A critique of socio-economic value of education: case for development of subaltern paradigm of schooling

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Abstract
This paper attempts to review critical academic evidence on the social and economic value of education. It provides a critique of the mainstream paradigm of education which is hegemonic and non-egalitarian. Being rooted in singular notion of schooling it does not encourage inclusion and fails to attract and retain many subaltern socio-ethnic groups which might be concerned about their languages, customs and cultures and so on. Also the dominant form of education and schooling is limited by suboptimum outcomes and goal diversion. From the point of view of inclusion and assimilation of diversity as well as richness of outcomes a case for plurality of education systems, particularly for low cost alternate systems of education is made out here.

Keywords: Union Igbo, Language, Standardization, Development, Twentieth Century.

1. Introduction
Education has always been enjoying the status of supreme philosophical stream. Traditionally it was not usual to criticize or to question the value of education. “The idea that the education was beneficial was accepted as virtual universal truth.” [1] Education creates outcomes that are valued by the people. The benefits of education to an individual and society can occur through various channels. They, accordingly, can be of many kinds, namely, intellectual knowledge production, occupational skill production, socialization and socio-cultural transmission, creation of political consciousness necessary for the functioning of democratic institutions, and spiritual and moral building as well. In essence, the discussion upon the benefits of education can have multiple categories of valuing the worth of education. The very basic value of education is embodied in the intellectual development of the homo-sapiens- the ability to understand the self in relation to environment. Man’s quest for knowledge is one of the basic instincts. Education might have born to satisfy the intellectual thrust of mankind. The process of schooling, in addition to other values, has the greatest value of developing a person to its fullest and let her expose herself to the full extent of her capabilities. Production of knowledge is that aspect of schooling, which makes one intelligent and aware of its environment; which enables to establish relations with environment and to understand the self in relation to others. The cognitive development of a child is the basis of her future state of affairs. From the very beginning the most important objective of philosophical discourses has been the intellectual development of mankind. Development of three Rs- reasoning, reading and writing enables an educated person to make use of intellectual faculties in order to meet with surrounding circumstances, to produce knowledge and to make rational decisions and judge of the behavioral tendencies. Production of knowledge makes one capable of dealing with the ongoing happenings in an efficient way. Perhaps the present seemingly vast treasure of knowledge and know how could best be attributed to as the fruit of intellectual value of education.

Character and moral building could never be separated from education from ancient to present times. The worth of education is, more than often, compared as against the integrity, honesty, rationality, righteousness and humanness of the products of an educational institution. Education has always worked, is working and will work as a transmitter of socio cultural treasure of societies from generation to generation. At times there might be contrast between the oncoming and inherited norms and values of a society. The role of education then is to smoothen and balance the opposite poles, in such a way that the identity and fine elements of the later are kept intact.
Education perpetuates, sustains and enhances the socio-cultural identity of groups of individuals. Alternatively, education is a means of social cohesion and nation building. It creates an understanding of different cultures and ethnic groups. The synthesis of the various ethnic, social and cultural groups generates a kind of harmony, tolerance and respect for each other’s norms, ideas, ideals, values, beliefs and actions. Socialization and enculturation of newly born members of an anthropological group are the most esteemed functions of education. Education of an individual is a process to learn and act according to the expectations of norms and behavior prescribed by the group of which she is or would be a member.

Development of nationhood, love and respect for brethren and loyalty to state refer to the political values of education. Knowledge and education of its masses would certainly enhance the power of sovereign. For smooth running of democratic institutions, peoples’ participation and democratic literacy are pre-requisites. It is necessary for citizens to know their duties and responsibilities and use the power of franchise rationally, in order to strengthen the cause of democratic way of living. Also a nation’s power and influence rest in its people. It is not the men in battle field which count, nor the guns. It is the brain behind them which succeeds and controls.

