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Rethinking the Value of Education: Amartya Sen and the Capability Approach

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Abstract:

Many scholars such as Becker and Schultz, thinking from the point of view of economics, have conceptualised the value of education only in terms of the development of human capital and the consequent improvement of individual earnings and economic growth. This conception has policy implications that have the tendency to affect education and who gets it in the long run. The problem this paper addresses is the problem of the inadequate problematization of the value of education within the human capital theory. The paper situates education in the capability approach which conceptualises the value of education in terms of its propensity to expand human freedom and capabilities. It argues that apart from the economic value of education emphasised by the human capital theorists, it has intrinsic value and that it is this intrinsic value that justifies investment in education. The paper examines the capability approach as a Kantian framework of evaluation that focuses on human beings as ends in themselves rather than as means to ends. It also examines the important conceptual components of the capability approach and how they relate to education. Furthermore, it compares human capability and human capital approaches to education and argues that the human capital approach, by interpreting education only in terms of economic growth and employment, entails an overly narrow metric and conception of the value of education and that the capability approach offers a counterweight to this conception. It is argued that education is a basic capability, that it is a right that everyone, whether economically viable or not, should be allowed to enjoy, and therefore, that its provision should be a matter of justice which should be a social commitment. The paper has no geographical coverage as it is a theoretical analysis of the value of education from the perspective of human capital theory and capability approach. However, it has implication which can be used in all societies. The study draws attention to the fact the investment in education should not only focus on those who the government or parents think are economically viable which may lead to the neglect of certain segment of the population such as the girl child and those requiring special education. It also draws attention to the value of the humanities and considers the marginalisation of the humanities unacceptable. The humanities provide essential ingredients which include clarity of mind, knowledge of the world and understanding of culture which are required for local and global peaceful coexistence.

Keywords: Capability Approach, Human Capital, Education, Investment, Humanities

1. Introduction

The capability approach is one of Amartya Sen's most important contributions to philosophy, the social sciences and especially, the field of development studies. The approach was first articulated in his 1979 Tanner Lecture, "Equality of What?" Since then, the approach has gained considerable attention as a normative conceptual framework which offers a clear and insightful way to measure justice, well-being and development. The approach has been influential in the *Human Development Reports* and the Human Development Index (HDI), both of which utilise the expansion of capabilities as comparative tools. As Robeyns (2005:94) succinctly describes the approach, it is a broad normative framework for the evaluation of individual well-being and social arrangements, the design of policies and proposals about social change in society. It is used in varying fields such as development studies, social policy development, health and education. In the field of development, it provided the foundation for the human development paradigm which has become an alternative paradigm to the economic growth theory of development. Rather than focus on people's happiness, desire for fulfilment, increase in income or basic needs fulfilment, as some approaches do, the capability approach focuses on people's capabilities, that is, on what they are able to effectively do and be. This focus makes profound theoretical difference and leads to quite different policies compared to neo-liberalism and utilitarian policy prescriptions.

The purpose of this paper is to situate education in the capability approach and to conceptualise the value of education in terms of its propensity to expand human freedom and capabilities in other areas of life, and hence to argue that apart from its economic value, it has intrinsic values and that it is this intrinsic value that justifies investment in education. This is a critique of the human capital approach which conceptualises education only in terms of the resources it is able to make available to individuals and nations, that is, in terms of the economic returns at both private and social levels. First, the paper examines the capability approach as a Kantian framework of evaluation that focuses on human beings as ends in themselves rather than as means to ends. Second, it also examines

the important conceptual components of the capability approach and how they relate to education. Third, it undertakes a critical scrutiny human capability and human capital approaches to education and argues that the human capital approach, by interpreting education only in terms of economic growth and employment, entails an overly narrow metric and conception of the value of education and that the capability approach offers a counterweight to this conception. The paper argues that the difference between the capability approach and the human capital approach rests on differing conceptions of persons. The essay describes how the key concepts of the capability approach introduce new ways of considering the role of education in development. It is argued that education is a basic capability, that it is a right that everyone, whether economically viable or not, should be allowed to enjoy, and therefore, that its provision should be a matter of justice which should be a social commitment. In other words, if we measure the value of education in terms of the capability to achieve valuable functioning, it becomes clear that society is duty-bound to enable each child to obtain basic education, irrespective of their contribution to growth.

