

Chapter 81

Educational Reform

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ABSTRACT

This chapter aims at examining the nature of educational reforms in general, access how they impact on the lives of the citizens, and identify some of the global perspectives of educational reforms. It examines how education could be reformed to make it equitable, address inequality and social injustice that still persists in our society. Educational programs in many parts of the world continue to undergo reformation due to governments' policy changes or ideology, yet so many people seem not to be satisfied with the nature of education delivery. The chapter concludes that educational reform should not only aim at introducing just new courses, restructure the curriculum per se but should aim at ensuring that it equips the citizenry to make them develop entrepreneurial skills, be able to find solutions to their problems and self-reliant. Reforms must also address the social inequality, social injustice, and lack of equity, social and racial discrimination that still persists in our societies today.

INTRODUCTION

Development of citizens in every nation depends on the country's educational system. It is not about the type of subjects that are taught in school but how inclusive the education system, if it addresses exclusion, inequality, and social injustice and address issues related to poverty and economic deprivation. Even though education cannot address every problem in the society, it is supposed to improve the lives of the people, develop their potential and equip them with the skills to enable contribute towards national development and achieve their own personal development and growth. Panichella & Triventi (2014, p.667) noted that 'given the persistence of relevant inequality of education opportunities – especially in higher education – several studies began to investigate educational transitions' in several

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countries in more detail, while devoting attention to the institutional features of a school system that will contribute to the intergenerational transmission of inequality'. However, over the years, countries have been making efforts to eliminate the inequalities in societies by embarking on educational reform that will bridge the gap between the less privileged and socio-economically disadvantaged and the most privileged group in society.

According to Apple (2016, p. 128), 'many people believe that there is something decidedly wrong in education right now'. Some parents are also worried about the type of education their children are receiving; while others also think the future of the children is very precarious looking at the lack of jobs, high rate unemployment and cultural insecurity in our society today. Countries are making efforts to improve education but many educational reforms continue to face some challenges. For instance, lack of adequate preparation and inadequate financial and material resources could also result in greater difficulties that could impact negatively on the implementation of a reform process (Munthe, Malmo & Rogne, 2011). Challenges facing educational reforms that have been identified by McInerney are lack of clear development plan; lack of funds to implement educational reform agenda; poor infrastructure; cultural differences and lack of skilled personnel to implement and sustain the process (McInerney, 2003).

Although several educational reforms continue to be implemented in many countries many people do not consider their countries education not good enough to address individuals and national needs. According to Lewis, many parents in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for example do not have confidence in their state schools so they opt for expensive private school education for their children (Lewis, 2008 as cited in Thorne, 2011). Lewis explained further that in the UAE, 4 out of 10 parents choose private schools against state schools, because they acknowledge states schools were failing to address the educational needs of their children. This lack of confidence in the education system made the UAE initiate education reforms to address the lapses in the education system. However, unlike inequalities and social exclusion that has made several countries to reform their education, the UAE educational reform focused on addressing the bad teaching methods and discrepancies in curriculum and study programs which increased the high rate of school drop-out. Arguably 'the causal impact of reforms enacted in the middle of the period while controlling for trends due to a rapidly changing economy that plausibly affects rich and poor households differently' (Gupta, Dubey & Simonsen, 2018, p. 110). Thus, Gupta et al went on further to 'ask whether the better infrastructure and expanded school access causally affected low-income rural children's school attendance over this period even after controlling for the confounding effect of any differential trends due to rising incomes and falling poverty post-liberalization' (p. 110).

In Singapore where similar reform has also taken place, concerns raised for the need for social cohesion, the establishment of national identity, remained paramount in their education reform agenda (Tan, 2008). Nonetheless, no matter the implementation strategy, a reasonable number of countries around the world although have had educational reforms aimed at improving the needed human capital and socio-economic development (Hynds, 2010), the socio-economic factors that militate against some individuals in some societies, the level of inequalities and social injustice that exists in our homes, workplaces, communities and even in our educational institutions make it difficult for many educational reforms to achieve their objectives (Arnesen & Lundahl, 2006; Hynds, 2010) let alone improving the lives of the masses for which the reforms are aimed at assisting.

Another area which some educational reforms seem to focus on its implementation and effective usage of the curriculum. The process requires changing of the existing syllabus for a new one which is supposed to reflect the new reformed curriculum that could aim at national development which will eliminate social inequalities, exclusion, poverty, and racial discrimination. Quality educational reform

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