2. Economic value of education

Right from Adam Smith schooling of people has been considered as the best means of social, civic and good sense to make right kind of judgments and the one to sharpen and discipline the process of ‘division of labor’. Marshall [2] believed that “…a good education confers great indirect benefits even on the ordinary work men” [3]. It does so because “it stimulates his mental activities, it fosters in him a habit of wise inquisitiveness, it makes him more intelligent, more ready, more trustworthy, in his ordinary work, it raises the tone of his life in working hours and out of working hours.” [4] By doing so, education becomes, “thus an important means towards the production of material wealth; at the same time that, regarded as an end in itself, it is inferior to none of those, which the production of material wealth can be made to subserve.” [5] Marshall goes on to conclude that “the wisdom of expanding public and private funds on education is not to be measured by its direct fruits alone. It will be profitable as a mere investment, to give the masses of people much greater opportunities than they can generally avail themselves of.” [6] Marshall stressed the need for mass education, because it will save and search out talent from oblivion. When it happens, education would repay more than the expenditures incurred upon, “if it called out for one more Newton or Darwin, Shakespeare or Beethoven.” [7] Psacharopoulas and Woodhall (1985) [8] stressed that education is beneficial in many ways; it “fulfills a number of vital objectives”. It: “Satisfies a basic human need for knowledge, provides a means of helping to meet other needs, and helps sustain and accelerate over all development. Provides essential skilled man power for both the industrialized and informal sectors of the economy, provides the means of developing the knowledge, skills and productive capacities of the labor force, and acts as a catalyst in encouraging modern attitudes and aspirations. Helps to determine not only the incomes of the present generation but also the future distribution of income and employment. Influences social welfare through its indirect effects on health, fertility, life expectancy and helps to increase the profitability of other forms of social and physical investment.”

Lucas (1988 [9]) pointed out a special kind of social benefits of education in terms of spatial externality. Spatial externality can be referred to as enclavization of education, which will result in the progress of the enclav area. General productive capacity may rise simply from the fact that educated people live near each other, forming an enclave. For example a telephone set is useful only if there are many telephone sets with other people. In the same way, if there are other educated people around, the utility of education will be more. Lucas’ argument puts a strong case for universalization of education for it will not only have explicit increase in the productivity but also raise and create other benefits to the whole of the society.

Extensive research on the magnitude of market earnings and impact of schooling has showed positively significant correlation (Schultz 1961[10], Hansen 1963[11], Becker 1975 [12], Mineer 1962 [13], Hanoch 1967[14], Grilliches and Mason 1972 [15], Cohnlisk 1971 [16]). However it is reasonable to ask whether education itself leads to higher earnings and egalitarian distribution thereof. Or does schooling reduce the incidence of poverty for all? The answer is not so pleasant. It has been found, that education is a factor enhancing the earnings, but only of those, who are recipients of or have availed themselves of schooling. Intuitively, the educated persons will get themselves on a higher footing. The social benefits of schooling from educated to uneducated and from region to region attempt to make the society as a whole benefit from education. The extent of social benefits, however, cannot equalize the earnings of educated educated and uneducated labor. Would inequalities prevailing in the economy remain unaffected? Would these increase or decrease? Considerations of ethics and social justice are necessary here.

Gary S. Field (1980) [17], after an intensive review of the literature, found that in developing nations education is a sound investment. But that, until the distribution of schooling among masses is not equal, education cannot equalize the society. Those with education in comparison to uneducated, better educated in comparison to less educated, urban areas to rural ones and well-off classes who have high accessibility to schooling in comparison to poor masses would tend to earn and produce higher. Thus the extent of income inequalities within the educated people could reduce, but that in other categories i.e. illiterate to literate, well-off to poor and rural to urban will not decrease, so far, till the educational opportunities and quality thereof become equally and effectively available to all.