2. The Capability Approach

The capability approach is a framework of analysis and evaluation developed by Sen which provides the philosophical basis for the human development theory in which development is defined as freedom. The idea of the capability approach is that social arrangements should aim at expanding people's capabilities. This implies that the assessment of the quality and acceptability of any social arrangement or social policy or action should be based on the extent to which it promotes the expansion of people's capabilities, that is, their freedom to promote or achieve what they value doing or being. Sen explains this when he writes that:

- A person's capability to achieve functionings that he or she has reason to value provides a general approach to the evaluation of social arrangements, and this yields a particular way of viewing the assessment of equality and inequality' (Sen, 1992: 5).

It is the combined concerns for positive freedom (freedom to achieve or become) and the replacement of per capita GDP with human development indicators, that seems to have led Sen in the direction of an increasingly unified conception of development as freedom. Sen highlights the ethical status of freedom, as the major means and end of development, dominating the specification of other values (1999: xii, 148). Sen's human development theory dates back to Aristotle who argues that "wealth is evidently not the good we are seeking, for it is merely useful and for the sake of something else" (Cited in Sen, 1999:14) What, for Sen, distinguishes a good political arrangement from a bad one is its successes or failures in enabling people to lead "flourishing lives". Sen thinks that wealth is desirable only because it is a "means for having more freedom to lead the kind of lives we have reason to value (1999:14). The implication of this is that the evaluation of the quality of life and human well-being which is based on income and economic growth is inadequate because it focuses on means rather than ends.

According to Sen, the status of human beings as ends of development must be well understood in the process of development. This is very important because they also function as means of development (1999). The means/ends framework of analysis proposed by Sen in the analysis of development is Kantian in mode. According to Kant, rational human beings are supposed to "act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end" (Kant, 1997:37). This is an alternative formulation of the Categorical Imperative, which is known as the Formula of Humanity. Kant does not say we cannot use people as a means, but that we cannot use them simply as a means. It is practically impossible to make use of people as means to certain ends because we rely on them to achieve these ends. What Kant wants to do through this moral imperative is to defend and elevate the dignity of human being. According to Kant, the value of human beings "is above all price" (Kant, 1997:35). He reiterates further that "In the kingdom of ends everything has either a *price* or a *dignity*. What has a price can be replaced by something else as its *equivalent*, what on the other hand is raised above all price and therefore admits of no equivalent has a dignity" (Kant, 1997:42). This is not meant to be mere rhetoric but an objective judgment about the place of human beings in the scheme of things. Human beings are not things that are valuable only as means to ends, rather they have intrinsic worth, as free rational agents who are capable of making their own decisions, setting their own goals, and guiding their conduct by reason. Everyone recognizes this intrinsic worth about himself and is expected to be extended to others.

It is the above framework of putting human beings at the center of policy-making and development concerns that defines the capability approach. The failure of the mainstream approach to development, which sees development as economic growth, is that it regards people principally as means. In this approach, people are valued in so far as they advance growth and prosperity of the nation (Alkire, 2010) and all welfare packages are to further their functioning as production inputs. Rather than pursuing economic growth and prosperity for the sake of it, Sen argues that the objective of development should be the expansion of people's capabilities, that is, "of their freedoms, their opportunities to achieve and enjoy the states of affairs that they value and have reasons to value" (Alkire, 2010: 193). Sen, in association with Dreze emphasise that their approach to development is:

- ...essentially a 'people-centred' approach, which puts human agency (rather than organizations such as markets or governments) at the centre of the stage. The crucial role of social opportunities is to expand the realm of human agency and freedom, both as an end in itself and as a means of further expansion of freedom (Dreze and Sen, 2002: 6)

It is this focus on human beings as the primary ends of development that places Sen's development theory in the domain of human development theory.

