



FORCES AND FACTORS AFFECTING EDUCATIONAL POLICIES AND PROGRAMME

INTRODUCTION

Good education can lead to a good quality of life for the people. It builds for them a strong foundation for their career and success in life. This low academic performance definitely has impacts on their lives. Furthermore, a low quality of education can also lead to a high jobless rate, and jobless people are likely to be misled to be involved in violent acts. Interestingly, many of the teenagers arrested for violent acts in the areas were mostly jobless. Hopefully solving educational problems will eventually lead to solutions to other problems as a whole. Educational policy implementation is the most important focus of this globe from perceptions of the school directors. In order successfully to implement such policy, street level bureaucrats are important as implementers. In the educational field, educational staffs, particularly committed teachers, for example, is among successfully major factors that lead to educational policy implementation success. They are closest to students and are the powerful change agents in making a difference.

FORCES AFFECTING EDUCATION IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Some of the forces affecting education are briefly discussed below:

Population Diversity

The rapidly expanding mix of culture and ethnicity and the changing demographics is one of the major affect in education. Although some legislation and judicial decisions that affect amounts of immigration, employment practices, and educational opportunity in the country exist, these guidelines will be revisited in the years ahead.

Globalization

Interest and concerns about global issues will affect our country's schools and our attitudes toward education for years to come. In a space of two decades, much of American cultural life has been influenced through connections to worldwide products, information on different values and beliefs, and shifting job markets.

New comparative education procedures are helpful in using global perspectives on education, and this practice provides a logical extension for our need to extend educational partnerships to another level. Already, many schools have established connections with "sister schools" in foreign lands to enhance the notions of worldwide common interests and concerns. The Internet and other electronic communication devices make the thousands of miles distance a trivial variable in worldwide communications.

Technology

Technological advances have always been viewed as support and enhancement for schools and other educational projects. During the 20th century, these advances were viewed much like new appliances that would make the home more efficient. Today, however, new technological developments (starting with networked personal computers) influence curriculum decisions, modes of instruction, and communication with families and communities.

Audio–visual devices to enhance curriculum grew rapidly during the last half of the 20th century. In the last decade, however, an explosion of technological equipment to enhance communication, entertainment, and retrieval of information has pushed young children's education and interests in very different directions.

Media, especially electronic media, has become a preferred vehicle for receiving information and entertainment. This has huge implications for the projects we plan in schools, the nature of the curriculum, the models we use to evaluate our successes, and the equipment used in future classrooms.

Religious and Spiritual Variables

Almost all the country is witnessing greater interest in spiritual concerns and the expansion of religious practices in local communities and abroad. Most teachers realize that studying about different religious practices can be a beneficial and stimulating project that will enhance a multicultural classroom. In elementary schools, religious dogma must remain outside any curriculum. The science curriculum in American secondary schools, however, has been affected in recent years on the issue of evolution vs. creationism and intelligent design. Statutes in several states and judicial decisions have come about as pressures from special interest groups contested the secular orientation typical in American public schools. As different religious groups become more visible and expand their influence in public education, questions about religious beliefs and principles are likely to receive more study and adjudication.

FACTORS INFLUENCING NATIONAL SYSTEMS OF EDUCATION

In light of this simple understanding of a national system of education, it is important to note that, behind every system of education, there are factors or features that determine or influence and hence shape each one of the system. However, the national character of a given system of education is never determined by one factor, but rather a combination and interweaving of several factors. Some factors are dominant in one particular system while in another system, they would be less dominant. Consequently national factors of a country are closely related with nationalism and national system of education. As such, in the study of comparative education we should study the factors which make the education of a country national. These factors include geographical, economic, social, cultural, historical, religions, political, language and technological. They are as follows:

1) Geographical Factors

The geography of any particular place is often natural, which means that it is undefined by man. Man in this respect ought to behave in accordance with the geography and nature in particular. In this regard the education system cum school system is influenced by the geography of the particular region. By and large the geography of a particular area dictates the type of building and equipment, means and

methods of transporting children to school, school going age of pupils among others. However, there are three major geographical aspects that influence the educational system directly. These are, climatic conditions, population distribution and land configuration.

In regard to climatic conditions they influence the system of education in terms of, content of education depend on the continental climate.

In regard to population distribution, which is often as a result of geographical influence also affects the educational system. Generally worldwide, population is either concentrated in the urban centres, or scattered in the country side.

In regard to land configuration, this also influences the education system in terms of architectural structure of farm houses, school buildings, village location and also the whole way of life and thinking of people.

2) Economic Factors

The type of education largely depends on the economic strength of any country. Also the economic factor determines the content and method of an education system. It is important to note that formal education is often possible where production exceeds consumption. In indigenous traditional education people were trained depending on the economic conditions and needs of the community. From an economic perspective, expenditure on education refers to the amount or percentage of national revenue spent on education by both individuals and the government.