Educational achievement has a direct influence on the status of a person. This influence, comparative to developed nations, is stronger in developing world (Foster 1987) [18]. It is because both the opportunity and achievement in...
education for rural and lower sections are meager and the resultant earnings and status, in turn also affect the same. The inequalities of income would prevail until the state takes necessary steps to equalize the opportunity of schooling for and in all (Fields 1980) [19]. Herein is the case for universal schooling. With regional, ethnic or even income differentials the process of development may not in itself decrease social inequalities, it may frequently increase them (Foster 1987) [20]. Mitigation of these to a significant extent would depend upon equality of education and quality, level and achievement thereof. Only with universal literacy of considerable qualities, in the masses, the incidence of poverty could be reduced among the poor (Fields 1980 [21], Berry 1980 [22]).

Various empirical studies have suggested that educated workers tend to have lower unemployment rates and higher earnings. But the existing situation of grave unemployment in India compels to pause upon the same. The structural aspects as noticed by Faurre and Edgar (1972) [23] generate contradiction between the products of education and the needs of the society which becomes one reason of many of the products of institutionalized education being rejected. Blaug [24] concluded, as did Psacharopoulas (1973) [25], Fields (1980) [20] and Berry (1980) [27], that undue weight to higher levels of education at the cost of primary schooling led to educated unemployment. Hence it is imperative for India to universalize primary schooling among all socio-economic, ethnic, cultural groups, through all available channels, at the earliest.

3. Dialectical critique of mainstream paradigm of education

Education is a critical variable in the functional domains of total system, social organization and organism. It is a variable with multiple internal and external characters. It is cyclically involved and embodied in societal formulation, changes and dynamism. It is both a cause and effect of spiral of social-economic historical progress. Education is a controller and monitor as well as a driver of social vector movement. Knowledge is power and education is the mother of all knowledge.

Education is a tool. It is an implement. It is an instrument. It is a critical technical skill in the survival kit of social organisms. It is a sharpener capable of finally sharpening the skills or the altitudinal preferential set of predilections. Ideally education should be an infallible and impeccable instrument of truth, beauty and goodness in society at the large. Education should rectify and salvage the society of the ills and weaknesses of societal organization. Culture and civilization should flourish. Social space should be available to all members on an egalitarian basis. The reality however is diametrically opposite to the ideals of value based functional paradigm of humanity. The present society is highly volatile vulnerable and anxious. It is based upon short term vision of sustaining itself upon rampant injustice, inequity and inequality of the distribution of opportunity, capacity and material inputs, assets, and resources. Oligopolistic control of political, economic and other sources of power and influence represents an intolerable deviation from the ideal constructs.

Education should have driven intellectual disposition towards long term sustainability of human space and civilization. Material consumerism however poses the greatest danger to the existence of man and other life sources of living organism. Depletion of nature and whatever belongs to nature in its virginity presents the untenable face of modern developmental progressive paradigm. The kind of education we have seemed to have enforced an attitudinal disposition towards life as a means and end of production and consumption, as depletion and accumulation. Despite the monumental expansion of education and schooling, the civilization aspects, e.g. literature- poetry, poetic sense and sensibility etc. seem to have disproportionally neglected and negated. Instead of a satisfying and fulfilling life, a never satiable anxiety of materialistic accumulation has overshadowed the space of human existence. An education worth the name must enforce and facilitate harmony of social life spanned over a never ending continuum of generations after generation; the predecessors paving the way of satisfying and fulfilling life to the successors on the way.

Education and its process should lead to richness of life, expansion of contours of internal and external happiness, dynamism and dignity of man, self-actualization, social equity, equality and egalitarianism. It should liberate humankind from the predicament of wayward, pointless and target less consumption of living hours. Economic theories postulate that education develops the human resource and creates human capital. However a human capital resembling physical capital cannot define humanity and humanism. The underlying assumption beneath ‘human capital’ conceptualization is comparison of human organism with physical capital occupying mechanical matrix. It is a culmination of the process of reduction of human being to industrial worker and consequently to working machine. Human capital hypothesis presupposes man power requirement projections and provision of supply of schooling accordingly, notwithstanding the quest of educational equality.

