

CHALLENGES OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM OF IRAN AND SOLUTIONS TO ADDRESS THESE CHALLENGES (IN THE OUTLOOK OF 1404)

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ABSTRACT

Education is one of the main issues that is dealt with in any society. In our country, Iran, like the other countries, education has been entrusted to the Institute of Education as the main custodian of that enterprise. From the beginning up to now, passing of the traditional education system to the current one, we have witnessed many evolutions in the field of education, such as the changes in strategies, policies, programs and structures to changes in management methods and implementation as well as changes in teaching methods. Today, the educational system is facing many challenges that must be overcome by preparing relevant and updated policies and programs. This essay has just been developed in the form of a review article examining six articles and research on the challenges of the educational system. After examining the articles one by one, the most important challenges would be collected and classified, and then the approaches proposed to address these challenges would be presented.

Keywords: *Education, Educational System, Education Challenges, Solutions*

INTRODUCTION

Development of the country largely depends on the degree of success of the educational system. If the matter is dealt with appropriately, different dimensions of sustainable development will certainly be provided.

In our country, Iran, like the other countries, education has been entrusted to the Institute of Education as the main custodian of that enterprise. From the beginning up to now, passing of the traditional educational system to the current one, we have witnessed many evolutions in the field of education, such as the changes in strategies, policies, programs and structures to changes in management methods and implementation as well as changes in teaching methods.

Due to the dynamic and continuous nature of education, development is an integral part of it. We can only achieve the higher educational goals applying a correct and proper management and provide an appropriate background to scientific development. Many positive steps have been taken in Education considering this field, despite all of these efforts, the system faces many challenges that hinder the proper functioning of it. So far, many experts and researchers have addressed this issue and each has examined it in a specific point of view and various solutions have been presented to solve the problems. This article has just been prepared in the form of a review article applying the primary and available sources on the internet to answer the following questions:

- 1 - What are the main challenges of the educational system?
- 2 – What are the solutions to address these challenges to achieve a suitable educational system?

Review of the Research and Publications:

Basic and analytical studies for general education policies

This study has been performed by the research committee of scientific, cultural, and social, Expediency Council, headed by Dr. Ali Asghar Fani in 2008 in the purpose of developing education general policies. The study emphasizes on the need for change in the country's educational system, and the necessity of formulation of general strategies and policies of the education system, and evaluates the current status, in

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the introduction of this study, the most important challenges have been mentioned which are dealt with as follows:

1-The domination of memorizing, content and structural weaknesses for scholar training, teaching life skills, socialization, acculturation, and lack of concern to creativity, innovation and education in addition to training.

2- The lack of a comprehensive system for the Economics of Education to solve the teachers` financial and living problems.

3- Lack of coordination among educational and research policy, textbooks are not updated, the discrepancy between the field of planning and implementation of curricula course content and lack of coordination among different structures of Research in Education and lack of effective research strategy.

4- Failure to reform the country's educational model based on the philosophy of education, the national innovation system and comprehensive map of science.

5- Constant changes of managers concerning political records, lack of skilled database to identify competent and capable administrators and lack of appropriate monitoring in performing procedures related to appointments and managements` changes in one hand, and Poor communication and coordination between Education and other governmental agencies and the domination of centralization morale and weaknesses in the methods of assessment and evaluation from the other hand underlies the problems related to the management of the education system.

6- Teachers don't have the required motivation and desire to serve and perform duties. Organization of services and educational facilities in the fields of housing, social security, retirement, health insurance, transportation, loans and scholarships is weak. Problems relating to the welfare and cultural livelihood are the main obstacles for lack of educational motivation

7- Human resources in Education, for gaining the professional skills and scientific competencies to achieve efficient training methods, tailored to the needs of the present age, are not desirable. Lack of education coverage in the deprived regions and provinces and lack of adequate educational facilities in some provinces and the lack of education experts willing to serve in these areas are other education problems in the country which necessitate the need for educational equity.

8- Weakness in the content, methods and curricula based on learning principles appropriate to science developments and technology in alignment with constitutional and the country vision is another problem of education in our country.

9- Teachers are less involved in decision-making and educational programs and comprehensive plan to train citizens with Islamic-Iranian identity and the skills necessary to live with modernization, reconstruction and upgrading the quality of education and research is not operational.

10- Performance measurement and evaluation system for teachers and staff qualification and assessment of educational performance indicators has not been created yet.

11- No sufficient funds for the development of educational service training in order to improve the quality of education are assigned.

