

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL BARRIERS IN IMPLEMENTING 21ST CENTURY SKILLS IN EDUCATION SYSTEMS IN ASIAN COUNTRIES

P.L.A.K. Gunarathna^{1*} and W.A.P. De Silva²

¹*Postgraduate Institute of Science, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka*

²*Department of Zoology, Faculty of Science, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka*

^{*}*anomagunarathna8312@gmail.com*

As societies undergo rapid technological transformations in the 21st century, the demand for an education system that cultivates skills necessary for the 21st century has become increasingly vital. However, the implementation of such progressive educational approaches faces complex obstacles due to the diverse socio-cultural settings in many countries. This review aimed to investigate the socio-cultural challenges in 21st century education systems in Asian countries. For that, 40 relevant review papers published after the year 2000 were selected from Google Scholar, ERIC and JSTOR. Content analysis was conducted to identify the main socio-cultural barriers and to their impact on implementing 21st century skills to Asian Education systems. According to literature, Asian countries such as Japan, Korea, China, and Singapore showed some positive impacts of socio-cultural patterns in implementing 21st century skills. Countries such as Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Pakistan have relatively high-power distance scores (ranging from 70 to 100) according to Hofstede's cultural dimensions and comparatively low masculinity index (below 50), suggesting a more feminine cultural orientation. The low uncertainty avoidance index in Singapore, China, Vietnam, and Thailand indicates a low tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity. High power distance, gender inequality, traditional assessment systems, low tolerance for new concepts and ideas, and poor female education were reported as the main socio-cultural barriers that affect education reforms. More than 50% of the papers highlighted the impact of these factors on students' self-expression, inquiry-based learning, creativity and critical thinking. The low tolerance for new implementations has been recognized as one of the significant factors that hinder education reforms as teachers are reluctant to deviate from the traditional classrooms. The traditional assessment methods practised in most Asian countries also negatively affect competitiveness among students. Religious and other socio-cultural aspects in Asian countries (Japan, China and Singapore) influence social norms, values, and behaviours creating barriers to implementing 21st century education systems.

Keywords: 21st century skills, Education systems, Social cultural barriers, Social norm