Human resource development is the latest conceptualization of schooling and education within a larger ambit of personal progression of human being. It presupposes a living aspect including health, hygiene, nutrition, apprenticeship, training etc. within a macro environmental context. Education forms a major component of global development of man. Human resource will differ as per the quantum, quality, content and duration of component inputs like education, nutrition, options etc. In a country like India, with rampant inequality and equity of distribution of opportunities and capacities, one can notice extremely skewed scenario ranging from bare deprivation of rural illiterate manual worker to global HR output of the ilk of IITs and IIMs with a never ending infinity of expanding opportunity gaps.

Another related aspect is the quality of human capital and the absorption of the same for productive engagement. It is a generalized observation that the quality of education imparted in India, and the third world for that matter, is far from satisfactory. The degrees and diplomas awarded do not correspond to the achievement level of the holders of these credentials. Absorption capacity is the other significant
variable. In any condition of less than full employment, unemployment of educated and uneducated ones is a matter of routine. However the widespread educated unemployment takes serious proportions, here, in India (Malenbaum, W. 1957) [28]. Macroeconomic policy and planning become crucial factors to some extent. None the less, it brings to ‘Alternate Hypothesis’ regarding the role of education in development, employment and earning differentials. Educated unemployment weakens the link between labor market skill requirement and the sort of educational output, we have. It also results in ever expanding spiral of ‘wait in’ cycle, whereby educated graduates have to wait for their turn of employment. It is a situation of simultaneity of oversupply coupled with undersupply (shortage) of the same variable that is the schooling.

Such a scenario boils down to ‘Screening Hypothesis’ (Lucas, R. 1988) [29] which postulates that educational certificates, degrees and diplomas work as a screening device, rather than being valid and reliable measures of the quality and suitability of the possessors of the same. Employers screen the aspirants on the basis of educational achievement knowing that such screening process works as a dependable proxy to judge other qualities of candidates like perseverance, endurance etc. Educational achievement then does not signify objective correspondence between the degree and the quality of the degree holder, for example. Rather it helps the system find out an objective criterion for selection based on merit, decided through screening of schooling credentials.

To begin with John Vaizey (1962) the economic justification for education is “the rise in the standard of living to which it leads.” [30] However the way education is imparted may make or mar the future of the society. Faure and Edgar (1972) in the Preamble to the report of the International Commission on the Development of Education reacted to the irrationality of behavior of modern changing society in the words, “…The great changes of our time are imperiling the unity and the future of the species, and man’s own identity as well. What is to be feared is not only the painful prospect of grievous inequalities, privations and sufferings but also that we may be heading for veritable dichotomy within this human race, which risks being split into superior and inferior groups, into masters and slaves, superman and sub man. Among the risks resulting from this situation would be not only those of conflict and other disasters (for present day means of mass destruction might fall into the hands of destitute and rebellious groups), but the fundamental risks of dehumanization, affecting privileged and oppressed alike, for the harm done to man’s nature would harm all men.” [31]

Any discourse on education axiomatically presumes that education is sacrosanct and worth the cost and pains it inflicts on the children. Education socializes. It enculturates. It enlightens. And so on. Whatever the elders feed their younger ones is deemed to be essentially for their good. In whatever manner the process of teaching learning goes on, it is always assumed to be the bona fide and to be the best. This approach however is gravely fatal. It subsumes the independence and independent identity of the children. It treats the students as mechanical and passive inputs in the production function of schooling. It monopolizes the field of knowledge and perception. Knowledge flows from top to bottom, and not vice versa. It results into unfortunate negation of observation, speculation and accumulation of first hand experiences. It inhibits the inclusivity and anxiety of children. Instead of charting their own world the children get compelled to accept the predecessors’ knowledge coming as indoctrination.

