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The Problematic of the Algerian School in Light of Current Social Change: Reality and Challenges

إشكالية المدرسة الجزائرية في ظل التغير الاجتماعي الراهن – الواقع وتحديات-

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ملخص:

تشهد المجتمعات العالمية المعاصرة تحديات ثقافية تتمثل في العديد من التغيرات المتسارعة في الفكر العالمي، كما تشهد معظم البلدان حركة تغيير غير مسبوقة ففي ظل التغير والتحولات العالمية والتغيرات المحتملة في عالم الغد وما يترتب عليها من تغيرات مجتمعية وتكنولوجية وثقافية، كون السمة الرئيسية اليوم لا تقتصر على نقل المعرفة فقد بل تجاوز ذلك، فتعليم الغد مطالب بتأكيد عدد من المهارات الرئيسية منها القدرة على التعامل مع التغير السريع والقدرة على استشراف التغير والاستعداد له والتهيؤ له.

بحيث حظيت المنظومة التربوية في الدولة مؤخرا بالتفاتة حسنة من طرف الباحثين التربويين، حيث صبغت مجموعة من البرامج لإصلاحها وتشمل هذا الإصلاح كل من المناهج وطرق التدريس و ..... في الأطوار الثلاث.

ولكن كسوسيولوجيين نلاحظ مشاكل لا تنحصر فقد على المناهج والوسائل السياسية التعليمية المتبعة وجودة التعليم بل تتعدى لأهم من ذلك، وهذا ما يدور عليه محور مداخلتنا.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المدرسة الجزائرية – التحديات – التغير الاجتماعي.

Abstract:

Contemporary global societies are facing cultural challenges manifested in rapid changes in global thought. Most countries are currently experiencing an unprecedented wave of transformation. In light of these global shifts and the potential changes of tomorrow's world—with their accompanying societal, technological, and cultural impacts—the main feature of today's education is no longer limited to the transmission of knowledge. Education for the future is required to emphasize a set of key skills, including the ability to cope with rapid change, anticipate and prepare for it.

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Recently, the educational system in Algeria has received renewed attention from educational researchers, leading to the implementation of various reform programs. These reforms cover curricula, teaching methods, and other aspects across all three educational stages. However, as sociologists, we observe that the challenges are not limited to curricula, educational policies, or the quality of education, but extend to more fundamental issues. This is the central focus of our presentation.
Key words: **:** Algerian school, challenges, social change.

Introduction:

An analysis of the socio-historical heritage of the school in society reveals the reciprocal relationship between school and society throughout history. The school, as a social and educational institution, is influenced by the educational system it belongs to and by the broader society, which, as a holistic system, affects the nature of its institutions, systems, and structures, and is in turn influenced by them. Today, the school as a social system has become a central issue for both developed and developing countries, especially since the role of education in contemporary societies is closely linked to processes of development, modernization, and progress. This has prompted many countries to reform their educational systems to keep pace with global developments. Like other countries, Algeria has sought to address social change—whether cognitive, social, or cultural—by focusing on educational reform, including structural and functional transformations of the Algerian school, curriculum and content reform, and the organization of educational structures to enable Algeria's integration into the knowledge society.

In light of this, current debates about the school revolve around many complex topics. The Algerian educational system, in addition to internal conflicts among competing discourses seeking dominance over this key social institution, suffers from a crisis rooted in the functions and roles of educational systems. This crisis is fundamentally about the relationship between school and society: the school is not an isolated world, but a system whose function and evolution are determined by integrated social processes within the broader social system.

First: Terminological Definitions

1.Challenges:

Challenges are defined as externally sourced variables, which may be obstacles or opportunities facing the institution and hindering it from achieving its objectives, requiring increased efficiency and internal reorganization to overcome them (Mazhar, 2005, p. 5)

They are also described as the set of difficulties teachers face in performing their educational duties, negatively impacting the effectiveness of the educational process and limiting the achievement of its goals. These difficulties span various aspects of teaching, such as content planning, selection of appropriate teaching methods, use of educational tools, and classroom interaction, necessitating study and solutions (Sadfawi, n.d., p. 3).

2 The Algerian School:

The school is a social and educational institution established by society to educate and socialize generations according to its principles and values, enabling learners to acquire the knowledge and skills needed for active participation in social life. The school plays a key role in integrating individuals into the social fabric and enhancing their ability to adapt to their cultural and social environment, thereby achieving harmony between individuals and the broader goals of society.
According to "Sheiman," the school is "a network of centers and roles performed by teachers and students, where standards are acquired that define their future roles in social life" (Wazfa & Al-Shihab, 2004, p. 16).

