

A Comparative Look at 'Development and Education' Among World Countries

Synopsis :

As Harvard professor Juan Enriquez clarified in his book "*As The Future Catches You*", a developing country can reduce the inflation, decrease the corruption, lower the budget deficit, and make significant privatization; however, still might not get rich since it only produces goods rather than knowledge (*all of the foregoing are among the current priorities of Turkey*).

Why is it that Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Africans, or Indians continuously remodel their economic structures, and they are still not as rich as the industrialized nations? Can it be because of the very few amount of knowledge they produce and sell?

Without any hesitation, it is education which can break this dead-end and make 'others' compete with the rich ones. Without adapting the national educational policies and systems to this inevitable 'knowledge revolution', the ability to increase the share of the pie will be weak.

Today's technology slams into existing systems and destroys them while creating new ones. Countries and individuals can either surf new and powerful waves of change -or get crushed trying to stop them.

Wealth will be more concentrated and those with knowledge to sell -both countries and individuals- will be the winners.

Aware of the fact that to continue the economic growth and the welfare state, the competitiveness should be increased, and to succeed it, German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder pointed out the need for a progress in education and R&D.

This progress includes the increase of college entrance percentage of high school graduates from 36% to 40% and establishing centers to train elite researchers. German federal government also aims to increase R&D/GDP ratio from 2.5% to 3% until the year of 2010.

While The United States spend \$182 billion every year to enlarge its knowledge base and Mexico does only \$1.4 billion, the hope of 'catching the train' seems to remain as a dream for the developing nations.

95% of the patents received in the US in 1999 belong to companies of just 12 countries. The number of patents belonging to IBM in 1998 in the US was more than the total patents of 139 countries. IBM received 2,756 patents in 1999; 2,934 in 2000. The total amount of knowledge this transnational company produced in 1990's helped it receive more than 15,000 patents.

According to a research of Boston College among 38 countries' students, the best Math and Science kids come from the Far East. This arguably underlines an explanation of the reality of 'Asian Tigers'.

And China: Last decade's annual growth on average exceeds 8%. But how about their educational improvements? In International Math Olympiads (IMO) of 1995, 1997, 1999, 2000, 2001, and 2002, brilliant Chinese students took the first place and in 1996, they shared the first place with Russia. (Among those who were placed in top spot,

comes Romania and Iran. Then the ones in top five in the last eight years are Vietnam, Hungary, England, Taiwan, Bulgaria, and South Korea.)

According to the UNESCO report of January 21, 2002; less-developed countries constitute 79% of world population while only 27% of world researchers come from those nations. These less-developed countries constitute 39% of world wealth while only 19% of R&D spending come from those countries.

While developed countries' R&D/GDP ratio is 2.4%, less-developed only allocate 0.9% of their national wealth to R&D. And finally, three of every **1,000** are researchers in developed countries while three of every **10,000** are researchers in less-developed countries.

According to a research of Turkish scholar Muammer Kaya from Osmangazi University, Turkey loses 59 of every best 100 educated brain and is now 24th out of 34 countries with highest brain migration, which also gives an idea of current economic problems.

Final Word :

To describe economic welfare differences among countries, a global language on educational policies and strategies need to be improved.

To offer long-term solutions for inequalities of distributing global wealth, policy makers first have to understand the international role of education with special reference to educational investment (mainly between 'developing-or-less developed countries' and 'western industrialized world').

If developing countries will not be able to end the period of 'development' by adjusting their educational policies with today's technological changes, then they always may have to stay as 'developing countries'.

To understand today and shape future, significant consideration should be given to scientific advancement, technological and economic trends and their effects.

Last but not least, by ignoring economic welfare differences or acting loose to help poor ones invest more on educational spending, the world's future will be full of conflicts and unknowns. I argue that more educational spending will even serve to overcome the major barrier of vanishing world security.