The kind of schooling and all that goes with it monopolize and homogenize the variety of knowledge about the phenomenal world. Schooling inhibits perception, conceptualization and attitudinal disposition, accumulation of experience, observation and assimilation of existential reality in the case of majority of students. The process of inhibition sets into motion from the very beginning. It makes the man a slave of preconceived ideas and ideologies. It minimizes the canvass of speculation. It does not capture the imagination. It does not lead to the “the consciousness as consciousness of consciousness” (Freire, P. 1970) [32] It does not captivate the wings of the butterfly chasing the dreamland of the colorful nymphs. The overdose of schools and schooling inputs seem to have become tiresome for children. Hence, a call for ‘De-schooling the Society’ (Ivan Illich, 1973) [33] for the sake of a change that educates the body, the heart and the mind of little ones without compromising childhood and creativity and never inflicting inferiority complex On them on account of varying socio-psycho-economic background of affluence or deprivation. Schools ought to act upon moral constructs and wide rangingmultilateral spirit of trust. Schools must not create moral vacuum (Saiyedain, K. G. (1965) [34], nor should they propagate endemic distrust (see Swartz, B. N. 1972) [35]. Children are the collective social asset and cumulative future of any society of man. They must not suffer on account of the deprivation embedded in factors related to parental cumulative causation of poverty and lack of survival entitlements. However, the process of education is not independent of socioeconomic existential realities. Social, political, economic, educational and institutional arrangements affect the vary mechanism of education. As a whole social control, dominant power groups, vested interest etc. to a great extent affect the policies, contents, contexts, and modus operandi of the educational variables. Temporarily existing social relations control and limit the spread, opportunity and availability of schooling to different social classes and groups. Dominant structures determine the quantities of restraints, constraint and autonomies to be exercised with respect to various subordinate subject variables in the form of subjugated social members. Conversely it can be inferred that ownership pattern of the means of production has bearing on the probable distribution and disbursement of pedagogical entitlements. General state of technology including educational technology is also a control variable. It determines the direction of change. It affects the behavior of beneficiaries.

A synoptic peep into the past is relevant here. There can be no doubt about the absolute value and contribution of education for the welfare and advancement of human society. The progress in literature, arts, scriptures, wisdom, logic, reason, social organizations etc. can really be credited to education. Educational experience has always been
reinforcing the constructive motives of humanity. At the same
time it is also a fact that education has always been a
selective variable. It has always been selective in terms of
availability, accessibility and opportunity; in terms of
content, context and configuration; and in terms of quota,
quantum and quality. The process of education has never
been, in the recorded history of civilization an equalizer of
social space and time. The distribution of education would
usually be found far away from normal; well skewed against
the lower strata of society. Everywhere education has had
been a privilege of the kings, the princess, the priest, the
aristocrat and the rich. It was the same in ancient India,
China, the Arabian Peninsula, the Europe or anywhere else.
Differential treatment is even more rigid in case of classical
languages, texts and learning. As an example, instruction in
Sanskrit is still not possible to a vast number of low cast
Indians citizens. The differentiation mechanism was
designed to serve the elite purpose. Limits on educational
expansion were necessary to legislate and enforce the
superior subordinate relationship on a consistent basis.
Another point to be noted is the content of education. The
type, quantum and quality of education have never been the
same for all. Homogenization may neither be necessary, nor
desirable. However permanent disablement and
discrimination, putting strain on the students, on the sole
basis of socio economic status must not be commended. If
the sort of education compels the son of a sweeper to learn
the same work, and martial arts became reserved for the
progenies of rulers then education would constantly be liable
to condemnation and blame. If a lesson in the same text
makes one wise and the other a culprit to be made
permanently deaf and dumb then it is not education. It is a
bipolar action of education of the educated and de-education
of the non-educated! Schooling of the schooled and de-
schooling of the unschooled!
At this moment, a look on the present Indian educational
scenario may be useful. Constitution of India declared, in
1949, its pious intention to provide elementary education to
each and every child before and up to fourteen years of age.
However seven decades of independence have brought only
unfulfilled hopes and nightmares. Definitional literacy rate in
India hovers around 74 percent, 65 percent for women and
82 percent for men. Public documents tell us that gross
enrolment ratio at present is more than 100 percent! It means
every child should be in schools (not desperately exploiting
their lives as child labor, nor as begging in public places).

