003). Similarly, holistic schools seek to respect and work with the meaning structures of each person. Therefore, the start of a topic will begin with what a student may know or understand from their worldview and what has meaning to them rather than what others feel should be meaningful to them.

Likewise, Barasa (2005) observes that the aim of holistic education is not just to cram the child with information to develop academic and job skills and to prepare the child to fit into the prevailing economic and social system, rather it is to help the young person develop into a free, creative, compassionate being who can participate fully in the life of the community. It has been observed that in holistic education, students are encouraged to become deeply and passionately involved in their studies to explore their passions under the guidance, supervision and support of the teacher. Miller (2000) suggests that the highest meaning of education is to bring about an integrated individual who is capable of dealing with life as a whole.

According to Miller (2000), the holistic education prepares the students to meet the challenges of living as well as academic. Holistic education holds that it is important for young people to learn: about themselves, about healthy relationships and pros social behaviour, social development, emotional development, resilience, to see beauty, have awe, experience, transcendence and appreciate some sense of truths. Holistic education besides, is concerned with the results of the disengagement between the mind, the body, the heart and the spirit evident in people’s increasing inability to cope with continued alienations from themselves as well as from others.



Holistic education is said to be essentially proactive in its core belief that a pedagogical model that integrates the whole person in the context of a supportive community, curriculum and organizational structure results in caring, inclusive, responsible citizens who understand the interconnectedness of all life on the planet. Forbes (1996) assert that learning is viewed as an experiential organic process and knowledge building through inquiry is seen as integral for all forms of education and life itself.

The Current Barriers of Holistic Education in Kenya

In Kenya, there is over emphasis on the formal aspect of the curriculum alone ignoring the latter two dimensions which are of equal importance for achievement of education goals and objectives. Too much emphasis is laid on passing examinations driving schools into the obsession of realizing high mean scores. The craze for passing examinations gives little regard to whether the means employed are ethical or justified. These means fail to recognize and respect the fact that each individual learner is endowed with different and unique talents, qualities and potentials that require nurturing. Naturally, scores of Kenyans have realized their potentials through promotion of non-formal curricular activities such as games and sports, creative arts and clubs and societies (Hannaford, 2007).

The learning in Kenya focuses on cognitive domain and other domains are not so much emphasized. The question arises: are cognitive skills indeed the most important part of education, especially in the 21st century? Should not schools, as Hannaford (2007) also asks, be more concerned about thinking, creativity, and the application of knowledge to real life situations? Finally, is not the main rallying cry of contemporary education for “school [that] is not preparation for life, but a part of life” (Hannaford, 2007, p. 13). Learning focused on the cognitive leads us to the situation that today “we have experts, but we have few thinkers” (Epstein, cited in Hannaford, 2007, p. 15). Modern education should not restrict its focus to the mere attaining of prescribed learning outcomes. It should address the whole person and his/her physical, mental and psychological development (Brühlmeier, 2010).

gological environments sensitive to numerous individual differences for the purpose of supporting the academic and social success of students (Tirri, 2011). Some of the fundamental demands imposed on modern schools are for it to be effective and of high quality. Stoll and Fink (cited in Gazibara, 2013) define an effective school as a school that promotes the development of all students regardless of their initial performance and background; as a school that allows all students to meet the highest possible standards, that improves all aspects of their success and development and, finally, that enhances its quality year after year. It is precisely active and integrated learning, or learning with the head, heart and hands, that is one of the key elements for increasing the quality and efficiency of modern schools. For all those reasons, it is important to consider a new organization of learning, as well as the role of school and community, in order to ensure the full development of students and harmonize it with their capacities and potentials.

Eshiwani (1993) observes that Kenya suffers from a certificate syndrome in which one paper certificate fails to secure an individual a vacancy to the next level. Criticism against over emphasis on the formal aspect of education was captured in the disgruntlement of the stakeholders in the Kenya Secondary Schools Heads Association Conference held in Mombasa in June 2010 whose theme was ‘The Role of Education in Vision 2030’. The delegates observed that there were high numbers of candidates who scored D+ and below, a pointer to mass wastage. In the year 2009 for example 896 000 candidates scored mean grade D+ and E which could hardly allow them placing even in the middle level colleges.

The summative evaluation report (KIE, cited in Kirimi, 2016) revealed that there is poor implementation of the curriculum leading to over emphasis of examinations, at the expense of the students’ holistic development (Abisaki, 2015). The same feelings were reiterated in fora such as Kenya Schools and Colleges drama festival in April 2010 in Kisumu and the Kenya Music Festival of August 2010, in Kakamega. It was against this background that the Ministry of Education (MOE) and Ministry of Youth and Sports (MOYAS) with the support from United Nations International Education Fund (UNICEF) endorsed the establishment of a pioneer talent academy in Kasarani with satellite centres in the counties. Research undertaken by UNICEF established that the youth are the majority in Kenya. They suffer from frustration and are evidently