12- Criteria for admission discipline teachers does not regulate in teacher training institutions and universities, the curriculum for teacher training is not updated and appropriate for the current era. Educational methods have not changed properly for the conditions of time, place, technology development and global developments.

13- Frequent changes in the organization of the Ministry of Education and not being immune to the influence of personal or political preferences have always hurt the country's education system.

14- The lack of proper proportionality between quantitative growth and qualitative growth and the lack of attention to obtaining the life skills and education issues, and promoting physical and mental health of students along with the education are the other barriers (Vaezi, 2008).

Education Policy in the Era of Globalization

Jahani Nia et al(2011) in this paper, introducing the phenomenon of globalization and its impact on relationships, expectations and rights of individuals in various communities, investigate the process of

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change in education policies affected by globalization and refer to the fundamental issues of education policy in the era of globalization. Based on this, education in the twenty-first century will face four major problems and if it is not to plan to respond them overwhelmingly, it will be alarming:

- 1 - The rising population of students and careful and forward-looking planning
- 2 - The quality of teaching and academic local and global standards.
- 3 – Increasing the productivity in all aspects
- 4- Comparative studies and transformation based on the time, necessity and Culture.

Political pressures, especially in underdeveloped and developing countries have had more destructive effects. Education requires a peaceful environment, being away from the seizure for development and damages due to political groups. Education has limited energy and time and should spend them towards reform, but they are spent for political convulsions. On the other hand, the scarce financial resources in developing countries, where the young population pressure is risky, are used primarily for quantitative development, and don't lead necessarily to qualitative development. The phenomenon of unemployed graduates is another problem that could exacerbate these tensions. Social pressures such as poverty, unemployment, social evils, phenomenon of rural immigration and urbanization, addiction and broken families destroys providing good education too.

Education at the threshold of the third millennium carries the huge burden of revival of moral values in order to reduce these tensions. In the beginning of the third millennium, communities and schools are exposed to rapid and substantial changes than ever before. According to Dewey, the social and educational philosophy which schools are established based on it, can be used as a primary filter to be considered for the development of social programs and he concludes that philosophy attempts to present the definition of the nature of a good life and a good society. So in free societies, freedom and democratic values are passed through schools.

In the Education of the third millennium, in which diversity and wisdom are important and stereotyped educational order has faded, we face a social and personal conflict and we don't just want to foster good citizenship and community, but we need to nurture human beings who learn the best way to live in peace side by side with others. Contemporary philosophical thought is needed to find an answer for this big contradiction and to offer the major purpose of education which is the better way of living as the course content (Jahani Nia et al, 2011).

Educational system of the Islamic Republic of Iran

Office of Information and opinion polls, while examining the education system of the Islamic Republic of Iran, suggests these two main reasons for the failure of the country's education system to create a proper background for scientific development from the beginning of accepting the changes:

- 1 - The limited acquaintance and superficial adoption of modern methods of education in West.
- 2 - The supremacy of politicians over culture and education.

In the past, limited acquaintance and superficial exploitation of new approaches to the western education system to a great extent were due to the totality Iranian society and regimes' irrational and emotional encounters with the symbols of the West. Therefore, the changes from the old system of education didn't go beyond from the old training schools to modern schools, mat to the bench, the wider educational establishment, recruiting new teachers, administrators, and moderators, hours of attendance, hymnody, flag partitioning, publishing new books and uniform clothing. And changing the traditional thinking on education management practices, compliance obligations of serious acquaintance with the principles of modern science and scientific training methods, the development of the relationship between teacher and student, adaptation the content of textbooks with the community needs and use of modern methods of education, were not considered. In conclusion, despite the quantitative increasing of schools and students, writing and editing new books, the foundations of the scientific development of the country did not have consistency. The main issue was the management style of the educational system of the country, which despite being in a new situation, still relied on traditional and dysfunctional thoughts. Despite the

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occurrence of the Islamic Revolution, due to various reasons, the search for appropriate strategies to benefit from the world new educational approaches and trying to make an efficient system of education, have been overshadowed by other issues. Poor funding for important matters such as providing training tools and teaching aids, textbooks qualitative change, improving teachers` living conditions, and administrative reform of the education system on the one hand and lack of scientific planning for reforming the non-equal and bewildering method of exposure of numerous educational community with new developments in the world, on the other hand, are the other reasons for this claim.

Since, despite all the positive essential efforts for efficient education system through administrative reform, the establishment of appropriate administrative structures and modernization of teaching methods hasn't been done, achieving the goals of social and scientific development of the country is difficult.

