**Critical Thinking Analysis of Contemporary Educational Issues: Case Study 2**

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**Introduction and Application of Critical Thinking Principles**

1. **Key Issues**

In Case Study 2, the main concern is based on the inequality in education for the disadvantaged groups such as Indigenous and lower socio-economic status students. Such communities are always at the receiving end of poor education since they are denied adequate funding, cultural representation, non- bias teachers, and equal opportunities as their counterparts in society (Biddle & Cameron, 2019). The chronic underinvestment in such schools means that the facilities are poor, there are few books and other learning materials, and fewer opportunities for children to participate in activities outside the classroom, which all increases these gaps (Lamb & Huo, 2017).

Education has been a highly unequal system that has been shaped by socio-economic status, cultural background, geographical location and especially past injustices (De Bortoli & Thomson, 2020). These inequalities have particularly impacted indigenous people since they have been colonized, excluded and marginalized for many years. For instance, a failure to incorporate culturally sensitive learning materials makes Indigenous students feel unrepresented, which leads to their disconnection and increased drop-out rates (Vass, 2018). In addition, there is evidence that socio-economic factors, including poverty, play a part in educational disparities. Students from poor background are unable to get basic needs such as books, computers, and private tutors which are essential for their academic success (Thomson et al., 2016). This inequity in the distribution of resources to various schools especially in rural or hard to reach areas keep on reinforcing poverty and low education attainment (Vass, 2018). Thus, the elimination of these disparities must be solved at the systems level and involve changes in funding, curriculum, and teacher training for cultural sensitivity (Biddle & Cameron, 2019).

1. **Stakeholders and Their Arguments**

The major actors in Case Study 2 are the disadvantaged groups, schools and other policy makers, teachers and parents. All these groups give different reasons for this based on their experiences and positions in the system of education. Some of the disadvantaged groups include Indigenous people and low income groups who claim that they have been denied fair and equal chances and resources in education (Biddle & Cameron, 2019). They demand for structural changes that will change the current disparity in resource allocation, teaching and learning material and professional development of teachers as well as the adoption of culturally relevant curricula (Boon & Lewthwaite, 2016). These communities still consider themselves as being marginalized within the education system, when they are not represented culturally.

*Educational Institutions and Policymakers* on the other hand believe that the constraints in education are as a result of resource constraints and other issues that are beyond the control of individual institutions or the system in place (Skourdoumbis et al., 2024). However, some policymakers may be aware of the inequalities but may argue that there have been major educational reforms that have been put in place for example, the need based funding models and any other changes that may be deemed necessary are limited by the available budgets (Thomson et al., 2016).

*Teachers and Educators* emphasize on the difficulties they come across in the course of their practice regarding lack of adequate pre-service and in-service education on cultural competence (Mifsud, 2024). Teachers and Educators claim that due to lack of resources or support they are not in a position to meet the requirements of their students. Also, they suffer from work-related burdens which hinder them from implementing new strategies of teaching or even new curriculum (Kline, 2016).

*Parents and Communities* from such backgrounds call for more reform since they feel their children are being provided with substandard education as compared to children from affluent schools (Baeza et al., 2023). Most parents advocate for education change that entail increased community participation in the formulation of curriculum and in the determination of resource needs.

1. **Underlying Assumptions of Stakeholder Arguments**

The two stakeholders work under some assumptions that shape their reasoning and points of view on the problem of educational inequity. Members of the minority groups are likely to believe that the education system must and can be changed to accommodate them and that cultural diversity is possible to be embraced (Lowe et al., 2024). Stakeholders presume that the discrimination that has been entrenched in the system is due to the social injustice that is accorded to their communities. This assumption is based on the idea that it is possible and necessary to change the system in order to address past unfairness.

For this reason, educational institutions and policymakers often believe that the current education system is relatively equitable, and that the differences in learning achievements are caused by factors other than the system’s deficiency, such as poverty, family background, or motivation of learners (Skourdoumbis et al., 2024). This assumption makes them to work for small changes rather than seeking radical changes since they believe that the current policies are sufficient to address issues of educational inequalities.

Teachers tend to believe that they do not have time and necessary resources to incorporate culturally sensitive practices in their classroom. They may consider the current curriculum as the best they can achieve given the conditions they are in, or they may believe that making drastic changes to their teaching practice would need more resources and help than is available (Baeza et al., 2023). This assumption can lead to the reinforcement of the current state of affairs as teachers may not be able to bring change in a system that is unresponsive to change.

