

KENYATTA UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

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Discuss failures of current education system in Kenya with regard to creativity and innovation.

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a major role in development of an individual. Using the right techniques in teaching and individual can help them acquire skills that would later be their source of income. The wrong techniques however cripple the individual's creativity. The system used in Kenya is the rote learning system popularly known as ``8-4-4 system'' where a learner is given a series of theories to cram and reproduce in test. The system has however proven to be incompetent due to the following reasons....

a) The system limits divergent thinking

The 8-4-4 system only allows for one correct answer in a question. Creativity however involves thinking through a series of options to come up with a new idea (divergent thinking). The system therefore does not give space to learners to explore their imaginations and come up with different solutions altogether thus hindering creativity

b) The system restricts opportunities open for learners

For many years now, learners are meant to believe that the chance of employability in spaces that involve arts is close to 0%. They are often encouraged to venture into courses involving mathematics and sciences ignoring their talents and skills. This has led to the daily increase of unemployment since the learners are taught ``out of their natural talents''. In the end, they are not creative enough to create employment opportunities for themselves and end up waiting to be employed only in the fields which they studied for.

c) The system has led to lack of flexibility in the job market

The job market is changing every day. There is therefore a need to adapt to these daily changes. The 8-4-4 system uses traditional techniques that were used to teach our grandparents. When a learner thus leaves school and gets ready to face the job market, they lack the ability to put theory taught into practice and adapt to the changing conditions. This is because they were only taught to cram answers for the sake of passing exams. When faced with a question which they were not taught to cram at school, they get stuck. Flexibility is an important skill when it comes to creativity and innovation. Lacking flexibility is thus enough proof that someone lacks the ability to be creative.

d) The system cripples the learner's curiosity and willingness to take risks

For the creative process to begin, curiosity must be aroused. In the 8-4-4 system however, this curiosity is admonished and is even punishable. Learners who express curiosity are considered to be ``bad students '' while those who don't question what they are taught are the ``good students''. Having a different opinion is considered wrong and there is no space for making mistakes since making a mistake is ``the worst thing that could ever happen''. However, innovativeness often involves trial and error. With the current system, a student dares not question anything they are told for fear of being wrong and making mistakes.

e) There is standardization of all learners promoting lack of individuality

The system places all learners in one basket refusing to accept the differences between them. One of the core foundations of creativity is originality. However, with standardization, this uniqueness in each student is put aside and all student are expected to come up with one uniform answer. Furthermore, all students are taught one syllabus not considering whether the subjects taught will be relevant to them in say, ten years

f) The students are not taught the source of theories taught

The students are taught only a set of theories that they are only allowed to cram and reproduce without questioning. They are thus left with unanswered questions with regards to the theories taught. For instance,

they are taught in religious studies about the origin of life and not given in depth explanations. The students thus lack knowledge that would help them improve ways in which things are done. One technique of creative thinking is re-application which involves using already existing ideas to come up with a fresh one. In order to use this technique one should be able to have all the raw facts concerning the already existing idea.

h) Most of the theories taught are not applicable in real life

The main indicator of a functional education system is its applicability in real life. The student's capability to put what they are taught into practice in order to accomplish individual goals. However, in most cases, students do not know what to do with the knowledge acquired from school after they leave school proving the inefficiency of the system. In fact, they forget what they were taught immediately they finish the examinations. This thus proves that they are incapable of being innovative.

h) The student's talents are not nurtured from an early stage

In the current education system, talent is measured by grades and not one's own natural talent. Time taken in exploring one own natural talent like writing or singing is considered as time wastage. Only those who score high grades are considered to be intelligent while those who do not score high grades are considered to be "academic dwarfs". The natural talents and skills of a student therefore slowly die with their ability to think creatively.

i) The system is majorly fact oriented at the expense of skill acquisition

The students are confined to classroom learning where they are taught to make books their "best friends". It takes into consideration all work and no play. Outdoor activities that will nurture student's creativity are not given heed to. The students that do not acquire skills that would help them be able to create job opportunities for themselves in the future or get employed using skills acquired. For instance, outdoor activities like tree planting could help one acquire basic skills for farming which could turn out to be their future source of income. In many occasions, schools pay more to attention to class work. For example it is common for students to be made to miss out on classes like P.E , life skills and even their break time during their final years in preparation for exams.

j) Much attention is not given to tertiary learning and tertiary institutions

The TVET institutions are always a learners last option after they fail in school. Spaces like carpentry, tailoring, or welding are looked down upon as they are regarded to be for those who fail the national test. The students are not encouraged to indulge into the creative space for employment creation.

k) Encourages dependency

with the pressure to do well in an examination, a student may end copying another students work instead of thinking for their own. They mostly copy from students whom they think are better than them academically. This dependency on another persons work or ideas cripples their own ability to think. Furthermore, dependency also comes about in the employment sector where a student after finishing his or her studies relaxes waiting to be employed by those that are already in the job industry which they studied for. They depend only on their degrees to give them jobs and do not consider spaces outside of what they studied for in the universities.

l) The rote learning system is strictly habitual

one of the key challenges facing creativity and innovation is habit. In order to be creative, one needs to break out of normalcy or habit. The 8-4-4 system is however habitual whereby one studies, sits for an examination, passes , forgets and studied again. The cycle is endless. This cycle thus does not give room to creativity .

m) The system is monotonous

Student involvement is close to minimum as they are mostly exposed to listen to hours of lectures in subjects which they are not interested in. The teachers say is mostly final. The system of learning thus mostly leans towards the teachers opinion rather than the students opinion. With the lack of interest in a particular subject or topic, a student will not even be concerned with learning more about it or even think of ways which will help improve certain concepts in the subject. For instance, without interest in mathematics as subjects, a student may not be able to explore alternative formulas to come up with solution

CONCLUSION

From the findings above, it is evident that the current education system is inefficient in the nurturing of creativity and innovation of an individual. Therefore, certain steps must be taken in ensuring that an education system that not only imparts knowledge but also skills to put knowledge acquired into practice is established. This way, the issue of unemployment will be reduced greatly.