

Renovation and innovation in education, its facilities, and its conditions

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Abstract

The rapid evolution of all aspects of the human life, especially in the field of communication and information, on one hand, and the common destiny of the world due to higher interaction between countries, on the other hand, have created a social motivation for innovation and renovation. This motivation comes generally along with some frustration among the people of most of the developing countries. This frustration pushes them to undertake reforms –if not revolution- in political, social or cultural domain including education issues.

The people of these societies being anxious about the education of their young generation are fascinated by the new doctrines or technologies of education. Hence, they often forget or underestimate the sound traditions stemmed from their cultural inheritance. They neglect as well the present and future conditions or possibilities of innovation in their own countries.

This article emphasizes that before starting any innovation in education system, it is worthwhile to answer to the following questions:

1- How we perceive the innovation to be realized in each of the domains of education?

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2- What are the relevant conditions for such realization?

3- How and from where we have to start these educational innovations?

Answers to these questions are given in this article.

Key Words: Educational innovation, educational renovation, contemporary education, Iranian education system

The rapid speed of development in all aspects of human life, especially in the field of production, relationship, and information exchange as well as the close relationships and the common destiny of the countries has created a type of social motivation, which encourages renovation and innovation. In many societies, this motivation as well as dissatisfactions and unpleasant feelings that accompany it have provided the ground for great modifications in political, social, and cultural life, an example of which includes education system renovation, especially in the developed countries. The experts of the developed and developing societies argued about the ways of innovating and renovating education systems and about their own and their children's education method.

Some education systems are sometimes so fascinated with the innovations that they forget the well-thought-of traditions raised from their own cultural heritage as well as the facilities and the conditions for renovation and innovation. Hence they remain lost between the old and the new. For this reason, we should answer the three following main questions and deliberate on them in order to see renovation and innovation as profitable and possible.

1- What is the purpose of renovation and innovation in education, and what are the basis and the standard for re-understanding the new from the old?

In order to be able to define “new” in any field, we should start the discussion from the values and the values system in any society and era. “Old” is attributed to a thing or thought that is not compatible with the new conditions and is not capable of meeting the new needs. In fact, it is this lack of compatibility which encourages the human being to seek for the new and innovation. It

is always so that the new needs, which are raised due to change in living conditions, create new needs, thoughts, and values in our mind and encourage us to find a new plan.

Naturally not all individuals feel such needs to a same amount and do not have the ability for seeking the new, and more importantly do not have the ability to innovate. As a result, the society is divided to groups of conservatives, obsolescent people, innovative people, people who look at the present, and those who are futuristic oriented. And finally, there is a group of people who are successful in setting the ground for transformation in the society and the models or styles for life. These individuals are those who have the spirit of creation or are creative and can foresee the coming transformation.

It is obvious that what is meant by “new” and “innovation” in the education system is not change in the appearance such as new buildings or use of the up-to-date tools that have become popular due to modern technology entry. Renovating should begin first where it can result in teaching new knowledge and skills and cause deeper and more speedy learning. In fact, the first thing needed is clarifying a common direction in which the policy for education, all the planning, and establishment of methods move together. In the innovation which can – or should – take place in the education system, identifying the higher objectives and goals for the education system, and finally the overall educational goals and aims stand at first priority. At this point, a hierarchy is imagined which should be first identified. Perhaps this task is the most essential and at the same time the most difficult work that should be carried out by the ones responsible in the education system. The work is their responsibility that must go with consulting participation of the intellectuals and scientists of human-sciences, especially those of the educational sciences.

What needs innovation is to determine the overall goals or those related to the time-lines and the places, as the references for the new needs of a society at its present speedy development. Here, the first innovation step is to see what physical, rational, and emotional characteristics our developing society has, or as Bloom says what cognitive, emotional, and behavior characteristics it has so that it can achieve its economical, political, social, and cultural goals in

the present time and in the future. This is a work that takes place with the participation of the clear-sighted persons and scientists in the fields of economy, sociology, and psychology on one hand, and educational sciences experts on the other hand. It is especially important that the educational sciences experts be those who are also familiar with philosophy and be able to philosophize (i.e. thinking as a philosopher) to a deep extent in the mentioned field in addition to education knowledge in its experimental meaning. To make this first step of innovation take place, a set of conditions is required, which we will answer while responding to the second question.