The human development theory emerged with the publication of the first *Human Development Report* (HDR) in 1990. However, its historical roots can be further traced back. For instance, when its elements are critically examined, the influence of the *Cocoyoc Declaration* will be seen as evident. Apart from this, the writers of the report claimed inspirations from the works of Aristotle, Kan Smith Ricardo and Marx. Aristotle is cited as having argued for seeing difference between a good political arrangement and a bad one in terms of its successes and failures in facilitating people's ability to lead flourishing lives (UNDP, 1990: 9). The report declared at its

onset that people are the real wealth of nations. Upon this basis, development is identified with 'human development'. The report discusses the meaning and measurement of human development, and defines it as a process of enlarging people's choices (UNDP, 1990: 9). The choices initially defined were the opportunity to lead a long and healthy life, the opportunity to acquire knowledge, and the opportunity to have access to resources needed for a decent standard of living. The goal of development then becomes creating the conditions for people to be able to make these choices. The report also defines three key indicators for measuring human development. These are life expectancy at birth, access to quality education, and command over resources needed for a decent living standard. It is clearly noted that excessive preoccupation with Gross National Product (GNP) growth and national income accounts has obscured the perspective of putting people at the centre of development by an obsession with means rather than focusing on ends.

The human development approach forces a fundamental distinction between the means and the ends of development. Since it is believed that the development of human beings is – or should be – the aim of all genuine development, all other developmental objectives and strategies which run parallel with, or counter to, this singular goal run the risk of becoming anti-human development. Often, such objectives and strategies celebrate the achievement of developmental goals which either maintain a pronounced distance from or are in conducive to human developmental goals. At best, they work towards and celebrate the achievement of potential means towards human development as the achievement of the overriding goal of human development itself. The economic growth model and the more recent liberalisation, privatisation and structural adjustment models can be noted as pursuing goals which can be unfriendly to the end goal of human development. As the HDRs have repeatedly stressed (e.g., UNDP, 1992: 1-11), the relevant question in the context of human development is not one of the *quantity* of economic growth but of the *quality* of growth. The defining difference between the economic growth and the human development schools is that the first focuses exclusively on the expansion of only one choice - income - while the second embraces the enlargement of all human choices - whether economic, social, cultural, or political. In one of the reports, it is noted that:

- The real wealth of a nation is its people – both women and men. And the purpose of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives. This simple but powerful truth is too often forgotten in the pursuit of material and financial wealth (UNDP 1995: 11).

Even though the Human development approach calls for a reduced significance for growth in income, it does not follow that it sees growth in the economy in terms of income as irrelevant in human development analysis. What is reiterated is that growth in income may be seen as necessary, in enlarging individual choices or in making the individual within the society to live better lives, it is an insufficient input. The *Human Development Reports* have, with international comparative data, consistently argue and show that human development does not necessarily follow the same path as economic growth. It has been shown that countries with low levels of income and low rates of income growth may nonetheless contribute to the advancement of human development to the extent that they adopt and implement specific sets of policies, particularly those which give primacy to "human priority" sectors and sub-sectors.

Amin sees economic growth as an important part of economic development as well as the basis for development (2003). These terms should not confuse us. Some scholars have distinguished between economic growth and economic development. For instance, Perkin et al thinks the fundamental distinction between them lies in the fact that economic development implies more than economic growth and, so it is a wider concept (2001: 8). Economic growth refers to a rise in national or per capita income and product. Per capita income is measured as gross national product (GDP), that is, the value of all goods and services that a nation's economy produces in an economic year divided by the population. For Perkin et al, "if production of goods and services rises, by whatever means, one can speak of economic growth. They explain that what has been happened in South Korean economy is fundamentally different from that of Libya with the discovery of petroleum in Libya. They remark that though Korea and Libya experienced rise in per capita income, the one in Libya was achieved by foreign corporations staffed by foreign technicians who produced a single product consumed by many in the US and Western Europe (Perkin, et al 2001: 9). This is to say that even though the government of Libya received large amount of income from their oil, they have had little to do with producing that income. It seems, therefore, that a key element in economic development is that the people of that country should be major participants in the process that brought about the economic growth.

For Amin, economic growth is a phenomenon based on human capital formation and technological progress (2003). His argument is that as capital accumulation increases; the marginal product of capital tends to zero. The implication of this, for him, is that capital accumulation only favour growth in the short-run. If growth is to be sustained, human capital and technological progress become primary. This is the reason why growth model development theorists focus on human capital development, and education is seen as a veritable tool in this direction. In this paper, I do not intend to take issues with whether capital accumulation is relevant in the development process but to challenge the emphasis that has been placed on human capital development in the process of economic development and the view that the major value of education is to fuel human capital development which consequently turns human beings to mere productive agents. For me, such a view implies a wrong conception of the value of education and the reason why it should be promoted. Our argument is that apart from the instrumental value of education, it has an intrinsic value. Focusing on the instrumental value of education would imply that the institutions responsible for the provision of education need not educate those who cannot become "capitals" that can be re-invested into the society's system of production. One can say that this problem derives from the wrong conception of development as economic growth.