Equality of educational opportunity in such a case must
become the sole responsibility of the state ensuring minimum
quality input entitlements of schooling skills to all, rank and
file.

4. Subaltern Perspective
Subaltern Perspective on education values the traditional
indigenous forms of schooling (like mutt, ashram, pathshala,
madaris, makatib, masajid, shiksha vihar etc.) as structures
maintained by the society for the spread of knowledge and
education among its members and preservation of its
historical identity. All the stake holders take motivation and
interest because it serves the most common cause affecting
each and every member of the society. The facilitators,
providers, managers and teachers of traditional schools,
along with the pupils, share convergence of the purpose. It
benefits all in one or another form.

Traditional schools belong to the lower strata of the society.
They serve that section of social organization which does not
constitute any identity within the sphere of elite
consciousness. They are the destitute; they are the deprived
ones. They are the neglected and forgotten ones. And they
are the poor ones who own nothing and live to serve others.
They do not get mention in the history of dominant power
groups. Traditional indigenous system of schooling provides
a paradigm to serve these subalterns and raise their social
existence in the realm of consciousness of the consciousness,
awareness of the awareness and the enlightenment of the
enlightenment. The structure and organization of TIS,
therefore, presents the respective scenarios. These schools
are poor in themselves. They get poor treatment from
dominant structure because their audience group is poor and
weak. Traditional schools present a paradigm of schooling
well confronting the high cost modern schooling system. The
alternate capacity and capability make them peculiar. They
consume less. They consume rationally. They consume
minimum of the minimum. They produce maximum out of
the minimum.

Traditional schools of deferent denominations provide a sort
of education focusing upon basic tenets of respective
religious-cultural-philosophical streams. They propagate
conflicting ideologies and ideas and put opponent sets of
closed idiosyncrasies. The conflict of viewpoints may be
severely divergent and damaging, at times. As far as the
ideological details are concerned a general lack of
convergence is manifest. As regards the objectives of a better
world, and service to humanity, traditional schools present a
shared purpose. They teach goodness of human behavior and
spread the light of education.

Traditional schools serve to those who are either un-served,
excluded, pushed out or out of the provision of schooling for
whateover reasons or deliberately choose to stay away from
modern education thinking that it is non-contextual, non-
relevant, unimportant and confronting their own set of values
and morality. Traditional schools also serve those who are
extremely deprived and marginalized.

Traditional schooling does not have far going linkages with
further educational avenues. Usually it stops all of sudden at
a dead end. Only a very few fortunate ones found it possible
to pursue higher level studies. Their pass outs or graduates,
therefore, carry limited accumulation of skills and knowledge; yet often this 'limited' amount being enough for future life.

Khan (2012) [36] has opined that the children of lesser fortunes, traditional schools almost work at the edge of virtual extinction. However they perform marvelously. They continue splendidly and they carry prospects of continuation through the time. However the non-mainstream traditional indigenous systems of schooling and education face as many problems as are there functional and relational dimensions. It is in this background that the functional value and contribution of these diverse avenues of alternative experiences be valued, sustained and assimilated.

Sum Up
This paper argued that the social and economic value of education resides in the observed gain in the form of improved social organization, human resource development, economic wellbeing and skill orientation etc. Universal primary education has the strongest developmental connotations. It is imperative that educational decisions be based upon socio-economic egalitarianism, creating capacities and enabling equality of opportunity for all, especially the weaker sections of the society.

5. References
3. Ibid. pp.211.
4. Ibid. pp.211.
5. Ibid.pp.211.