

Liberia



D.E.S. Kandakai

Minister of Education

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Research Coordinator and Chief of the Department of Development Service of the Liberia Rural Communication Network. She served as Assistant Education Secretary for Curriculum and Textbook Development at the Catholic Education Secretariat (1991- 1997).

She has represented the Women of Liberia on the Independent Elections Commission. In 1997, she became Minister of Education. Her overwhelming desire is to see education in Liberia viewed and actualised by all as a cornerstone to national development.

Educating the Liberian child in the context of globalization

Who is a Liberian in the global context of today? A Liberian child growing up in the world today must wonder who he or she is. What are those variables that define this child? For that matter, who is a Ghanaian, a Kenyan, a South African or a Senegalese? One critic has lamented that African education has managed to produce mainly Fantis, Luos, Xulus or Wolofs and not Ghanaians, Kenyans, South Africans or Senegalese, to paraphrase.

Having experienced an excruciatingly chaotic decade of war and its aftermath with its attendant death, mayhem, diaspora and displacement of more than half of the population both internally and externally, the Liberian child has been dislodged from a once peaceful and fairly prosperous haven.

Today, Liberian children find themselves yearning to be Liberians whether they have been resettled in the United States, Europe or are in the Buduburum camp in Ghana or in rural Pleebo or Saclepea, towns in Liberia. How can our educational system as a principal formative force make Liberians of all of these children who have been adversely affected by war and are now rewarded with sanctions, especially at a time when the new information technologies have consumed the world?

The psyche of the Liberian child and her/his socialization into a national and world society is in the hands of an educational system that has been greatly weakened and undermined by events which far exceed the excesses of a protracted civil war or the intentions of international sanctions; because clearly, even before the war the educational system already required massive overhauling and assistance.

A New Policy Framework, a Liberia Education Sector, Master Plan, 2000-2010 proclaiming compulsory and free primary education by the year 2003 and a new Operations Manual for the sector will make these policy documents developed with the assistance of UNESCO, UNICEF, and other partners clamor for funding and support as promised by donors at the World Education Conference in Dakar - April 2000; reminiscent of children looking for toys at Christmas from Santa Claus, which they have a hard time believing in the first place. ✍