Nainita Madurai

SAGES Position Paper

03/02/2010

Globalization and the rapid spread of information have recently made education an incredibly important issue around the world. In my opinion, education is a fundamental base in any society or culture. This is issue in which many people get involved. Programs such as *Teach for America* encourage people in various fields to become short-term educators. There are also many programs that allow people to teach English and other subjects in foreign nations. I am interested in education, specifically in developing countries, because in the future I wish to study child and adolescent development in the Middle East. I believe the importance of getting a good elementary and secondary education is sometimes overlooked. These initial years in school are at crucial times in the development of children and adolescents. Additionally, performance during elementary and secondary education determines whether adolescents will continue on to get a higher education. Because of this, education reform is a constant problem for governments across the globe. Even developed nations, like the United States, struggle with education reform. However, for the purposes of this essay I will focus on education in developing nations. Education is a vast topic that encompasses other relevant issues. The issues that I will discuss are censorship, development in “developing” nations, and availability of resources.

Censorship is unfortunately a problem that occurs in every nation. If censorship does not occur directly then some form of it does. An example of indirect censorship is bias in the media or in textbooks. It is incredibly difficult to get rid of censorship completely, especially when education is strictly controlled by government. However, censorship hinders education and is a problem that many societies should look at tackling.

Development and the concept of progress are very important in, what are considered, developing nations. Progress is a relative term, and as an aspiring anthropologist I will say that people view progress ethnocentrically. However, the truth is that progress is different for every society. Any sort of progress, no matter where, is a process of change. Desire for change is often the result of education. It is true that most revolutions and social movements are led by highly educated individuals. On the flip-side, education can sometimes interfere with cultural and societal practices. This interference can either be negative or positive.

Access to a good education is a serious global problem that does not discriminate between the rich or the poor nations. However, within developing nations, educational resources are far more available to wealthier and upper class citizens. Because education is unevenly distributed, the gap between the rich and poor only gets wider. This widening gap signifies a loss of opportunity for the people who cannot afford a good education. If they never receive the proper education their families may remain in poverty for generations.

Another reason I find education interesting is because of the irony that exists in the knowledge and education I have received. Through my education, I have come to understand that as you learn more information, you realize more and more how little you actually know. Knowledge is eye-opening to how big the world is, and education is the means by which knowledge spreads. It is evident that education is important in any society. Ultimately, I would like to help change the world of education. To do that, we have to explore different methods of teaching. And most importantly, we have to understand htow to tailor these various methods to fit the different aspects of societies. In the future, the questions that I want to answer are: why is a good education important? Why are the methods of teaching crucial to a good education? And if it is possible, how should societies go about changing the methods of teaching?