3) The Social and Cultural Factor

Schools at large often and closely reflect the social patterns prevailing in a particular country. As such the education system is usually seen as a social factor which must reflect the ethos of the people that it serves. In this regard, it is the prime aim of education to ensure cultural continuity through fostering the growth and development of national characteristics that often act as stabilizing forces. In its simplest definition a culture of a society is the total way of life of the society. In each culture, there are certain values which are not affected by time and place, for example, faith in God, love for truth and non-violence and the ideal of universal motherhood and justice are the permanent values of many cultures of the world.

Another view of cultural and social change is in the reshaping of the educational machinery to make for equality of educational opportunity for all. This has led to the widening of the school curriculum and increased emphasis on the importance of the right kind of technical education for the new technological age. As a result, the old dichotomy between a liberal and a technical education is slowly broken down and the social distinctions which existed mainly because of that divide have become of no consequence and have been minimized with time. In this regard therefore, it is necessary to develop love for one's own culture through the education system because it strengthens nationalism. In order to make the country strong and prosperous, the spirit of nationalism must be nurtured. In each country there are various types of communities, classes, castes, and interests and due to the lack of national feelings many people ignore national interests.

4) The Historical Factor

Each country of the world has its own history that shapes the nations aims, aspirations, activities and destiny. This is often reflected through the educational

system. Colonialism has been an important historical factor that can be said to have shaped the education system of many countries in the world.

Another historical element is manifest between periods in history when attempts were made to try and bring together groups within close geographical boundaries, for example, East Africa, South Africa, West Africa and North Africa. A close look at these groups reflects features in their systems of education that tend to have similarities. While on the other hand, historically there have been struggles for the creation of national states, with each state wanting to have its own unique national identity. The national factors of these countries often show differences that are reflected in their education system.

5. Political Factor

The political philosophy which controls the government of a country often has its inevitable impact on education. The political factor dictates the kind of administration the system of education will have. They also underlie the features in education system and the functioning of the same. For example, the fundamental ideas of socialism as a political philosophy were about the exploitation of labour by capital and this resulted in class mass. As a political philosophy, socialism recognizes property as the basis of the economic structure of the state which results in the concentration of civil and legal power in the hands of the property owning class. Socialism advocates for the nationalization of the means of production; where owners of means of production do not work and workers who produce do not own anything. A change of such a social order can only be achieved with reform in education. This would be through a state mechanism with full control of education and the curriculum and this means that the citizens must be trained by the state, for the state and in state institutions.

There is also a close relationship between the national character and the national system of education. Nationalism also as a political ideology influences the system of education in a country. Nationalism could be defined as a psychological feeling within a group which believes they have common outlook and traditions based on myth of common ancestry. These common ancestries include race, language, religion and territory and often strengthen the consciousness of nationality. The racial aspect which is often within the political ideology of a country may play a significant role in determining features in the education system.

6) Language Factor

Many languages may be spoken in a country, but only one enjoys the status of a national language. In every country the national language occupies a special place. Also every government tries to ensure that every one acquires the capacity to express himself through the national language. Without one's own national language, no country can be said to be strong.

Language in itself is a symbol of the people. Each community or group has an original language of its own which often suits its environment and stage of cultural development. It is through language that individuals become members of a community and this is important in building the national character. Through the native language, the child has the first expression of himself/herself and the world. However, in the modern world today, there is increasing use of foreign language especially in the school system. This requires a child before entering school to learn the foreign language. In most cases, before entering school the child acquires proficiency in mother tongue or native

language and in so doing builds up vocabulary covering most of the objects of sense, impression and daily activities. This means using a different and a foreign language in school system means superimposing on this basis a language of ideas expressed entirely in a foreign medium and this often poses a problem to the learners.

7) Religious Factor

Religious loyalties also dictate aims, content and even methods of instruction in education. Indeed, religion and beliefs have also been known to influence and shape aspects in education system.

Religious organizations have also been and are still involved in educational development through building of educational institutions. For example, the catholic Jesuits succeeded in building up some of the greatest systems of secondary and higher education institution known in history. There is currently a catholic university establish in Kenya besides many catholic sponsored primary and secondary schools. The Muslim faithful also have their own establish institutions of learning as well as other religious groups such as the Hindus, Buddhists.

8) Technological Factors

Technological changes cannot also be ignored in education. Technology and especially modern technology also influence the education system of the country. Historically, emphasis on industrial and technical education followed the industrial revolution. Technology affects the type of education as well as the means of instruction.

With the emergence of computer technology, internet technology, this has revolutionized the whole education system especially in the developed countries. Through information communication technology, home learning has been made possible. Today the influence of technology in education cannot be ignored. Indeed the challenge is for the educational administrators and policy makers to see to it that the right infrastructure is in place in order to allow the use of information communication technology fully and be able to reap its maximum benefits in the education system especially in the developing world.

CONCLUSION

Good education can lead to a good quality of life for the people. It builds for them a strong foundation for their career and success in life. It is important to note that, behind every system of education, there are factors or features that determine or influence and hence shape each one of the system. However, the national character of a given system of education is never determined by one factor, but rather a combination and interweaving of several factors. Consequently national factors of a country are closely related with nationalism and national system of education. As such, in the study of comparative education we should study the factors which make the education of a country national. These factors include geographical, economic, social, cultural, historical, religions, political, language and technological.