On the other hand, parents from such background may feel that the system is already against their children and that a lot of pressure must be applied to make changes (Biddle & Cameron, 2019). This assumption is based on past experiences of exclusion and lack of adequate implementation of previous reforms.

**Identifying Potential Fallacies and Biases within the Issue**

**Evaluating Fallacies and Biases in Stakeholder Arguments**

The issues of educational inequity among the disadvantaged groups as discussed in Case Study 2 is filled with cognitive biases and fallacies that affect how the various parties think and reason about the problem. These biases and fallacies cause a lack of progress in addressing educational inequalities since it becomes difficult for stakeholders to make unbiased and rational decisions on the problem.

1. **Appeal to Tradition (Educational Institutions)**

There is one more logical fallacy that can be identified in the case of policymakers and educational institutions – the appeal to tradition. The current educational system has been implemented for many years and in general it has been effective in serving the population, according to policymakers. The basis of this argument is the belief that since the system has worked in the past (for some groups), it does not need much modification. The appeal to tradition fallacy is a weakness because it ignores the changing requirements of various students especially in a society that is increasingly multicultural and socio-economically diverse (Biddle & Cameron, 2019).

The fact is that the effectiveness of the system, on the whole, has been driven by the results of the middle-class and other non-suspect populations, while the negative impact on the Indigenous people and other vulnerable groups, including those with low income, has not been considered (Vass, 2018). This fallacy fails to consider how cultural minorities experience exclusion, how resources are distributed unequally, and how culturally sensitive curricula are absent (Lamb & Huo, 2017). It does not take into account the fact that the environment in which the system was developed is different from the current one and as such the system has to adapt to the current environment. The educational institutions and policymakers have to accept the fact that the current system only preserves the existing disparities.

1. **Confirmation Bias (Marginalized Communities)**

Another cognitive bias that may affect the views of the minorities is the confirmation bias. Such communities may only pay attention to instances that support their belief that the system is unfair and that they have been receiving raw end of the deal while ignoring the positive changes that have been made (Thomson et al. , 2016). This bias may influence the way these communities approach policy discourse, including their capacity to identify gradual changes or reforms that have been made in the past. For instance, the minorities may perceive additional funding or attempts to include more diverse material as inadequate or symbolic, thus, supporting their notion that the system is not serious about change (Boon & Lewthwaite, 2016).

Of course, it is correct that many of these problems have not been solved at the systemic level, but confirmation bias can make these communities fail to notice when progress is made. It also means that it may be challenging to have a constructive conversation with policymakers because the emphasis is still placed on previous mistakes (Skourdoumbis et al., 2024). On the other hand, the policymakers must understand that this bias is a result of past experiences where their promises were broken and the system ignored the existence of the indigenous people, and thus, they should try to regain the trust of the indigenous people through constant and genuine interaction and change.

1. **Status Quo Bias (Teachers and Educational Institutions)**

There is always a possibility that teachers as well as the educational institutions themselves may show status quo bias, which is the inclination to favor the preservation of the existing state of affairs as change is considered to be dangerous or unpredictable. This is especially the case in education where major changes like changing the content of what is taught to reflect the diversity of the population or redistributing resources to schools that are poorly funded can be daunting to the stakeholders (Kline, 2016). In teachers, status quo bias may be seen in the refusal to embrace new teaching techniques or cultural sensitivity training, especially where they are already overworked and bogged down by numerous responsibilities (Boon & Lewthwaite, 2016).

1. **False Dilemma (Parents and Communities)**

As a result, parents and communities from the marginalized backgrounds may be trapped into the fallacy of the excluded middle where they view the issue of educational reform as a zero-sum game. In this view, if changes are not made right now and at large scale, the whole system of education is considered as a failure for their children (Biddle & Cameron, 2019). This kind of thinking prevents effective discussions and does not take into account the possibility of gradual changes that can have a large effect on the disparities in the long run. It is quite understandable that such parents are impatient with the progress that has been made, but the way the problem is set up as one between radical change now or more failure does not allow for the kind of discussions that would lead to meaningful change (Vass, 2018).