The schools today face the challenge of creating peda-

a vulnerable lot going by the violence they exuded in the post-election violence of 2007/2008. It was also a follow-up measure to the talent and potentials exhibited in schools in the areas of non-formal curriculum activities. Schools must continue to re-address issues of NFCAS to cater fully for learners of all categories

The Role of Stake Holders in Enhancing Holistic Education

In education, the term stakeholder typically refers to anyone who is invested in the welfare and success of a school and its students, including administrators, teachers, staff members, students, parents, families, community members, local business leaders, and elected officials such as school board members, city councilors, and state representatives. Stakeholders may also be collective entities, such as local businesses, organizations, advocacy groups, committees, media outlets, and cultural institutions, in addition to organizations that represent specific groups, such as teachers' unions, parent-teacher organizations, and associations representing superintendents, principals, school boards, or teachers in specific academic disciplines (e.g., the National Council of Teachers of English or the Vermont Council of Teachers of Mathematics). In a word, stakeholders have a "stake" in the school and its students, meaning that they have personal, professional, civic, or financial interest or concern.

Stakeholders develop 'investment portfolios' through collaborations between the public sector, private organizations, and civil society. Britto (cited in Weemaes-Lidman, 2014), Chief of Early Childhood Development at UNICEF, argued that "now is the time to invest in early childhood development," and she recommends stakeholders to develop 'investment portfolios' through collaborations between the public sector, private organizations, and civil society. Desmond as cited in Weemaes-Lidman (2014) suggests "taking a holistic approach toward the 'cost of inaction', as he believes in achieving greater response when illustrating the consequences of not investing in young children".

Educational stakeholders' diverse range of perceptions on what holistic education entails could lead to either fidelity or slippage in the designing of policy and curriculum documents, and ultimately have an impact on the implementation of holistic education in classrooms. As cited in Weemaes-Lidman (2014), educational scholars Chiu, Kates and Harvey, Forbes,

Allan and Evans, Gallegos Nava, Krishnamurti, Miller, and Brown offer comprehensive categorization of holistic education literature, and accentuate the holistic emphasis that addresses the multifaceted needs and potentials of teachers and students as they discover themselves and each other in the integral context of the classroom.

Stakeholders engage in critical observation how holistic education unfolds in the environment they work in. Miller (2007) states that a general understanding of holistic education includes the intellectual, emotional, physical, social, aesthetic, and spiritual development of a human being. Stakeholders' contributions are numerous in the improvement of the quality of university education. Parents are to ensure that their children are provided with adequate materials needed for their academic activities.

Adequate provision must be made for students in terms of buying their food stuff, early payment of tuition fees, provision of accommodation and provision of books. Parents could also play the roles of provision of counseling to ensure that their children stay in school, attend lectures, refrain from joining secret cults, develop good study habits and learn effectively. Parents should also play the role of provision of spiritual support for their children while at school through praying for them. The primary objective of parents is the assurance of their children quality education which will enable them to lead productive and rewarding adult life in a global society (Cotton & Wikelund, 2001).

The stakeholders are grouped as internal or external. Internal stakeholders include government who is the owner of higher education institutions or service provider, students-on whom all the activities of university education systems are centered, academics-who are constantly engaged in teaching, research and community service, university administrators who manage the affairs of the institution by providing leadership, non-academic staff, and other management staff, principal officers, senators, directors of institutes, heads of departments and internal members of governing council. The external stakeholders include National University Commission (NUC), non-governmental organizations, community based organizations, parents, employers of labour, trade unions, alumni association, industries/firms, the private sector, development agencies both local and international, and the society as a whole.

Attainment of quality secondary school



education in Kenya requires continuous and holistic improvement which necessitates cost sharing among stakeholders both internal and external. Stakeholders' collaboration is about exploring partnership with another organization or group owing to lack of resources or competencies (Jackson, 2009). Collaboration will help to trigger improvement in university system. Such collaboration could be achieved through universities establishing a close link or relationship with employers of labour/industries and other external stakeholders, or by utilization of technologies and expertise from the environment to perform activities that staffs are not competent in performing.

Conclusion

In conclusion, holistic education is important in that it prepares the child to become a well-rounded adult. Therefore, learning in Kenya should focus on all the three domains of learning: cognitive (head), affective (heart) and hands (psychomotor). This will help to develop human being intellectually, emotionally, physically, socially and spiritually.

Recommendations

In review of "the quest for 3H: towards a holistic secondary education in Kenya," the following recommendations are put into consideration.

- Education should integrate all the three domains of learning: cognitive (head), affective (heart) and hands (psychomotor).
- Holistic education should be emphasized in all schools because it prepares students to meet the challenges of living as well as academics.
- The 3 domains (cognitive, affective, and psychomotor) must be incorporated in all aspects of the curriculum; it must be emphasized on both formal and non-formal educations which are of equal importance for achievement of education goals and objectives.
- Attainment of quality secondary school education in Kenya requires continuous and holistic improvement which necessitates cost sharing among stakeholders both internal and external.

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