

## Course Code: MED15303CR

### Comparative Education Unit II

#### Introduction

A national system of education is often defined from the perspective of formal education system. This includes institutionalized formal education from early childhood education, primary education, secondary education, tertiary education and university education. The informal and non-formal education subsets are often assumed to be part of the formal education and if not ignored altogether, they are given little attention. However, it is important the national educational system should be wholly inclusive of all the subsets of the educational system, that is, formal, informal and non-formal 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. In this chapter we shall study some such factors;

#### 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, for example, training of doctors in the tropics is likely to emphasize more on tropical disease like malaria. Extreme low temperatures in Continental Europe, affects accessibility to school by young children. Temperatures also affect the time at which schools can reasonably begin in the morning and when they end. In Norway, for example, the sun does not rise during winter until ten o'clock in the morning and often temperatures fall to negative 20 degrees. Thus in the Scandinavian countries there are no infant schools or early childhood education departments in some schools because of extreme temperatures. Climatic conditions also influence the education system in relation to time of vacations. In North America and many countries in Europe take school vacations during cold winter and others during hot summer. In hot climatic conditions especially experienced in arid and semi-arid areas, learning often takes place during morning hours when it is cool. When it is hot in the afternoon very little learning takes place due to excessive heat.

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 centers, or scattered in the country side. For example Australia has two systems of education, that is, one for the urban areas and the other for rural areas. In the urban areas there are well-equipped schools with adequately qualified teachers and administrative personnel. While in the rural areas, schools are small with one teacher for ten up to forty students. This is because farms are far from the nearest schools and daily attendance is difficult. Therefore the central government is responsible for their administration and financing. The government also provides the means and organization of correspondence, tuition and traveling teachers. As such most students receive education through correspondence and occasional visits by the traveling education inspectors.

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 because of the rigours of the climate, in some cases, because of closeness of family ties, boarding schools for children are non-existence, except for the few who come from far and inaccessible places on daily basis. By and large land configuration determines settlement and location of schools.

## **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. If the economic condition is poor, education becomes backward in many aspects while if the economy of a country is strong, then educational aims and the curriculum are given a special direction for making the country prosperous. For example, in the USA and Japan, education system is patterned so as to make the individual graduate, strong and capable enough to stand on his or her own feet after having received education. While in India, college and university graduate do not know where to go after completing their education and most of the students continue to stay on in the university as long as they can so that one can postpone for a few years the problem of the educated - unemployed.

Another economic influence on education is that, the poorer classes in communities tend to be content with minimum education for their children, and the richer classes are known to be able to keep their children longest at school because they can afford to meet the costs. In a subsistence economy, that is, one in which people are just able to make ends meet, educational systems tend to be informal occurring on the job. On the contrary, where there are enough grants in systems of education, minimum requirements are met and thus the quality of education is often high. For example, Britain, France, Japan and the USA among other strong economy countries, they provide enough grants that are allocated to their systems of education; actually they have enough funds to support all educational programmes in their education systems. Unlike the case of developing countries, where funds are very scarce, which affects even payment of teachers salaries, essential resource materials such as textbooks are not adequate and in some cases not even available. As such, this greatly affects the nature of the systems of education in terms of the content and methods in learning institutions and in essence the whole system of education.

In this regard, the growth of the capacities of individual citizens and national development is of great importance. In fact, the education system should be such that, it provides

opportunities for the maximum development of each citizen. The aim here is to ensure that the wealth of the nation is not concentrated in the hands of a few capitalists who manage to attain some level of education. It is actually by developing individuals that the overall growth of the nation can be guaranteed. At the same time, there should be no-class distinction in the planning of education that should be permitted, because this results in neglect of the education of other more capable citizens. If this happens it often results in social disparities and in the long run weakens the nation. Proper planning of the education system also calls for the establishment of a proper national character, which if it lacks, then the necessary leadership and co-operation of the people will also be lacking. Lack of a proper national character, means that the national education system will not be able to realize its objectives. Consequently, with good leadership and people's cooperation, there is much that can be achieved even when adequate economic resources are wanting. Thus, there is evidence to show that there is a very close relationship between economic security and the national system of education of any country.

### **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. Every society consist of human beings and in whatever state they find themselves they always have some kind of educational system. This form of education of the society will always strive to perpetuate and protect its traditions and aspirations. As such a close study and analysis of each education system will always reveal the cultural concept and pattern of the community in question. Also the social patterns of the people in any particular community or country are reflected in its system of education.

It is important to realize that the culture of the people often changes at a slow pace. 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. However, radical reforms in a society may be slowed down or blocked at the level of implementation because of the cultural lag. In African the

various projects for educational reform does indicate that there has been basic cultural changes in the life of a people from the colonial period into the post independence period. In many countries of the world today, changes have occurred in the attitude of the youngsters towards their elders, for example students do not show due respect to their teacher as students did some twenty five or thirty years ago. The teachers also now care more for the increments, in their salaries and other allowances than for teaching. In many meetings of teachers, there is more talk of groupism, backbiting and salaries, than of students' welfare. In some circles, guardians and parents also do not respect teachers as they did before. All these and others are a clear indication that the relations between parents and children, sisters and brothers, husband and wife, masters and servants and between many other units of society have undergone great changes. Thus, we have begun to discard many old mores and modes and are adopting more liberal attitudes. As such time and place have been changing many elements of culture and as a result it is being reflected in the education system in various ways.