The traditional and patron supremacy of political authorities on the fate of the education system is the other reason for the inefficiency of the education system in the country's scientific development. In fact, planning and conducting educational system and its fate for preparation the context of the scientific development of the country should not depend on formation of a government. Actually, correction, restoration and efficient management of the system is possible through reforming its management methods, accepting the theory of necessity of scientific educational management by the authorities. Therefore, in the current situation, changes and improvements in the educational management is so important that the issue of "political acceptability" of its management before the authorities is the secondary importance.

Challenges due to the advent of technology in the educational system and the solutions

Referring to the advent of new technology in the world and the positive impact of technology in education system, Azimi Yancheshmeh (2011), in this paper which was presented at the First National Conference on

Education, emphasizes on the importance of correct and appropriate use of these technologies and then discusses the challenges that have been arisen by this technology and its use by thousands of students on one hand, and the resistance to adoption of these technologies on the other hand. He pointed out to ten challenges and offers the solutions in designing, performing and evaluating which are necessary to be done by the authorities, teachers and students.

- 1- Language: most of the literate people use a local language, while the internet content is presented in English. English is the common language of technology and this means that many applicants are not covered.
- 2- Adequate access to technology: Schools can't afford purchasing equipments and technology proportional to the number of students. Since low-income people constitute a majority of society, these families are less inclined to use new technology and look at technology as a luxury and unnecessary item. The lack of necessary technical infrastructure and creating equal opportunities of access to technology in these areas is another problem.
- 3- Involvement of teachers with technology: We can see many classrooms with computers placed alongside which their coating hasn't been removed for a long time, because many teachers have little experience to use these technologies. Another problem is the resistance of human resources against the changes. Therefore teachers` inflexibility to adopt these technologies has turned into a major obstacle to engage with technology.
- 4- Providing technical support and maintenance of technologies: Most of the available technologies in the country are imported. For this reason, knowledge, support and maintenance of them are not available in the country. On the other hand, the materials of these technologies may defect and spare parts for replacement may not be enough.
- 5- Acculturation: There is a negative attitude towards the use of technology in society. For example, there are no moral and cultural constraints in internet. On the other hand, ICT hasn't been

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acculturated in the educational society of the country. For this reason, sociologists warn about the use of these technologies and their effects.

- 6- Consideration of social interaction and communication: Application of ICT has strongly influenced social relationships of today's world.
- 7- Thoughtful studies: Miliron (2004) points out that the influx of inducing the technology into education without thoughtful study is dangerous and critical.
- 8- Quality: Nowadays, we observe the production of technologies regardless of the quality standards. On the other hand, most individuals are not familiar with the criteria for evaluating these technologies or aren't careful in this cases. The use of technology without quality is not useful, it is even harmful.
- 9- Literacy and the ability to apply technology: If all of the above challenges be overcome but there be no ability to use technological literacy, technologies will have no benefit and only will impose additional cost.
- 10- Creating regulatory and legal framework for the use of technology: The lack of systematic legal framework for the use of technology can greatly limit the use of technology. Unfortunately, there is not such a strong frame in our country (Azimi Yancheshmeh, 2011).

Education in the era of globalization, challenges and strategies for dealing with it

Saboori Khosroshahi(2010) in this paper deals with the phenomenon of globalization and a definition of globalization, and studies it in various aspects, then, expressing opportunities in the era of globalization and the impact of "globalization" on the education in Iran, he expresses the major possible challenges facing the future of our education system and then offers the appropriate educational strategies to overcome the challenges ahead.

Challenges on education expressed in this research include:

- 1- Dangers of computers entrance to education: Hazards that may be caused by computers in education include: isolating the students from the community, undermining the relationship between teacher and student, threatening the education of human values and exposing excessive stereotyped form of education
- 2- Inappropriate use of the Internet: Students use the Internet to do their research. Internet shows research a lot easier than what it is.
- 3- Mono-cultural world and the loss of indigenous cultures : Associated with globalization, concern is the growing of mono-cultural world, the culture which is advertized by the West global media and its public relations networks. Culture that dictates people what to wear, what to eat, how to live and how to think.
- 4- Devaluation of the past and increasing the present value: Among the key principles of the traditional educational system in Iran, is the tremendous value of "the past". Developments occurring in the field of educational technology and new methods have drastically changed this principle. It should be noted that a new generation of students are in the way that perceive and interpret "the past" differently. And therefore we should not expect the academic literature.
- 5- The phenomenon of modern illiteracy: We have entered into the age of information with inefficient and traditional methods of education and so we can neither absorb all the talent lovers nor can we present a good learning for the few who are absorbed. The result is the occurrence of negative migration of scientific elites who immigrate to other countries to obtain their desired knowledge.
- 6- The phenomenon of dissonance learning: Development of communication technology, the variety of products and procedures and educational material caused many developing countries, particularly Iran, involve in the phenomenon of "dissonance learning " by which part of the students while are studying within a unit formal education system, benefit from additional