When development is conceived in terms of economic growth only, the unit of analysis and evaluation is evident, namely, the economy and not the people that keep the economy going. The significance of Sen's shift of focus from the economy to the people is that the information relevant for analysing development and the value of any policy action is not just income of the people but extends to cover non-economic and non-material aspects of life such as cultural activities, dignity, self-respect, political participation, non-

discrimination, and so on. The human development approach, therefore, brings a pluralist conception of progress in the process of development analysis and evaluation. The approach seems to integrate the visions of those activists arguing for the recognition of basic needs, international interventionists' cry for the children, relief organization's concern with epidemics, writers' focus on the disparity between the rich and the poor, and the humanists' call for social justice in the quality of life (Sen, 2000:7).

Valuable in this approach also is that it recognises the diversity of human beings and societies and therefore did not take a universalist posture. It is thought that "the domain of social valuation should not be taken over by some kind of an allegedly value-neutral engineering solution (Sen, 2000:7). It, thus, allows for a reflectively and socially engendered desirable content of development. Human development, in this sense, becomes democratic development and can be described in Abraham Lincoln's terms as the development of the people by the people and for the people (Streeten, 1993: 68).

3. Core Concepts of the Capability Approach

According to Sen, the capability approach involves "concentration on freedoms to achieve in general and the capabilities to function in particular" (1995: 266). This quotation shows that there are two major components of the capability approach, namely functionings and capabilities. However, one must add that there is another component which is significant, that is, agency. These concepts constitute the tools for assessing the well-being of individuals and the appropriate space for the evaluation of well-being, development and equality and social justice whether in education or otherwise; and they are what separate capability approach from other ways of understanding, for instance, educational policy and development analysis. Sen disagrees with the use of primary goods proposed by Rawls and the space of utility proposed by Mill as the appropriate space for assessing inequality. Sen thinks that assessments based on economic resources and utility do not look at how individuals are treated in the society. Sen's belief is that the possession of commodities may not necessarily translate into well-being. Apart from this, Sen also thinks that the space of income does not take into account the large interpersonal variations of personal characteristics or disparities in the natural or social environment that affect the conversion of commodity or primary goods to particular ends. Due to the diversity of between human beings, thinking of equality only in terms of primary goods leads to inequality of well-being.

Thinking in terms of utility is, for Sen, problematic because the utilitarian objective is the maximisation of the sum total of utility irrespective of the manner of distribution. This particularly raises problem if particular individuals are better at producing utilities than some others. The utilitarian approach has the tendency to discriminate against individuals, where is handicapped and who thereby require more resources to be converted to certain number of utility. This is because such individuals would be considered inefficient in terms of utility generating ability and instead more resources would be given to more efficient producers so as to increase the sum total utility. This ignores the fact that in it is the low efficiency producer who may be in greater need of a higher level of resources to achieve a given objective condition, such as education or health status. A distribution based on utilitarianism could thus be perverse, doubly compounding such a handicap.

The capability approach is proposed as an alternative to the commodities-based and utility-based approaches. In this approach, it is not the possession of the commodities or utilities that provide proxies for well-being, but rather, what the person actually succeeds in doing with the commodities given its characteristics and his or her own personal characteristics and external circumstances (Sen, 1999: 74-75). In other words, functioning and capabilities constitute the appropriate space for assessment of well-being, development and the value of education. And for this reason, it allows interpersonal comparisons of well-being and evaluates policies according to their impact on people's capabilities as well as their actual functionings. The key idea of the capability approach is that social arrangements should aim to expand the people's capabilities, that is, their freedom to promote or achieve what they value doing or being. It therefore, implies, as Alkire and Sabina (2009: 54) remark, that "An essential test of development is whether people have greater freedom today than they did in the past. A test of inequality is whether people's capability is equal or not". It asks whether people are *able* to be healthy, and whether the means or resources necessary for this capability, such as clean water, adequate sanitation, access to doctors, protection from infections and diseases, and basic knowledge on health issues, are present. It asks whether people are well-nourished, and whether the conditions for the realization of this capability, such as having sufficient food supplies and food entitlements, are being met. It asks whether people have access to a high-quality educational system, to real political participation, and to community activities that support them, that enable them to cope with struggles in daily life, and that foster real friendships. For some of these capabilities, the main input will be financial resources and economic production, but for others it may be political practices and institutions, such as effective guarantees and protections of freedom of thought, political participation, social or cultural practices, social structures, social institutions, public goods, social norms, and traditions and habits. The capability approach thus proposes a broad, rich, and multidimensional view of human well-being and pays much attention to the links between material, mental, and social well-being, or to the economic, social, political, and cultural dimensions of life.

