

EDITORIAL

It Is Time to Rethink the Global Education System

It is now over two years since the first cases of Covid 19 were detected in Wuhan, China, subsequently bringing the entire world to its knees. Even the most economically and technologically advanced countries have not been spared. According to the WHO, there has so far been 283,210,045 infections and 5,430,736 deaths worldwide as of 28th December 2021. We have all lost family and friends to the virus. To make matters worse, the WHO has identified signs of an even worse global mental health pandemic in the aftermath of Covid 19.

Besides the loss of lives, the pandemic has had a devastating effect on educational systems worldwide. While we are yet to receive full estimates of its nature and magnitude, we can easily imagine the damage made by the total closure of schools for extended periods of time. Whereas some of the middle and high income societies have had some sort of continuity by using online and hybrid arrangements, more than half of the children in the world have had no access to education for the past two years.

Whenever a global catastrophe of this magnitude occurs, it highlights failures in existing systems and becomes an opportunity for humanity to reflect and, ideally, improve. In modern history, the aftermath of the Second World War saw a major reorganization of the global system, with the establishment of the League of Nations and the Bretton Woods Institutions; the precursors of the current UN and World Bank. Henceforth, almost all major educational policies and initiatives such as EFA, MDGs, and SDGs have come out of the UN system. In many developing countries, UNICEF, UNESCO and the World Bank have more say in shaping educational policy than any local actor.

While the current UN-based system has been effective in promoting mass education and generally improving educational outcomes worldwide, the Covid 19 pandemic has demonstrated that it is no longer viable. Even before the pandemic, there were already calls for rethinking how we educate children and prepare 21st century workers (Wagner, 2010). About twenty years ago, the World Bank itself identified the need for making fundamental changes in the organization of schooling as well as teacher training (World Bank, 2003).

Arising from the middle of the twentieth century, and created for mainly for the newly independent states which were still under the grip of their former colonial masters, the current system was obviously a continuation of the colonial master plan. Its emphasis was to prepare workers for a mass-production industrial model as well as some middle-level administrators to serve in the colonial and post-colonial governments. General education would provide basic literacy and numeracy (known as the 3 Rs of Reading wRiting and aRithmetic). After completing general education, the individuals would then be channeled into specific career streams, some of which only required simple on the job training while others required advanced education and training.

The current developments in Information and Communication Technologies have unleashed changes in design, production and distribution of goods and services worldwide. Today we are talking about a Fourth Industrial Revolution (IR4.0) which is bound to radically change how we live, learn and work (Wagner, 2010). The accompanying changes in global

mobility, cross-border remote learning and working, and the new emphasis on the service industry, all necessitate a total overhaul of educational systems and processes. The Covid 19 pandemic has been the proverbial last straw.

Creating an education system, and in this case re-creating it, requires us to find answers to key philosophical questions. What do we mean by education? Why should we educate? Who should we educate? Who should provide the education? Where should education take place? How should the process of education be conducted? What should be the duration of education? What should be the contents of this education? Should education focus on global knowledge or cater for indigenous problems and generate indigenous solutions using local systems and practices? Who has the right to decide what a country's education system should focus on? Lest we get tempted to think that we already have answers to these questions, we have to remember that we are where we are right now as a result of the answers we have produced. It is time to rethink those answers and educational philosophy will be handy in this, since the role of philosophy is to pose questions and question answers.

The papers in this volume are situated at the peak of the Covid 19 pandemic. While they are related to the issues raised in the above paragraphs, none of them specifically addresses those issues. Given the enormity of the task, we shall need to convene several international conferences for that purpose.

In line with the multidisciplinary and international coverage of IJES, the issues dealt with in this volume are wide-ranging. The first paper by Musa Siddiq Abdullahi and Musa Salim deals with the challenges faced by non-Arabs in speaking the Arabic language. It examines the specific difficulties of Hausa speakers in pronouncing particular Arabic phonemes. Azam Othman et al. deal with the topical issue of urban poverty, how it affects students' optimism and the usefulness of government assistance programs for the urban poor. On a related theme, Abdul Hameed Kamoludeen and Madihah Khalid examined how students' motivation to pursue higher education is affected by their optimism about the country's economy and influence from their parents. Abdulmajid Aldaba et al. examined how participatory decision-making affects job satisfaction in an academic institution. Noorlila and Siti Fatimah present a systematic review of literature and a proposed framework for the role of exposure to the natural environment on emotional well-being. Lastly, Adel Hussain's paper is the only one written in Arabic and deals with the very important topic of homework among primary school children, which has been especially complicated while children had their lessons from home during the pandemic.

References:

World Bank. (2003). *Lifelong learning in the global knowledge economy: Challenges for developing countries*. The World Bank.

Wagner, T. (2010). *The global achievement gap: Why even our best schools don't teach the new survival skills our children need-and what we can do about it*. ReadHowYouWant.com.

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