

# **Challenges of Holistic education in a Neo Liberal society**

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Education and schooling have an important role and function in dynamic societies. Today's dominantly capitalists society depends on education for various reasons as studied by political and social scientists. Among the many purposes of education that have evolved with the changing needs of society, culture transmission and socialization, though the primary ones, have now a new function to contend with.

The capitalist neo liberal agenda is to make each citizen a useful, contributing player in the market economies by giving individuals the skills they need to become economically self-sufficient – purchase a home, put clothes on their backs, and to feed their families. This is quite an attractive proposition from a political and economical and even a social perspective where citizens will have the ability to serve their own personal interests and a purchasing power. The underlying intention, quite obviously, is the preservation and functioning of this neo liberal society.

As responsible educators, parents and future citizens, it is relevant, then, to question the values promoted by mainstream educational practices and analyse whether these values are consistent with a holistic education.

We may not even have to go as far as questioning the content taught in our schools for what essentially needs to be reviewed is the purpose of schooling itself. The purpose of mainstream public schools to feed students into the market, consumer driven society as an end in itself, affects the practices that are common to public schooling. Standardized curriculums, standardized testing, managerial-like administrations, and the avoidance of the range of substantive social justice issues in schools which disallow for the nurturing of socially active, ethically aware, compassionate, transformative human beings. Values of individual consumerism supersede concerns of social justice and our schools reproduce dominant values without even knowing it. In fact, some researchers like Ken Robinson have criticized this model of modern schooling, and have gone as far as calling it “fundamentally anti-learning

in nature and what kills creativity. A system that fails to nurture human potential for anything more than a job and such materialistic goals , needs to be critically reflected upon. As educators, therefore, we need to re-open the discussion of the aims of education of both the mainstream systems and the holistic value based programmes in order to arrive at a fertile an defective synthesis of the two. In attempting to revive a model of education that nurtures one's humanity as the primary goal and yet does not sacrifice market success, holistic education systems face a fundamental challenge.