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by Student Help

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BRITISH STUDIES/ TOPICS

(TOPIC 12: BRITISH EDUCATION SYSTEM)

Introduction

The education system of Britain is quite famous as excellent quality education, interactive teaching methodology including top ranking and widely appreciated universities are part of this education system. Across the entire United Kingdom, there are basically five different stages of education patterns or systems present. Research on the British education system has shown that in Britain, early years, primary, secondary including FE ("further education") as well as HE ("higher education") are compulsory. Owing to this fact, in order to provide explicit knowledge on the British education system, the current study has attempted to highlight key details of the "British education system". Apart from covering explicit details, a critical view on "British education system" has also been highlighted to ensure appropriate understanding regarding the patterns or key elements of this aforementioned education system. Details regarding each part or subsections of the British education system have also been covered. Criticisms and drawbacks of the British education system have also been highlighted in this study. Apart from providing critical views, personal opinion on the "education system of Britain" has also been highlighted to ensure development of proper topic-oriented and topic-relevant knowledge.

Exposition

Critical view on "British education system (BES)"

The British education system is quite unique as the education system of the UK has been evolved and developed by having a completely separate system under separate Governments. In FY 21-22, the UK has spent around 4.6% of the nation's national income (1). This has highlighted that the UK has spent attractive funds to make the educational system inclusive as well as highly effective. However, spending by schools per learner or pupil has reduced by around 9% in FY19-20. This has further revealed a shocking truth of the current education system in Britain. This also reveals, the education system of the UK has both positive and negative sides. There are basically ups and downs in each substrata of the British education system.

Empirical evidence has suggested that the Government of the UK is considered as a responsible authority for England maintaining responsibility for England's education system (Male, 2022:313). The Welsh Government as well as the executive of Northern Ireland are responsible for the education system of Wales and Northern Ireland. Moreover, in terms of maintaining the education system in Scotland, the Scottish Government takes the responsibility. Apart from this segregated form of responsibility, the law related to the British education system also states that full-time education is considered to be essential and

compulsory for all children. For instance, ¹ full time education has been compulsory for British children belonging to an age group of 5 to 16 years (2). This has highlighted that the British education system has the ability to give basic education to all children of the nation.

Moreover, extensive research on the education system has highlighted that the National curriculum of England, established in the year of 1988, has provided a widely accredited framework of education for Wales and England between the age range of 5 to 18 years (3). Despite being a fixed education curriculum, a wide range of private educational institutions, free schools, academies, home educators have designed their own exclusive education curricula to fulfil the education needs of children of Britain. This shred of evidence has highlighted the uniqueness of the British education system along with diversification of the education system of this nation.

Details on early years education in Britain

Early years education is a key part of Britain's education system (Bradbury, 2019:20). Research on the early years education system, it is evident that in England since FY10, all 3-4 years are mainly entitled to around 15 hours of absolutely free education for around 38 weeks in a year. The most notable feature of this particular segment of the British education system is that education in early years mainly takes place in a variety of settings such as voluntary preschool, preschools that run privately, nurseries, childminders. Apart from this, empirical evidence has highlighted that in recent years, vast expansion in early years education has been witnessed and this has only been possible with the amendments of the Education act 2002 or "EA2002". As per the views of Kim *et al.* (2019:99), educational standards refer to skills as well as knowledge learners need to possess at certain critical points in their education career. Furthermore, educational standards need to serve as a comparative principle for promotion, examination, evaluation, supervision as well as assurance of significant quality in education. In this context, the early years educational system in the British education system has highlighted all those facilities, which can maintain the key criteria of the aforementioned comparative principles.

Second part of Britain's education system- the primary stage

In addition to early year's education, more diversification is present in the British education system. In Britain, the primary stages explicitly cover three different age categories or age ranges such as nursery under 5 years, infants (5-7/8 years) (4). This differentiation has been widely visualised in England, while in other parts of the British education system, such as Scotland as well as Northern Ireland, no prominent distinction has been visualised between junior as well as infant school. Thus, the British education system has highlighted different

strata in their education system, which in turn helps in accomplishing educational needs of the nation. As per the views of Philippas and Avdoulas (2020:360), the basic as well as ultimate goal of primary education is to achieve numeracy as well as literacy amongst all pupils. Apart from this, establishing foundation in subjects like mathematics, science, primary education is considered to be utmost necessary. For instance, as a part of the primary education system, children in Northern Ireland as well as England are mainly assessed at the end of first and second stage. On the other hand, in Wales, learners have been assessed in their final year of the foundation phase as well as at the end of the second key stage. Assessments of pupils have been done by various teacher assessments. Thus, followed by early years of education, primary years of education are as effective as early years of education, which fulfils the basic literacy and numeracy needs of pupils across the entire Britain.

Secondary education system as well as higher education system

In England, apart from the early and primary education system, provision for secondary school is also available. Secondary school is considered to be other strata, which further reflects historical circumstances as well as policy adopted by the local authorities of England (5). Research has also shown that there is much diversification of secondary schools in England (Carter Andrews *et al.* 2019:6). For instance, in Northern Ireland, post primary education mainly comprises around 5 compulsory academic years, while in case of Scotland; the schools of Scotland have taken 6 comprehensive years to successfully complete secondary education. This has highlighted the diversification of secondary education in several parts of Britain. This also shows diversification of the overall education system of Britain based on different regions. Although there is much diversification present in the education system of Britain, the primary motto is to fulfil the literary and numeracy needs of pupils of Britain.

