

Reflection – EDUC 892

Social Justice and Equity in International Education

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The purpose of this course was to examine the idea of social justice through the lense of international education. Starting with a definition of social justice, the class explored the ideological, cultural, geopolitical, economic, and other structures that produce inequities in the area of education in national and international settings. Through readings by various scholars and classroom discussion, the class engaged in critical debate surrounding how education might be used as a tool to shape a more just world for all students.

This was the final required course for students in the international education concentration. Additionally, this was also my final international education course as I had completed my additional three courses earlier in my program. Upon evaluating the gaps that I had in my knowledge, I decided to use my time in the course to learn a little about a part of the world that I did not have as much background in – Africa. For the final paper, I decided that I would keep to my focus on the International Baccalaureate, but for some other course assignments, I would expand my knowledge base.

To expand my knowledge, I completed two assignments for EDUC 892 that focused on Africa. First, we had to complete a book review and I chose a book called *The Invisible Cure: Why We Are Losing the Fight against AIDS in Africa* by Helen Epstein. The book described efforts Epstein in the 1990s to work on various AIDS projects in Africa and explained why a lot of money seems to go to waste. The book review was very hard to write for me as I found the style of writing personally aggravating (I never liked writing opinion) and I kept wishing I was able to do more research to see if I could find more to support Epstein's claims.

The second assignment I completed for EDUC 892 that focused on Africa was a geographic issue paper (included as an artifact). The assignment required us (the class) to choose a social justice issue and place it in the context of a country or area and then produce a 3,000-5,000 word paper. Spurred from something I had read in Epstein's book plus the fact that my husband and I have a friend in Uganda who actually works in this field, I chose to research the idea of male circumcision in Uganda. I wanted to know if it might be a possible tool in the fight against AIDS or if the idea was hindered by culture. As I did the research, I quickly found out I would be reading articles from *The Lancet* and studies from the *New England Journal of Medicine*. When I finished the paper, I was confident I knew the topic but also a little sorry for Dr. Baily who would now have to read my work as this paper was so out of the realm of the education papers I normally wrote.

For my final project (included as an artifact), I returned to my focus on International Baccalaureate (IB) programs and looked at the issue of access since this falls into questions of equity which then falls into a social justice issue. IB has done some research of their own in this area and I started there but expanded my view to look at the question of access as it pertains to IB programs globally. What I found was that I needed to think about access to IB programs differently in the United States where education is often tied to the achievement gap issue and abroad where IB programs are often in private, tuition-based, international schools. Doing that paper and the preliminary research helped me separate the global and American IB even more than I had already been doing.