

The Challenge of Curriculum in Kenya's Primary and Secondary Education: the Response of the Catholic Church

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Introduction

Stakeholder politics in education determine the general direction and quality of any system of education. As stated by Apple (2001) stakeholder politics pose a great challenge to the various stakeholders, in mooted ways of being accommodated to participate in policy construction. This chapter highlights the ways the Catholic Church as one of the most prominent stakeholders dealt with selected challenges associated with its involvement as a stakeholder in education policy making in Kenya. Everywhere in the world, the Catholic Church recognizes and contributes immensely to education as an important area of human development and because it enhances and develops informed evangelization process (The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (1977). Thus the Catholic Church sees education as a process of holistic formation of individuals—enriching them in all spheres of life including intellectual, technical, and social skills through the school, apart from spiritual sustenance.¹ Beutow's (1988, p. 7) view, "genuine education involves information, formation, and transformation" concurs with the general principles of Catholic education as a process of formation. Thus through the monologues and dialogues that characterize the education process, the individual is developed to his/her fullest potential. In 1929, Pope Pius XI cogently described the place of education in the Catholic Church stating that, the Catholic doctrines ranked education as one of the highest commitments of the modern church anywhere in the world. He clarified further that in the process of evangelization, conversion is enhanced by education since it provides the knowledge and justification required by the new converts. Pope Pius also described education for material survival as facilitative to spiritual growth. In Kenya, the Catholic Church participates in education by building schools, participating in curriculum planning and implementation, involvement in higher education, and civic education for the wider community. In the process of pursuing these goals the Catholic Church has faced numerous challenges. The degenerating morals caused by growing secularization of education through introduction of new subjects, prevalence and spread of HIV/AIDS, reluctance of the government to enforce certain laws, and the anti-religious sentiments exhibited by other stakeholders—notably teachers' unions—are among the greatest challenges experienced by the Catholic Church in Kenya today.² Whereas clear action has been taken to respond to these challenges, some continue to bedevil the initiative of the church, particularly in education. This chapter therefore examines the involvement of the Catholic Church in the curriculum development activities in Kenya, and the educational goals it seeks to achieve. It analyses the role the church plays as a stakeholder, and the challenges experienced, reactions, and research initiatives that have put in place to deal with the associated challenges.

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