

Global Education Policies of UNESCO and The World Bank: A Comparison Study¹

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Abstract

UNESCO and the World Bank are working to improve many aspects of human life around the globe also in the field of education. Their view matters since they have the power to affect people around the world and their policies. Although these two organisations are working together on projects in the field of education, their views on the general merits of education bring them apart. It can clearly be seen from their general agendas that while UNESCO's motto is "building peace in the minds of men and women", the World Bank's mission is to reduce poverty and support development. These two very distinct understanding of education leads to various approaches and outputs for global education policies around the world. While the World Bank focused on the issues such as the economic analysis of education, school to work transitions, and finance and expenditures, UNESCO set its agenda on themes such as human rights education, education for sustainable development, teacher education and inclusive education. Financial concerns dominated the World

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Bank's agenda, while UNESCO seemed focused on the wellbeing of people involved in education, whether students or teachers. It is suggested for developing countries that these differences should be taken into account when considering working with these two organizations in the field of education.

Keywords: Education policy; World bank; UNESCO; Millennium development goals.

UNESCO ve Dünya Bankası Küresel Eğitim Politikaları: Bir Karşılaştırma Çalışması

Öz

UNESCO ve Dünya Bankası, birçok alanda çalıştığı gibi eğitim alanında da insan hayatının birçok yönünü geliştirmek için çalışmaktadır. Bu örgütlerin görüşleri, küresel düzeyde insanları ve politikalarını etkileme gücüne sahip olduklarından dikkate alınmalıdır. Bu iki örgüt, eğitim alanındaki bazı projeler üzerinde birlikte çalışsalar da eğitimin genel değerleri hakkındaki görüşleri onları birbirinden ayırmaktadır. Genel gündemlerinden açıkça görülen UNESCO'nun sloganı “kadın ve erkeklerin zihninde barışı inşa etmek” iken, Dünya Bankası'nın amacı yoksulluğu azaltmak ve kalkınmayı desteklemek olarak görülmektedir. Bu iki farklı anlayış doğal olarak dünya çapında küresel eğitim politikaları için çeşitli yaklaşımlara ve çıktılara yol açmaktadır. Dünya Bankası eğitimin ekonomik analizi, okuldan iş hayatına geçiş, finans ve harcamalar gibi konulara odaklanırken, UNESCO insan hakları eğitimi, sürdürülebilir kalkınma eğitimi, öğretmen eğitimi ve kaynaştırma eğitimi gibi konularda gündemini oluştur görünmektedir. Finansal kaygılar Dünya Bankası'nın gündemine egemen olurken, UNESCO, öğrenci veya öğretmen, eğitimin içindeki insanların refahına odaklanmış görünmektedir. Gelişmekte olan ülkelerin eğitim alanında bu iki kurum ile çalışırken bu farklılıkları göz önüne alması önerilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Eğitim politikası; Dünya Bankası; UNESCO; Binyıl kalkınma hedefleri.

Introduction

Education is shaping the worlds of imagination. Sometimes, it limits the fresh minds of children by teaching them exactly how to live, what to wear, how to eat, which leader to follow etc. In another context, it prepares young generations to live together in an interdependent world (Osley and Vincent, 2002, p.1). There are many definitions of education ranging from liberal to Marxist, from humanist to spiritualist. It matters how you define

education as it indicates what you want to achieve at the end of the education period.

“Education’s challenge will be to shape the cognitive skills, interpersonal sensibilities, and cultural sophistication of children and youth whose lives will be both engaged in local contexts and responsive to larger transnational processes.” (Suárez-Orozco and Qin-Hilliard, 2004, p.3) Arguably the biggest challenge that globalisation poses to the education is that worldwide education policies are not able to keep up with the trends and changes in the modern world at the current rate of globalisation. While curriculums are not able to answer global challenges and problems, local issues are also undermined and overlooked.

In this postmodern era, many children sit with their classmates who are sometimes from a different continent, or religious and cultural background. The global movement of people across the globe is making it difficult to live in highly homogeneous communities. Children must now learn to think in different ways, and to consider a diversity of opinions and cultural practices. How should one Swedish child in Sweden see arranged marriages that are common amongst Moroccan migrants in Sweden? Similarly, how should one Kurdish child in the UK consider gay couples in his street? In this regard, there are significant challenges ahead for the education policy makers who want to reform or say something about national education policies or want to develop a global education policy.

Education Policies of UNESCO and the World Bank

UNESCO and the World Bank are working in the field of education. Their view matters since they have the power to affect people around the world and their policies. In this study, it will be discussed that although the education policies of the World Bank and UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) have similarities and their main aim is to meet the need of a global education policy which claims to end inequality and inefficiency in education and improve the quality of education and access to basic education around the world, each of them has a different stance on the general purpose of education. This makes a significant difference on the implementation and development of the education policies. However, they often collaborate with each other: for example in HIV/AIDS education. These differences can be summarised by saying that the Bank’s education policy tends to be more practical and more

about the financial features of education. On the other hand, UNESCO's education policy is more theoretical and adopts a rights-based approach and it deals with the social and spiritual aspect of education (UNESCO, 2007). As Deacon (2007, p.72) stated, UNESCO is concerned with the content of education, not with the funding. In this respect, their two main programmes, namely Education for All (now Education 2030) and Learning for All, will be analysed, discussed, compared and evaluated in the light of discussions regarding global education.