The point that needs being mentioned here is that in determining the education goals, it is not enough to rely on the human aims and ideal perfection in its general meaning. Rather, the conditions in any era and society should be considered in our aiming. Today, being the era for fast exchange of information, it is impossible to imagine the human being and its characteristics in a particular society. The impact of the society in its global meaning, norms, thoughts, and behaviors that are transmitted in various forms, such as the mass media, cannot be ignored. In fact, these external elements are constantly influencing the identity and personality of the individual and the group. Most often these external elements result in internal contradictions and create a form of dual and sometimes multiple characteristics. Therefore, one of these innovations is to think about new ways to resolve the mentioned internal contradictions, struggles, and challenges and to achieve thinking and emotional stability to be able to struggle the lost balance of our society. The main and important innovation in education is to create strong and creative personalities with new-thoughts, who are at the same time stable instead of creating personalities who have dogmatic characters and are captured by the stereotyped thoughts. This is possible by creation of plans and especial methods for educating individuals. In all of these elements, research into the objective and real condition of education for the purpose of innovation in any field is very important.

2- Assuming that the thought or the new design in the education system has been generally described, what conditions should be created for applying it?

The first condition for the successful performance of the mentioned new project is that the background situation be appropriate for conducting them. The history of Iran's contemporary education shows that in the past, projects for renovation or innovation were only partially beneficial and instead of working for the good, made the environment more complex and chaotic, or were forgotten after a while. Such circumstances rose since the primary requirements for conducting the projects were not in place even though the projects seemed logical and beneficial to the nation. The reason for these defeats was that firstly, the tools for conducting the projects were not prepared, and secondly the education staffs, especially the members of the teaching group (teachers and instructors) were not trained to face understanding the new education philosophy and the carrying-out of the new principles. They were not familiar with the carrying out equipment, which of course were the new methods. In the second place, the Iranian society –including the families and the related social groups– were not united for accepting the new principles and collaboration in using them. Furthermore, they did not believe in its correctness and efficiency.

To tell the truth, it is not possible to fully take away the education system with all its constructing elements from the roots and replace it with the absolutely new system or construction blocks such as programs or new methods. This is since the elements of the system are connected together and impact each other in both directions. Secondly it is so since the education system has a tight relationship with other social organizations that influencing them and gets influenced by them. When no attention is paid to these connected links and when we focus on changing all or part of the mentioned system, often not only do we end up having no satisfactory results –that is, for the renovation or innovation– but we face a lot of new chaos and mixing up that takes place, which is sometimes very difficult to fix. This is since we have paid no attention to the links and have strictly imitated the models that

belong to another society or followed a world-view which has become popular.

3-How and where should we begin innovation in the education system?

For responding to this question, we take a look at what has been so far stated about the renovation and innovation conditions in the education system. It seems that the first step in doing this is the understanding of the current condition and the insufficiencies in comparison with the desirable conditions or, in other words, a condition in which reaching for new goals becomes possible. The second step is to provide conditions in which new models can take a practical form. It is obvious that just upon witnessing the current insufficient conditions, models from another culture or other social circumstances cannot be imitated and constructed. The third step is to make the involved groups aware of the benefits and the necessity of innovation. In addition and parallel to this, various groups such as the families should be made aware and encouraged to participate by getting their agreement with what is to be done. Experience shows that in order for any kind of innovation in education to make improvement in the education system body and flourish, it should be accepted in the informal educational environments. Since the benefit and the necessity of any kind of innovation should be first understood and accepted by the education staff –including the teachers and the instructors– it is better that any kind of innovation as well as its reasons and methods be clear for the future teacher education faculty members and university staff and other instructors in order that this group can work on making the rest of the groups in the society aware.

The final point is that in education the true new innovations are considered the thoughts and reflections, models, and ideas that have a clear philosophy which is a combination of national thoughts outcomes and global arena and having its support. The philosophy should be effective in good training of the individual and creating the characteristics that are necessary for social and moral advancement in the society, especially knowledge-loving, wisdom, and innovation.