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 has 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. In many cases minorities are suspicious about the majority and in certain contexts this may be true of the majority as well. This makes it necessary to inculcate love for the country's culture and especially through the adoption of a national system of education.

#### **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 African countries and others in the world. For example, the Berlin conference in 1815 was dubbed the scramble for Africa. At this conference the European powers shared African states like a cake. This latter meant that; the colonies had to take up much of what was in their colonial masters homeland and to date features in education of these former colonial master are reflected in their former colonies.

The missionary factor also contributed a great deal in shaping the systems of education in most African countries. Christian missionaries in particular from Britain, France, Holland, Germany, Switzerland, and USA among others, have largely influenced the development of the education system in Africa. In this regard, the present systems of education in many countries of Africa, Asia, North and South America are actual products of past colonial influence. As such, most of these countries in their present endeavors in education represent in most cases, heroic efforts of their colonial heritage.

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. As such, similarities and differences of education systems all over the world have a history behind them.

### **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. In such cases, the details of the curriculum are often decided by the state authorities and involve functional training of citizens. The curriculum may also involve scientific training for social utilization purposes.

Good examples of countries that have introduced a socialist system of education are Mexico, Bulgaria and Cuba. The common features of their education system include monopoly of the state control on education, secularism, physical and military training political indoctrination in and out of school and also more emphasis on science subjects. In these states, freedom of individuals and the idea of tolerance are not accepted. Unlike these countries, France has a centralized system of education based on its political philosophy. In France, everything to do with education is controlled from the centre (metropole) which is the central government. In the case of USA and Japan, their education systems are highly decentralized, and are often based on the democratic influence and the capitalistic political philosophy of these countries.

There is also a close relationship between the national character and the national system of education. For example, the national character of USA is democratic as such its education system is democratic in most of its aspects. 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. Race refers to a tribe, a nation or a group of nations. Modern population includes people of different racial origins. The British colonial policy was based on the principle of decentralization and on the building up of a commonwealth of nations each of which should be free to develop its own culture and national character. Hence there is a close relationship between national character and national system of education and the former has been universally accepted as an important basis of national system of education. Thus the political system of a country is closely related with its educational programme.

## **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.

In East Africa, Kiswahili has slowly influenced features in the education systems in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi. Kiswahili is a compulsory subject in primary schools in Kenya and Tanzania. In Tanzania Kiswahili is used as a medium of instruction in all primary schools. In South Africa, there are two linguistic groups, the English speaking and the Africans speaking groups. After the colonization by the British, English was enacted as a medium of instruction in schools. The inhabitants spoke Afrikaans and had been used to the Dutch school system. The use of English failed and in 1914 Afrikaans was recognized also as a medium of instruction in school for African speaking children. As such, in a South Africa, a bilingual system of education came into being, where some schools use English, while others use Afrikaans or even both.

French as a language is also used in former French colonies like Cameroon, Tunisia, Madagascar, Senegal, Rwanda and Burundi. Cameroon also emerges as a bilingual country with

two official languages and two systems of education, that is, the Anglophone to the West and Francophone to the East. Although the Cameroon government has been trying to put the two zones together it has proved to remain difficult. Interestingly the ex-British Anglophone system of education continues to produce local syllabuses with the aim of making secondary school examination; the ex-French francophone system still clings firmly on the old and more formal baccalaureate.

By and large in Africa colonialism influenced the language of instruction in schools. In the former British colonies, pupils were taught in their vernacular in the lower elementary or primary school curriculum. The French colonies put more emphasis on French as a medium of instruction. To date most of the inherited systems of education still suffer from the effect of the colonial masters in the school system and at large in the education system. Thus the place of national language in the development of a national feeling cannot be over-emphasized. As such in a national system of education, special emphasis is placed on the study of national language.

#### **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. In Africa, European Christian Missionaries did influence and continue to influence the education system. The initiative taken by the Christian churches to extend education and their power to control development often explains many of the common elements which can be discerned in education systems in countries that were colonized by the Europeans. For example schools days are from Monday to Friday and resting days are Saturday and Sunday. This is more so because some people have their worship days as Saturday and others on Sunday.

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 established in Kenya besides many catholic sponsored primary and secondary schools. The Muslim faithful also have their own established institutions of learning as well as other religious groups such as the Hindus, Buddhists.

In Africa, the present systems of education have been influenced by the work which was initiated by European Christian missionaries who included Catholics, Protestant and Muslim. All these

have influenced features in the education system in the areas, they occupied. Most current is that the primary and secondary curriculums have religious subjects being taught in schools in Kenya.

### **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 revolutionised the whole education system especially in the developed countries. Through information communication technology, home learning has been made possible. Universities are also adopting projects like AUV and e-learning. 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.