There were two main global movements in the field of education at 2012; Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA) (UNESCO, 2012, p.114). As of 2018, after adoption of the Incheon Declaration for Education 2030 in 2015, UNESCO revised its targets in terms of achieving millennium development goals since they had not been met by the deadline of 2015 (UNESCO, 2015). UNESCO was the leading agency of the EFA programme and five other international organisations cooperate in this movement. The World Bank was one of these five organisations in the programme. Alongside this, the Bank also launched its own education strategy in 2011 entitled 'Education Strategy 2020 Learning for All Investing in People's Knowledge and Skills to Promote Development'. Furthermore, the World Bank economists altered the Millennium Development Goal of primary school completion to a Millennium Learning Goal (Barrett, 2011, p.119). The education strategy of the Bank highlights three main points: investing early, which promotes childhood education; investing smartly, which prioritises learning and skills acquirement and finally yet importantly; investing for all, which determines to give girls and unprivileged children access to education (The World Bank, 2012). The key word to understand here is "investing".

The Bank is primarily a bank; therefore, it deals with money and financial transactions. It could be challenging for a social scientist to contextualise the word 'investing' in the title of an education strategy. Nonetheless, as can be seen from the Bank's main aim ("... to reduce poverty and support development") (World Bank, 2012) the bank manages the money. It would be strange to expect an education strategy, which is concerned with the human rights and good citizenship education from the bank. The reason might be that as Rizvi and Lingard (2010, p.18) state "Education is regarded as the producer of the required human capital." In

this case, treating education as a matter of economics and development seems reasonable. However, it should be argued that education institutes where the culture and values are transmitted to the next generations and children learn how to socialise with others and acquire skills to cope with life challenges cannot be downgraded as solely the producer of human capital which the labour market wants (Klees, 2012, p.2). Hasan and Hartog (2010, p.303) also believes that schools should focus not only on vocational skills but also others such as general analytical skills and cultural skills.

There is an assumption here, which says; investments in the quality of education lead to better and sustainable development and growth (The World Bank, 2011). In this regard, the growth-focused paradigm of development, which deals with human capital, as well as other aspects of growth, might have been applied to education policy by the World Bank (Hasan and Hartog, 2010, p.298). This way of understanding might be the origin of such education programmes. Yet, in 1996, the World Bank itself asked the question why did more education not lead to faster economic growth? (Pritchett, 1996). As far as the World Bank's stance on education is concerned, it seems that the emphasis is put on the quality of education rather than the quantity of it. It is also worth noting here is that on the contrary the Human Development Index whose indicators have been revised, uses the mean years of schooling as one of the indicators of human development worldwide (UNDP, 2011). What the Bank means by the quality of education is the skills that people acquire at schools to achieve economic growth (The World Bank, 2011). As Heyneman (2003) stated, the challenge for the bank in the 1960's was that when the bank wanted to operate in a country, it needed skilled workers and professionals to cooperate with. Otherwise, it was almost impossible to operate and achieve sustainable growth. Therefore, nothing was wrong with prohibiting any lending to humanities, art and science faculties of schools. The Bank preferred to train the work force, invest in teaching and equip people with the skills necessary to work in the field. In a sense, the Bank was not willing to assist theoretical education; education should be practical, employable and commercial (Klees, 2012).

Nevertheless, it could be argued that the bank ignores the fact that education may make people believe in a system other than free market ideology. In that case, capitalism, which the bank relies on, supports vice

versa, would have great difficulties to survive (Doyal and Gough, 1984, p. 20). In developing countries like Turkey, the Bank focuses mainly on instilling free market ideology by forcing governments to open their national market to global investments and privatisation. For instance, in 2001 economic crisis in Turkey, the Bank accepted to help Turkish economy on some conditionalities including privatisation of one of the largest state run telecom companies (Kikeri and Burman, 2007, p.2). Therefore, it would be logical to think that the Bank will invest in educational institutions, which will benefit the Bank and its worldview in return.

It should be noted that The World Bank sees very strong links between education and poverty, social protection and health, which cannot be easily overlooked (The World Bank, 2011). As for the relationship between poverty and the merits of education, the Bank states “*Education improves the quality of people’s lives in ways that transcend benefits to the individual and the family by contributing to economic prosperity and reducing poverty and deprivation*” (The World Bank, 2011, p.12). The Bank is also quite confident in saying that the involvement of the Bank in education sector should not only consider education as its own but it should also look at “*...those that pertain to health, social protection, employment, transport, water, public sector governance...*” (The World Bank, 2011, p.67). The Bank pays great deal of attention to social protection programs due to the fact that continuity of education process depends on the families’ welfare and income in times of economic crisis or adverse circumstances (The World Bank, 2011, p.67). Although it could be right to say that education is a subject that interconnected with many other areas, and therefore it cannot be understood on its own, this idea has room for different interpretations. It can be argued that the Bank could use the inefficiency of education policies and a practice in a country to influence other areas and even manipulate a country’s other policies and services.