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training in an informal way through access to new features (especially the Internet). This anisotropy can cause irreparable damage to the education system of Iran.

- 7- Lack of association between mental affairs and objectivity: Official Education relies on memory. This process continues for each student to twelve years. So most of the instructions that are provided during this time are subjective and don't go beyond. In other words, the formal education in Iran does not involve students with social processes. So the students graduated from this type of educational system will suffer from intellectual aberrations in the face of a wave of global culture.
- 8- Learning a foreign language: Given the diversity of the countries of the world and diverse cultures and languages the transfer of a concept from a culture to another culture requires a change challenge of an intellectual state to another intellectual state and these different intellectual systems can be a source of misunderstanding, contempt and disregard for individuals and families. On the other hand, with the advent of globalization and its impact on all social, economic, cultural, and moral aspects, the need for communication between individual people within each country, and their mutual understanding and tolerance for each other, increases. In addition, in order to use the cultural heritage of other countries and exchange the information and communication technologies and the inevitable displacement of teachers, students and knowledge all over the world, the need of learning foreign languages has been increasingly justified than before.

What are the challenges of education in Iran?

Pointing to the global slogan of United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural organization (UNESCO) which says "every child needs a teacher" introduced at the International Week of Education for All (first week of Ordibehest 2013), Abdullahi (2013) discusses the major challenges of education in developing countries.

The reason for choosing this theme is the importance of education for all people emphasizing the essential role of teachers in improving the quality of education. According to him, teacher shortages in some poor countries and the lack of trained and vocational teachers are two major challenges in developing countries.

In the poor and peripheral countries, due to the lack of funds in education, teachers are not sufficiently recruited and the teachers employed in schools have not passed the required special courses. In the most poor and developing countries, teachers' salaries, and as a result their motivation, job commitment and productivity is low. Untrained and poor teachers without motivation can never ensure the quality of education.

Another important issue is the teachers' ability to respond to the challenges of the Twenty First Century. New communication technologies have removed the wall between school and home education and the monopoly of education system has been broken. Focusing on students learning in developed countries is gradually replacing the centrality of teachers in teaching.

Educational systems, even in the most advanced societies, are conservative and resist being changed. But ultimately, society imposes the trends and new demands on the educational system. The gap between students' needs and educational system desire to resist against change is one of the challenges of education everywhere in the world.

Our Education is not faced with a shortage of teachers. Rather, there is an improper teachers' distribution causing excess resource in rich areas and shortages of teachers in some poor areas. Education has problems in the field of educational quality and part of this poor quality of teaching, is due to employing, training and retaining the teachers.

Most teachers haven't received the necessary training for the teaching profession. And during their career have rarely reviewed and modified their information, knowledge and teaching methods. Professional involvement and motivation among teachers is low.

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DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

As we can see emphasis on concentration of human resources as an essential pillar of the educational system and the challenges associated with it is the interface of investigated Articles. On the other hand, entering the twenty-first century and the emergence of a relatively modern phenomenon of ((globalization)) and the ever increasing advances in learning technologies; we see that handling and proper use of these technologies is the other major challenge of education system in 2025. What has been neglected in these papers is a failure to address the lack of educational spaces, an important matter, which is essential for creating an effective and efficient educational system. However, we classify the main challenges of Education in the following categories:

A) Challenge of structures:

- 1 - Frequent changes in the organization of the Ministry of Education and the influence of personal preferences or political branches
- 2- Frequent changes of managers involved in political history
- 3 - The political supremacy on the field of culture and education

B) Challenges related to human resources:

- 1 - Lack of desired motivation among teachers
- 2 - Lack of professional skills and competencies of teachers and staff and lack of efficient methods
- 3 - The low participation of teachers in decision-making and educational programs
- 4 - Poor distribution of teachers
- 5 - Lack of teachers` ability to respond to the challenges of the Twenty First Century
- 6 - No increase in productivity in all aspects
- 7 - Lack of a proper system to evaluate performance and competency assessment for teachers and staff

