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The roots of educational changes in the perspective of democracy challenges in Finland and England in the 20th century

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The roots of English conservatism and its perspectives in education

Conservative ideas appeared as a reaction to social and economic changes in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in Europe. Conservative doctrine was found on the principle of hierarchy and the assumption that equality among people does not exist. Consequently, “conservatives divide society into classes and categories, which depend on abilities, skills, and social origin” (Suwalska, 2017, p. 37). As a result, conservatives affect the right of a social group to raise the young generation and advocate the rule of law, a strong state, and a free market.

The roots of English conservatism and its perspectives in education

In the light of the conservative doctrine, political leaders “are responsible for ensuring the integrity of traditional institutions and the preservation of existing social patterns. If they introduce social or educational changes, they implement them gradually. Such changes are usually few and involve elements which do not impact tradition”(Suwalska, 2017, p. 37). According to conservatives, people deprived of the past and their roots feel lost.

The roots of English conservatism and its perspectives in education

It seems necessary to mention that the main role of the conservative school is to acquaint a young man with the achievements of previous eras and instill membership in a particular social class.

The student is obliged to understand cultural values, develops appropriate behaviour, and respects social norms. The school teaches about membership in social classes and the resulting work, wages, and vision of the past. As a result the roles of church, family, and school are perceived highly as values of conservatives.

The roots of English neoliberalism and its perspective in education

Liberalism, which started in the era of the Enlightenment in France, developed in Europe in the nineteenth century along with the emerging capitalist society based on the free market. The concept of ideology was developed by French philosophers, who rebelled against absolute monarchy, educational institutions, and dogmas of the Church. They promoted civil rather than religious values, separation of church and state, and the removal of religion from schools.

The roots of English neoliberalism and its perspective in education

They underlined the secular nature of education, the task of which was the training of qualified workers. The student was at the centre of liberal ideology, which resulted in a new vision of the school. “Laissez-faire capitalism is thus seen as guaranteeing prosperity, upholding individual liberty, and, as this allows individuals to rise and fall according to merit, ensuring social justice” (Heywood, 2002, p. 33).

As a result, “the followers of the liberal conception of property and economy, particularly the principle of laissez-faire, believed that the government was responsible for the creation of conditions for the development of a competitive economy” (Suwalska, 2017, p. 36)

The roots of English neoliberalism and its perspective in education

The economy directly influenced education and its development, especially the knowledge and skills necessary to find work regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic conditions. Consequently, educational policymakers made political decisions with regard to educational policy and programs taking into account centrist tendencies. The principles of liberalism introduced the limits of freedom for teachers and students. Liberals implemented a curriculum which allowed a free choice of profession.

Equality and peruskoulu in Finnish education

Equality means not only the particular rights but duties of people, too (Espinoza, 2007, p. 345) and it is also connected to the power of particular language in the process of building the social reality (Englund, 2005, p. 40). “The notion of equality is not only a tool for linguistic description; it also evaluates and creates different educational realities” (Englund and Quennerstedt, 2008, p. 717). In this light, it makes sense to mention what kind of educational equity phenomenon is represented in the Finnish society. “Because school learning is strongly influenced by children’s family background and associated factors, equity of outcomes requires that schools are funded according to real needs to cope with these inequalities” (Sahlberg, 2015, p. 149). There is an observable relationship “as John Dewey (1916) insisted that educational experience provided the bridge between “self” and society, between self-realization and democratization” (Pinar, 2004, p. 13).

Equality in Finnish education

The introduced peruskoulu required from teachers who worked in the academic grammar schools or work-oriented civic schools the ability to teach students with different abilities. As Jouni Välijärvi justified the comprehensive school reform was based not only on organizational change but it introduced a new philosophy of education (Välijärvi et al., 2002), which included the statements that all students can learn because of giving them appropriate opportunities and enough support.

Finnish schools introduced a relationship which provided the bridge between “self” and society, between self-realization and democratization” (Pinar, 2004, p. 13).

In this light, to understand and learn about human diversity is a significant educational goal, for which schools are obliged to function as small-scale democracies, as John Dewey had suggested before. In Deweyan philosophy “democracy will stand or fall with the possibility of maintaining the faith and justifying it by works” (Dewey, 1939/2003, p. 153).

Equality in Finnish education

According to Sahlberg (2015, p. 167), it is “understandable that the pragmatic, child-centered educational thinking of John Dewey has been widely accepted among Finnish educators”. In this light, Dewey’s pedagogy is highly related to research-based education of teachers who study in Finnish universities.

The main directions of teachers’ professional development in Finland have been educational theories, research-based teacher education, methodologies and days of teaching practice since the 1970s. Finnish students are obliged to design and implement the most original, exceptional research in theory and in practice of school. Practical training at schools is a main part of the university study of teachers in Finland. According to Sahlberg (2015, p. 117), “all teachers as professionals are able to understand teaching holistically and improve their work continuously”.

Equality in Finnish schools

The key element of research-based teacher education is deep and wide knowledge about the most useful research in their subjects of teaching. They are obliged to understand the theoretical principles of research to introduce them in their classrooms. A research-oriented approach in teaching activities is linked to open-mindedness of teachers and their ability to design conclusions based on different methodological sources used during their lessons. According to A. Suwalska (2018, p. 275), Finnish society „trusts their teachers and heads of schools”. The integral parts of teacher education programs are theory and practice in Finland. Teaching practice involves three main parts: “orientation, intermediate practicum, and advanced practicum, which expand teacher trainees’ responsibilities” (Jyrhämä, 2006) .