Apart from secondary education, another part of the British education system is the higher education system. Research on the higher education system of Britain, Higher education ((HE) in England as well as the UK mainly consists of higher degrees or courses such as bachelors degree, masters degree as well as doctoral degrees. This has highlighted that apart from basic education, the education system of Britain has the ability to offer inclusive and higher degree courses to its learners who intended to acquire all high qualification. Most importantly, this part further signifies the real inclusiveness of the UK's education system.

Further education system (FES)

FES is also a vital part of the British education system, which mainly has been used in a general sense in terms of covering all advanced sources. This education has been taken after completion of compulsory education. However, there is a distinction between higher education as well as further education. While HE has focused on offering higher education than secondary school, FE in Britain has included and offered education to people more than 16 years of age. In this education subsystem, work associated training, community learning and such others have been offered by FE colleges in the United Kingdom. Thus, this reveals another unique part of the UK's educational system, as this helps in providing unique educational systems. Based on the recent information, further education has been considered as a wider part in wider learning as well as the skill sector, which is followed by workplace, prison education including other types of non-school education regime. Owing to this fact, it can be understood that likewise other education, this segment is also equally vital. Being a part of the Britain education system, this segment makes the UK education system even more inclusive as well as effective. Additionally, "British school system (BSS)" is also part of "British Education system" which also includes BTEC courses to enhance a wide range of practical knowledge (Denny *et al.* 2021:01). Apart from this, the FES or "Further education system" has given explicit emphasis on building practical skills. Thus, in providing skilled-based learning, this part of BES has played an integral role. All these aforementioned shreds of Evidence has highlighted that FES are a key part of the British education system, which includes a completely different set of education, highlighting a complete uniqueness of this education system. As a whole, this represents that the British Education system (BES) has developed in such a way which not only highlights the diversity of this education system but at the same time represents the capability of BES in terms of providing practical education and skill-based education.

Criticisms of educational system of Britain

Education systems can undergo a range of Criticisms if it is not maintained in an appropriate manner. The drawbacks present in any nation's education system can disrupt the process of delivery of education. Although the British education system has an attractive side, considerable criticisms are also present about the British education system. As influenced by the ideas Hodgson *et al.* (2019:277), an ideal educational system needs to give equal opportunity to all leaders to access an equitable range of resources to up-skill their educational aspects. This further helps in fulfilling educational needs of a nation's learners and pupils of school age. For instance, critiques have highlighted that the growth of education in the British education system has not been uniform at all sub education levels. This has

highlighted the drawbacks of the British education system in terms of maintaining uniformity at all educational levels. Moreover, primary schools under the British education system have undergone a wide range of challenges due to subsequent lack of a desirable amount of funds. Furthermore, as per the evidence highlighted by *Guardian*, in England, education has close resemblance with conservative professions (6). In addition to this, lack of funding as well as investment further stresses on educational resources. This eventually creates pressure on pupils and teachers, who are part of the UK education system. Furthermore, critiques also reveal that the education system of Britain has the capability to attract only limited social classes instead of offering equitable educational opportunities to common masses. For instance, in the UK, the vast masses of the UK still remained illiterate while the education system mainly focuses on giving education to the upper-middle as well as middle class education (Xu and Tsai, 2021:10). This shred of evidence has highlighted another drawback of the British education system. This aforementioned argument also reflects that the educational system has been restricted to some extent. Taking into consideration only a few social classes in turn indicates the main flaws of the British education system. Due to all these reasons, the British education system has been subjected to criticisms. For instance, the “British education system (BES)” is well known for a range of prestigious systems such as Cambridge, Oxford, which provides excellent and a variety of educational courses for a range of international learners. Despite having a wide range of aforementioned prestigious universities across the globe, the British education system has been subjected to criticisms. Hence, despite segregating the educational system into different strata, English education is still incapable of providing required education to masses. Owing to these criticisms, the respective authorities of the English education system need to take responsibility to provide education to wider masses instead of focusing on upper-middle classes and middle classes. Instead of adding complexities in the education system, focus needs to be given on minimising the criticisms and maintaining an inclusive education system.

Personal Opinion regarding the chosen topic

British education has had the reputation of having one of the highest and most effective education standards across the globe. Based on my personal opinion, the British education system has attractive elements as well as drawbacks. I think that the “British education system (BES)” has involved a range of good universities as well as colleges, which are key parts of the BES. I also believe that having the highest education standards across the globe, the UK educational system is considered to be one of the inclusive education systems. Furthermore, despite having the highest reputations, there are certain strata in the UK

education system, which can make the education system complex. Most importantly, I think the funding issues, unequal distribution of resources are major criticisms of the British Education system. Based on my opinion, the English education system is quite conservative and yet the education system is unable to distribute a wide range of resources. I also believe that by accumulating more funding and giving more attention in maintaining equality in the education system, the British education system can make significant improvement. Focusing on distributing education across broader masses, I believe, a better as well as absolute fair education system can be maintained by Britain. Thus, as a result of this, future improvement in the current education system can be possible.

Conclusion

From the above study, it can be summarised that, education system in Britain is quite diverse and effective. Apart from including different strata, the education system of Britain has included a wide range of effective elements. These wide range of effective elements has helped in fulfilling basic education needs of people including providing assistance to grab key educational knowledge through quality of education. The stands or strata present in the British educational system helps in defining skills and knowledge of students in Britain and serves as the primary basis through which learners of Britain can achieve key milestones in their educational career. Based on the aforementioned discussion, the involvement of different government bodies of Britain in their own education systems might help in segregating the nation's educational responsibility. Thus, it can be concluded that the British education system is truly diverse yet effective. However, the education of Britain has also been subjected to a range of criticism. In this context, access to a range of funds, and no uniformity of education at different levels of Britain's education system needs close observation. Hence, by maintaining and overcoming all these criticisms, the education system as well as the education pattern of Britain can evolve more in future days.

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