C) challenge the content of educational programs :

- 1 - Weakness of content , methods and applications and lack of updated textbooks
- 2 - Lack of coordination among educational policies
- 3 - Lack of educational methods to fit the time and place
- 4 - Lack of educational quality and lack of local and global academic standards
- 5 - Lack of comparative studies and evolution according to time, the necessity and culture
- 6 - Restricted acquaintance and superficial adoption of modern methods of education
- 7 - The phenomenon of dissonance learning
- 8 - Lack of association between mental affairs and objectivity

D) challenges relating to technology:

- 1 - Inadequate access to technology
- 2 - Lack of involvement of teachers with technology
- 3 – Lack of Providing technical support and maintenance of the technologies
- 4 – Lack of sufficient knowledge and ability to exploit technology
- 5 - Lack of regulatory and legal framework for the use of technology
- 6 - Dangers of computers for education
- 7 - Inappropriate use of the Internet
- 8 – Mono-cultural world and indigenous of local cultures

E) Challenges of funds:

- 1 - The lack of a comprehensive system for the Economics of Education to solve the teachers` financial and living problems.

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- 2 - Lack of sufficient funds for the development of in service training
- 3 - No sufficient funds for the development of educational service training

Solutions and recommendations

If we want to achieve an Iranian society with features depicted in twenty-year outlook of 2025, the educational system should change from a stagnant and passive system to an active, efficient and effective one.

To achieve this important task, a national determination is required accompanied with the participation of all political, cultural, social and economic institutions of the country. In this way, solutions and suggestions raised by the investigators to be discussed below can be helpful:

- 1 – Reduction of government management and supervision and providing conditions for independency of education and training system.
- 2 - Entrusting the management of the education system to the real experts and creating essential link between universities and education
- 3 - Continuous monitoring of laws and adoption of effective policies and procedures to improve internal and external factors affecting the education system
- 4 - Focus on the policy, retaining the central governmental management and delegating responsibility for planning and implementing certain tasks to districts and schools
- 5 – Providing facilities, standards and appropriate teaching methods to identify, strengthen and grow the different levels of management in the ministry, provinces and different regions of the country.
- 6 - Giving priority to planning and performing of integrated educational programs in order to attract labor and retrain manpower in related offices
- 7 - Setting up performance evaluation systems in the process of personnel selection and development of training programs
- 8 - Revising existing rules and setting new rules with regard to the educational community and regional councils, in order to attract the cooperation of the public and other governmental agencies at the national, provincial, regional and institutional levels
- 9 - Data collection and evaluating teaching performance of NGOs, providing services to attract teachers to provide relevant and necessary arrangements for the development of institutions, through the implementation of the Plan such as training personnel, providing the academic and technical support and utilities, regular assessment effectiveness and quality of educational services
- 10 - Provision of institutional facilities and acceptance of proper procedures for the education of nomadic tribe and exceptional children
- 11 - Coordination of public education with social, political, economic and cultural needs
- 12 - Coordination of objectives, programs and instructional methods with students' needs
- 13 - Identification of facilitating factors and barriers to achieve short-term, medium-term and long-term educational goals
- 14 - Evaluation of the efficiency of the educational system at all levels and effectiveness of the educational system on educational administration
- 15 - To identify and develop future strategies and policies to provide appropriate training
- 16 - Identifying the educational problems of goals, curriculum, teaching methods, training specialists, organizing, managing, and educational evaluation
- 17 - Recognizing social and psychological problems in children and adolescents and promoting their personality, socialization and leisure
- 18 - Investment and development programs
- 19 - Involvement of teachers in real environments and monitoring activities at all educational levels
- 20 - Care of the livelihood of teachers and create job attractions for this profession
- 21 - Planning for training individuals in order to achieve the standards of ethics, knowledge, understanding, insight and skills
- 22 - Reinforcing religious, cultural and social beliefs

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- 23 - Comprehensive and coherent plan for achieving equal education
- 24 – Providing the facility for proper training along with updated technologies of the world and equipping schools with computers and network
- 25 - Development of localized technologies
- 26 - Providing technical support and maintenance technologies
- 27 - Providing proper cultural context to adopt developments in accordance with globalization and new technologies
- 28 - Formation of research groups, investment in research and studies, developing a research framework
- 29 - Preparing standards and criteria for the evaluation of technologies
- 30 - Training teachers through in -service training sessions to make full use of technology

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