Finnish teachers

Teacher training schools, which are close to universities, manage students' practice. They encourage students to work as reflective teachers and critical practitioners. Finnish teachers, who are leaders, prepare their own curriculum which should be accepted by local education authorities. As a result, teachers are authors of needed supervision and regulations which promote success of Finnish students. Teachers do not have to check and test students very often, as it takes place in England and the USA.

The roots of educational reform in England

In March 1976, following the resignation of Prime Minister Harold Wilson and in connection with numerous attacks by the Irish Republican Army, James Callaghan became the Labour Party leader and Prime Minister. However, in the wake of the declining value of the pound sterling against the US dollar the Labour Party lost the elections of May 3, 1979 to the Conservatives. The new leader was the first female Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who developed a strong policy.

The roots of educational reform in England

Thatcher strengthened the economic potential of the UK and created a more stable political situation in the country through reducing the scale of taxes and creating conditions for the development of private industry. She sought to strengthen the central government.

.Well-prepared and full education is reserved for only very few children. The New Right, observing “the necessity for education to accommodate the needs of economic life and to support the workforce, returned to the traditional elementary school and expressed opposition to the idea of universal education” (Suwalska, 2017, p. 97).

Consequently, these educational changes named as strategy of top-down reform (Śliwerski, 2015, p. 179) limited the compulsory curriculum and modified the role of teachers to the function of contractors, managed by corporations in educational process. The proposed changes in education in England, offered only the basics of education for all.

The roots of educational reform in England

Zbigniew Kwieciński (1997) precisely described this type of educational change as the strategy of the managed epidemic. Consequently, every teacher and student is forced to accept the change introduced by the education authorities. This contributed to an enlargement of the competence of the Minister of Education in educational programs. The Act introduced the concept of “Key Stages,” marking educational stages in the formal assessment of all students at the ages of 7, 11, 14 and 16. A framework for the compulsory pro-gram of education for each of the four stages of education was introduced. The curriculum involved balanced spiritual, moral, mental, and physical development.

The roots

Due to fast changing conditions in the factories and competitive global markets, education was forced to introduce professional orientation of students with the ability to plan and monitor students' professional future.

The central government was responsible for the provision of educational services, educational policy, and planning the direction of educational system. In this light, the working conditions and employment of teachers were changed, too. Teachers faced an ultimatum: "either submit to re-education or lose your job" (Jones, p. 43).

Firstly, one curriculum for the entire country was introduced in England, but then didactic objectives were also prepared for student achievement at specific ages, along with "specific criteria for implementation of the program, which in turn become an integral part of reforms" (Potulicka and Rutkowiak, 2010, p. 27) in the context of school-leaving exams.

The roots

Privatization and centralization were the main pillars of the reform with “neoliberalism characterized by market competition in education and neo-conservatism in the case of centralization” (Potulicka and Rutkowiak, 2010, p. 95).

Privatization in educational policy in England promoted private schools through scholarships for students from poor families. Only people from the middle classes could receive scholarships; they were not granted talented children from the families of manual workers. The 1988 reform made stronger the ideological control of education and accelerated differentiation between schools. New curricula and new exams were introduced, which contribute to neoliberal working methods. Moreover, the work, employment, promotion and dismissal of teachers changed. Teachers were treated as technicians who manage the process of teaching.

The roots

The new curriculum in England was overloaded with facts that required memorization. There was no time for discussion or students' doubts. Students studied in the atmosphere of obedience without understanding of concepts, accuracy, and principles. Teachers reduced the development of students' personality and killed their critical thinking. In corporate ideology, teachers, as "ideological intermediaries, contributed to the emergence of a labor force that enabled efficient management of the production process by financial potentates" (Suwalska, 2017, p. 101).

As Hayek mentions in *The Constitution of Liberty* in the section "Contract work and independent work." The hardest part is to convince the masses that it is in the common interest "to maintain conditions enabling only a few people to achieve the positions that to the masses seem unattainable" (Potulicka and Rutkowiak, 2012, p. 75).

Conclusions

Conclusions

This article presents the educational change in Finland and in England in the context of roots of democracy challenges in both countries. Finland has built the welfare state democracy with its consequences in Finnish schools. The article confirms that the comprehensive school reform in Finland was based on a new philosophy of education (Väljäre et al., 2002) which enables providing students with appropriate opportunities and enough support. The phenomenon of Finnish educational equity is represented in society, especially when students come from varied family backgrounds. As a result, equity of outcomes requires that schools obtain money to cope with these inequalities. In addition, Finland has got rid of the system of external inspection and improves the quality of teachers' work. Consequently, Finnish society appreciates high-trust to teachers' job, teachers follow the same values

Conclusions

On the other hand, England incorporated neoliberalism, which was described by H.A. Giroux as “a massive attack on equality and justice” (Suwalska, 2017, p. 98). In the 1970s the Conservative party paid attention to standards and values in education. As a result of neoliberal and conservative ideologies, England introduced effective education for rich and lower quality for poor children of workers and peasants. The elements of neoconservatism and neoliberalism were united in the presented educational concept. Furthermore, schools accepted reduction of education expenditure due to free-market educational policy.

Conclusions

It led to a growing gap between school-leavers of general and vocational education. New trends in education contributed to conservative educational policy and to the selectivity between and within schools.

Due to fast changing conditions in the factories and competitive global markets, education was forced to introduce professional orientation of students with the ability to plan and monitor students' professional future. There will always be inequalities in England in access to education which depend on abilities, talents, and origin.