The modern school is a specialized educational institution concerned with the comprehensive development of the child—physically, mentally, emotionally, socially, and morally. Its goal is to create a well-balanced individual capable of positive adaptation to contemporary changes, relying on scientific curricula based on modern educational principles and technology (Ministry of National Education, 1973, p. 15).

3. Social Change:

Social change is one of the most important topics in social sciences, increasingly relevant today due to the scale, speed, and impact of changes affecting individuals, groups, and societies.
The concept is complex and multi-faceted, with no single definition, as is often the case with social concepts, given the diversity of researchers' interests and the complexity of the phenomenon itself.
Social change is defined as a continuous dynamic process involving structural and functional transformations in systems and institutions within the social structure over a specific period, leading to reorganization of social behaviors, relationships, and roles. Due to the organic interconnection among social system components, a change in one aspect often affects other systems, resulting in a chain of interacting changes across most dimensions of social life (El-Sayed, 2008).
Adel El-Houari defines it as a process of transformation affecting social systems and institutions, whether morphologically (structurally) or physiologically (functionally), during a specific period. This change is interconnected and complex, as a change in one social phenomenon often leads to a series of qualitative changes impacting various aspects of life with varying degrees of intensity and scope (MacLeod & Gomson, 2014, p. 41).
In summary, social change encompasses the total transformations affecting the structure and basic functions of society, its demographic composition, its systems and institutions, as well as prevailing social relationships and representations. It is a continuous process occurring over time due to the interaction of multiple material (economic, technological) and non-material (values, culture, public policy) factors, with direct or indirect effects on individuals' behaviors, roles, and status within the social structure.

Second : The Problematic of the Algerian School Amid Current Challenges

The core issue in Algerian educational reform lies in the educational methodology underpinning the system, which is rooted in an ideological framework derived from official political discourse and translated into educational policies. However, the inconsistency and shifting references of these discourses over time have produced a structural crisis, disrupting the natural development of the modern Algerian school model and leaving the system out of sync with global transformations in knowledge, technology, economy, and culture. This has negatively affected the school's ability to accompany global developments and produce citizens equipped to face contemporary challenges.

Based on this, several issues arise regarding the school in Algeria, summarized as follows:

1. **Improvisational Educational Reforms:**

   The absence of a comprehensive, forward-looking vision and a lack of scientific methodology and integrated system in formulating reforms have left many plans as temporary, fragmented solutions, rather than tools for radical transformation and sustainable development. Instead, they have become mere reactions that do not address the root structural problems of the educational system (Mohsen, n.d., p. 64). Each new education minister in Algeria tends to introduce their own reform project.

2. **Deficiency in School Knowledge:**

   The Algerian school suffers from a clear knowledge gap, making it unable to keep pace with rapid changes, especially amid the current digital and scientific revolution. The school culture often lacks harmony with prevailing modes of thinking in society and sometimes produces mental and behavioral models at odds with lived reality, deepening the gap between school and society.

3. **Ambiguity of Educational Goals:**

   Decades later, there is still debate over the desired type of school: one that addresses national issues and incorporates the nation's values, or one that focuses on universal human and scientific concerns, often neglecting national and spiritual specificities.

4. **Stagnation in Teaching and Learning:**

   There is an urgent need to reconsider the school's operational mechanisms, program content, and educational methods to align with contemporary

knowledge requirements. Despite legal emphasis on curriculum renewal and modernization, the school often remains bound to traditional practices that marginalize learners' abilities and creativity. Overcoming this requires a deep shift in educational philosophy to focus on the learner as an active agent, investing in individual potential rather than merely transmitting ready-made knowledge.

5. **The Language Issue:**

Algeria still faces pressing language challenges, especially with the coexistence of Arabic and French in education, and the recent introduction of English as a third foreign language in primary schools. Despite widespread support, there are concerns about implementation, such as lack of qualified teachers and the need for age-appropriate curricula.

Third: The Relationship Between the Algerian School and Current Social Change

The relationship between the school institution and social change is a central issue in contemporary educational discourse, especially amid structural transformations driven by scientific and technological revolutions since the mid-20th century. These changes have created new social dynamics and widened the gap between the school as a traditional institution and society as a continually changing entity. As a result, the school has become unable to keep pace with rapid social and cultural changes, negatively affecting its educational and integrative functions and diminishing its symbolic and practical effectiveness within the social fabric.

A key aspect of the current educational crisis is that education targets the future but is designed based on the past, creating a paradox between the past it is built upon and the future it is intended to shape. The school has, in this context, become a kind of historical museum where children are compelled to dwell (Addi, 1978, pp. 268–278).