Functionings, according to Sen, are various things a person may value doing or being (1999: 75). These functioning, he remarks, may range from elementary activities such as being adequately nourished and being free from avoidable diseases, to very complex activities or personal states, such as being able to take part in the life of the community and having self-respect. Functionings are achieved outcomes, that is, what a person is able to do or become with the commodities (and their characteristics) in his possession, given his personal characteristics as well as existing external circumstances which may be social, cultural or political (Saith, 2001:7). It relates to many different dimensions of life – including survival, health, work, education, relationships, empowerment, self-expression and culture (Alkire and Deneulin, 2009:32). Functionings include reading, taking part in the social life of a community through attending a meeting about a school, being calm and so forth. Capabilities are the potential to achieve these functionings, for example, having been taught to read; having books or newspapers available to read; and having the conditions that will develop

calmness (not too long a working day or too many anxieties). The difference between capability and functioning is one between an opportunity to achieve and the actual achievement, between potential and outcome.

In relation to education, the core concepts of the capability approach are important in the evaluation of educational input and outcomes. Functionings in education refers to educational outcomes such as being able to read or passing an examination. Capabilities are the potentials, or rather, input that make this outcome achievable, for instance, availability of teacher to teach, being taught, have books to read, a conducive environment to read etc. evaluating education in terms of functionings alone may not give adequate information about how well people are doing. Achieving the same outcome, for example failure in an examination, may hide different capabilities. Look at a scenario in which two female students fail a mathematics examination. On the one hand, the first one's parents are mathematics teachers, have a good library at home and the girl is well fed. The second, on the other hand, has poor parent, no library at home and is not well fed. While the former preferred to play with her friends than to read, the latter read and struggled to get good grade. The outcome was the same functioning, but behind this were unequal capabilities. However, according to Walker and Unterhalter, it is the difference that is the capabilities that is germane to thinking about justice and equality (2007:4). The capability approach therefore requires that we do not evaluate functionings alone whether in educational analysis or in the consideration of the general wellbeing other the people. It should be noted however that the requirement of the capability approach may be difficult to meet as it may be practically impossible to equalize capabilities (opportunities) for all (in this case, students).

4. Human Capital Approach to Education

The concept of human capital refers to the aggregate of a human knowledge and skills that can be used for production purposes. It is the stock of competencies, skills, knowledge and personalities attribute embodies in individuals which facilitate their ability to perform labour for the creation of personal, economic and social vale (OECD, 2001). Human capital as an economic concept is analytically different from what has been conventionally called human resources. The subtle distinction between the two is rather telling, in that a "resource" is something that one can exploit or use to some advantage objectively and without agency from the resource itself, while a "capital" by definition is not something that someone does, but that someone owns (Bouchared, 2008). Like physical capital, knowledge capital can be acquired and preserved, and can yield dividends in the form of productivity and, arguably, the wealth of whoever owns it. But unlike other forms of capital, human capital cannot be separated from its holder, and its value is entirely dependent on that person's capacity to apply his/her knowledge in an economically profitable enterprise. In that sense, human capital, even if it is fostered and paid for by public agencies through public policy, remains the property of its holder, namely the individual who "owns" his or her education. The idea of human capital originates from the observation that schooling develops certain qualities in people, and that these qualities enhance economic activities just as increase in physical capital does.