This issue raises other problems that the education sector cannot solve on its own. At this point, the Bank may give loans and donate money to poor countries in order to create a suitable environment for education. However, it does not prevent someone from asking why the bank has to reform national education policies at all, whilst there are many other organisations in the world that specialise in education and can offer their help to the countries need it.

For instance, UNESCO was the leading agency on a programme, which was collaborated on by many other institutions including the World Bank. This programme was Education for All. It was launched in the World Education Forum in 2000. The Bank has taken part in this programme and it is still giving its ongoing support to the movement (The World Bank, 2011). Therefore, it is very normal to ask for an explanation of the existence of two different education policies, one led by the Bank and the other one led by UNESCO. Although both organisations work together in many areas including education, it does not necessarily mean that they do not criticise each other. UNESCO EFA Global Monitoring Report 2011 (2011b) stated that the financial institutions, which cooperate in the Education for All programme such as the World Bank and IMF, have failed to assess the implications of the global economic crisis for the EFA goals. Moreover, Godolphin (2011) argues that the Bank has not facilitated its resources to achieve EFA goals. Furthermore, it has caused debates that education dialogues with countries were managed by economists or non-professionals rather than professionals in education (Steer and Wathne, 2009).

On the websites of both organisations, the Education for all programme can be found. They have the same six goals which are “expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education: ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to, and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality: ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes; achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults; achieving gender equality in education by 2015; and improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all” (UNESCO, 2011). It is interesting to see that they had more or less the same aims and contributions to the movement. It can be seen that improving the quality of education was one of the aims, which the new education strategy of the World Bank emphasized on. Therefore, why was there another strategy created for only one purpose which was already taking place in another international organisations agenda? According to the Bank, demographical and technological global challenges and changes demanded a

new strategy to improve the quality of education with gains in access to schools (The World Bank, 2011, p.2). However, it does not account for a need of a comprehensive education strategy by a bank, which predominantly pursues financial gains.

An overview of the approaches of both organisations to education would display that they had some common themes such as Science and Technology Education, HIV/AIDS education, education for all, and early childhood care (UNESCO, 2015). Moreover, SABER (Systems Approach for Better Education Results) initiative which was one of the initiatives of the World Bank on education sector, organised a conference in Indonesia titled as 'Strengthening Education Quality in East Asia' in close collaboration with UNESCO in 2011 (SABER, 2011). There were 22 main themes in UNESCO's education policy. These themes were ranging from climate change education to science and education from economic crisis and education to secondary education (UNESCO, 2012c). However, the World Bank's education policy was composed of 4 main topics: Education for All, Education for the Knowledge Economy, Economics of Education and School Health and Nutrition & HIV/AIDS. There were also 19 sub topics, which addressed different areas in education (The World Bank, 2010).

On the other hand, different concerns about education can easily be seen from the relevant websites of both organisations. While the Bank was focused on the issues such as the economic analysis of education, school to work transitions, and finance and expenditures, UNESCO set its agenda on themes such as human rights education, education for sustainable development, teacher education and inclusive education (UNESCO, 2012c and The World Bank, 2010). It reveals that their main concern on education is different. Financial concerns dominated the World Bank's agenda, while UNESCO seemed more focused on the wellbeing of people involved in education, whether students or teachers. Moreover, although the World Bank published a document titled "Implementation of Free Basic Education Policy" in 2006, and discussed the challenges and achievements, its education strategy did not mention free education at all (The World Bank, 2011). However, UNESCO's main education agenda which was 'Education for All' highlighted that primary education should be compulsory and free across the globe (UNESCO, 2011).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the education policies of the World Bank and UNESCO shared some common themes. However, due to the Bank's nature and its main aim, it focused on the practical side of education such as equipping people with job skills to ensure sustainable development and making sure that at the end of the education period, everyone had the skills to lead them to be competitive in the labour market. On the other hand, UNESCO was more concerned about the theoretical aspect of the education such as human rights education and inclusive education, which addressed the issue of gender inequality and disadvantaged children (UNESCO, 2012c, p.7). Although these two organizations were working together on some projects in education, their views on the general merits of education brought them apart. It can clearly be seen even from their general agendas that while UNESCO's motto was 'building peace in the minds of men and women', the World Bank's mission was to reduce poverty and support development (UNESCO, 2012b and World Bank, 2012). Therefore, it is suggested that developing countries should consider their priorities in terms of education policies when working with UNESCO and the World Bank in the field of education.

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