To approach the essence of the global educational crisis, several points highlight the tension and boundaries in the relationship between society and the institution, especially regarding the production and dissemination of scientific knowledge:

1. The school is no longer the sole producer of knowledge; thousands of scientific and commercial institutions now generate knowledge.
2. The school is no longer the only disseminator of knowledge; other institutions spread it rapidly through media and social networks.
3. Educational programs lag behind modern scientific knowledge, creating a gap between school and scientific reality.
4. The school fails to develop critical scientific awareness, focusing on rote learning rather than critical and scientific thinking.
5. There is an imbalance between theoretical and practical education, with excessive focus on theory and neglect of practical skills needed in the labor market.

A major aspect of the school's educational crisis is its dual function: preserving values and socializing students according to prevailing ideologies, while also keeping pace with technological and cultural innovation. This creates a fundamental dilemma: how can the school reconcile these functionally contradictory roles within the educational process?

Fourth: Challenges Facing the Algerian School Amid Current Social Change

The Algerian school currently faces structural and knowledge-based challenges reflecting the scale of social change in Algerian society. On one hand, the society is experiencing rapid dynamics—urbanization, increased use of digital media, changes in family structure, and declining traditional symbolic authorities, including the school. On the other hand, the national educational system has struggled to adapt quickly enough, creating a growing gap between official educational discourse and learners' realities.

Despite significant political, educational, and social efforts, the system still faces obstacles, including:

1. **Cultural Challenge:**
   Contemporary society is undergoing rapid cultural transformations, marked by a conflict between traditional values and new norms promoted by media and digital technology. This threatens the value and behavioral foundations of individuals, especially learners. The teacher's role is crucial in reinforcing cultural identity and national belonging, requiring cultural and cognitive competencies to help learners distinguish between authentic and imported values, thus achieving two strategic goals:
   - Reinforcing Arab-Islamic cultural identity and protecting against cultural hybridization.
   - Supporting national and communal orientations by explaining development plans and reinforcing positive societal values (Al-Naji, 2000, pp. 111–112).
2. **Globalization Challenge:**
   Globalization imposes multiple challenges on the Algerian school, particularly regarding the preservation of national identity amid unprecedented information flows and exposure to diverse cultures. The school must prepare individuals for civic engagement, allowing conscious openness to other cultures while minimizing negative influences and maximizing benefits from global experiences. Institutionally, the school must leverage scientific and technological advances to serve its educational and developmental goals, adapting tools and curricula to meet current and future market needs.

3. **Technological and Scientific Progress Challenge:**

   The main challenge is the school's ability to shift from traditional to e-learning. The third technological revolution, or post-industrial/post-modern

era, is based on advanced scientific knowledge and creative minds. What matters is not just possessing technology, but using it optimally (Matawa, 2000, p. 35).

4. **Economic Challenge:**

   Algeria, like other Arab countries, faces economic difficulties affecting educational reform. Budget deficits have delayed many educational projects, and economic challenges have left most reform initiatives unimplemented.

5. **Educational Planning Challenge:**

   Educational planning in Algeria and the Arab world has often been ad hoc, with several challenges negatively impacting school performance, including:

   - Lack of experts and expertise in planning.
   - Absence of planning methodology within the educational system.
   - Lack of integrated planning between education and development.
   - Ignoring the relationship between school and other educational institutions.
   - Failure to benefit from contemporary global experiences.

Key Recommendations:

1. Restructure educational curricula to balance cultural preservation with global competencies, focusing on 21st-century skills such as innovation, critical thinking, and self-learning.
2. Implement programs and activities involving both community and school to harmonize perspectives on the negative effects of certain changes.
3. Adopt curricula that reinforce Islamic and national identity among students.
4. Enhance continuous teacher training in values education, understanding global cultural changes, and mastering modern technology.
5. Integrate media and digital literacy into educational programs to enable learners to critically engage with digital and media content that may conflict with national cultural identity.
6. Align educational programs with labor market needs by incorporating vocational and technical education and strengthening practical skills.
7. Allow schools greater flexibility to adapt curricula and knowledge tools to their capabilities and students' socio-economic and cultural needs.
8. Accelerate internet connectivity for all schools and provide training for staff to use computing and information technology.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, Algeria is striving to catch up with developed nations in education by adopting policies aimed at advancing the Algerian school, especially as globalization becomes an undeniable reality. We must face it with internal strengths rooted in our intellectual, economic, and social foundations, given the magnitude of the challenges. This paper offers several proposals, emphasizing that educational priorities for schools amid current social change and globalization should be based on two main pillars: cognitive adaptation to rapid developments and technical/technological adaptation. The paper demonstrates that traditional education, still prevalent in schools, is no longer suitable in the new context. This hierarchical, passive model turns students into mere recipients, making them unfit for the knowledge society. Given the seriousness of the challenges, immediate restructuring of schools is required, focusing on cognitive development and the comprehensive adoption of computing in all school activities and programs.

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