This fallacy also has the potential of polarizing the conversation because it pits the stakeholders on different sides working towards different objectives. Policy makers and educators may feel under pressure and threatened by calls for radical, large scale changes that are demanded of them and this may only serve to consolidate the current state of affairs (Skourdoumbis et al., 2024). It would be more beneficial to admit that the changes are necessary and urgent while at the same time understanding that it is not easy to make such changes in the system.

**Biases Affecting Decision-Making and Perception,**

There are several types of biases that affect decisions in education but the most common ones are implicit and confirmation biases. Sesnsitivity bias refers to hidden prejudices that make teachers expect less from the minority students and this impacts on the quality of teaching and learning. This bias also affects the perception of student conduct, which leads to more severe punishment for the students of color than for the white and wealthy students. This means that policymakers may only concentrate on data that supports their views such as increased graduation rates while ignoring other issues affecting the marginalized groups. This can result into complacency in addressing inequality and underfunding the needy schools. To overcome these biases, it is necessary for policymakers to look for the information that would contradict their current beliefs and include diverse viewpoints.

**Developing an Argument and Culturally Compatible Strategies**

1. **Relevance of the Issue to the Classroom**

This issue is very important in the field of education since it deals with equality, fairness and discrimination issues. If these disparities are not addressed, then the social and economic implications could be enormous. The disadvantaged students will still be denied their right to education and will keep on being locked out of better future and opportunities that come with it in the society. If educational inequality remains the same, the society as a whole will worsen social inequalities which leads to systematic exclusion, high unemployment rates and high social welfare costs. However, the inequitable education also denies these communities the ability to positively impact the economy and the society.

1. **Consequences of Inaction**

If this issue is not addressed, it will perpetuate long-term disadvantages for marginalized groups, leading to:

* **Widening Socioeconomic Gaps:** This means that the employment rate will be low among these people and this will only help in maintaining poverty within the affected communities. This in turn leads to the decrease in social mobility as well as the perpetration of deprivation for successive generations.
* **Social Fragmentation**: Education can therefore widen social inequalities and cause social unrest or dissatisfaction among the minority groups who feel they are locked out of the benefits of society.
* **Cultural Erasure**: If culturally responsive education is not valued, the cultural wealth of Indigenous and other marginalized people is not valued since their histories and cultures are not well represented in the curriculum.

1. **Implementation of the Action Plan and Strategies for Change**

Solving this problem calls for the formulation of appropriate measures that would enhance the attainment of educational equality. Drawing from relevant research and evidence-based practices, several key approaches include:

1. *Inclusive Curriculum Development*

The need for an inclusive curriculum that incorporates the histories, languages and cultures of the aforementioned groups of people. This approach can foster learning environment where all students feel they are being represented and are of value. For instance, the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge is important in acknowledging First Nations people’s input and in creating a welcoming environment for the Indigenous learners.

1. *Culturally Competent Teacher Training*

It is important that teachers be trained to become culturally sensitive. Teacher training courses that aim at increasing the teachers’ understanding of culture, prejudice, and culturally sensitive teaching strategies can reduce prejudice in the classroom. Teachers should be equipped with the necessary resources and assistance that would enable them to teach their students with respect to their cultural backgrounds.

1. *Resource Redistribution*

The funding of education should be fair. Schools in these areas should be given more funding to make up for the years of neglect and poor funding that such schools have received. These may include recruiting more employees, offering extra academic assistance after classes, and enhancing the quality of teaching aids and tools.

1. *Community Engagement*

It is possible to involve parents and other members of the community in decision making concerning education hence leading to a more collaborative approach. This way, communities are involved in the development of curricula, and therefore are more likely to ensure their children get an education, and the system is more likely to meet the needs of the students.

1. **Cultural Compatibility Considerations**

Any educational reforms have to take into consideration and embrace cultural diversity of the minority groups. When developing curricula or teacher training and development, it is necessary to consult with community and cultural authorities to avoid using improper material and to use proper teaching methods.

**Conclusion**

It can be concluded that the elimination of educational inequality is an issue of not only ethical significance but also of functionality. Using critical thinking principles to the problem, assessing fallacies and biases, and designing culturally sensitive solutions, we can start on the path of making education fair. The implications of doing nothing are severe, however, there is evidence that positive change can be made for the vulnerable groups and society as a whole if efforts are made.

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