The human capital theory is an approach to development which arose in the late 50's. It is also known as the human resource approach. The theory has its root is Adam Smith's *Inquiry into the wealth of all nations*. Smith was unambiguous on the role of human capital in the economy of any nation. He remarked that most people think of capital only in terms of physical things such as factories, machines, or tools, noted that it should not be forgotten that one of the most important part of capital stock is the productivity of human beings. And, in the development of human productivity, Smith considered education as central. The theory was further developed by the Nobel Prize winner, Schultz. According to him, human capital refers to the useful skills and knowledge that are acquired through the process of education (Schultz, 1961). It is the stock of education or educational capital which when added to the stock of physical and financial capital would not only revitalise the capital concept but would enhance productivity. It is supposed that human capital is even more important as it is needed to coordinate other sock of capital for effective productivity. For Schultz (1961), direct expenditure on education, health an internal migration to take advantage of better jobs opportunities are not consumptions but investment in human capital. Schultz compares the acquisition of knowledge and skills to the acquiring of means of production. And anyone do not have to be at the mercy of other people because they can make themselves marketable and be in control of their own earnings and earnings. He notes that through investment in human capital "Laborers have become capitalists not from a diffusion of the ownership of corporation stocks, as folklore would have it, but from the acquisition of knowledge and skills that have economic value" (Schultz, 1972:6). He argues that this seem s to give a new conception of man which many people are at home with. That is that it conceives human beings as capital. He argues further that the failure to treat human beings as capital, as a means of production and as the product of investment perpetuates the retention of the wrong notion of labour as a capacity to do manual labour which requiring little or no knowledge and skill. The theory is a product of the expanding and maturing industrial culture which demanded an increase in "educated, skilled specialised, differentiated, healthier and more disciplined...labour force (Nepal Human Development Report, 1998:26). The human capital theory focuses on the creation and production of human beings as productive agents. It concentrates, as Sen remarks, on augmenting production possibilities through agency of human beings by developing their skill and making them acquire more knowledge.

Hugh Lauder (2014) highlights the basic assumption of the theory to include, one, that it is in the self-interest of individuals to pursue education because it will lead to higher economic returns, which form the basis for aspiration and a sense of progress in society; two, that education is fundamentally efficient because employers will not hire incompetent people; and three, that employers will respond to a better-educated workforce by investing in new technology to capitalize on the productive potential of a more skilled workforce. Given this, it becomes an important and valuable investment for the government to fund education. It provided policymakers with a simple policy prescription: Provide the means for individuals to have a good general education, and they will increase their income and the nation's wealth. In a study, Psacharopoulos (1973) showed that there is high rate of return both at the private and social level when there is increase in investment in education. The study further revealed that there is a higher rate of return for investment in male children education than the female children (Psacharopoulos, 1973:6). Education is central in the human capital approach (Becker,

1993). It requires that people be educated and that the government fund education. This paper argues that though education is instrumental for economic reasons, the growth and resourcist thinking of the human capital theory represent and inadequate and narrow conception of the value of education.

The dominant theme in the human capital theory is that education is an investment rather than consumption (Blaug, 1976). The basic belief underpinning this theme is that the formation of human capital entails the sacrifice of resources today for the sake of a stream of benefits in the future. Schultz for instance notes that college graduates earned more, and argues that the cost of higher education can be understood as an investment which would later generate financial reward in the form of comparatively higher wages. He writes:

- I propose to treat education as an investment in man and to treat its consequences as a form of capital. Since education becomes part of the person receiving it, I shall refer to it as human capital (Schultz, 1960:571).

Education is seen as a way in which the quality of the workforce can be enhance. College graduates do not just earn more arbitrarily; it is because the quality of their work but because of the increase education added to the quality of their work. This shows that education and training yield better economic result than individual earning power without it.

A review of state educational policy across the globe reveal the influence of the human capital theory. Gillies (2014), in such a review notes that within Europe, the influence of the human capital theory is seen in the way in which children and young people are categorized as national resource. In this way, they are equated with other resources such as oil, gas, or mineral reserves, all having the potential of being wealth producing for the state. Thus, children and their education form capital reserve that can be further developed for future profit. The theory seems to have some disturbing implications which the capability approach attempts to correct. This implication will be shown in the course of further analysis

5. The Capability Approach to Education

The capability approach to education is rooted in the human development paradigm which sees the value of an economy, not in terms of economic growth but in its capacity to provide opportunity for human flourishing, that is, for each human being to live a life that he has reason to value. In the capability approach the overriding consideration is not economic growth but the development of the quality of the life of the individual, that is, his well-being. This is not to say that the capability approach is averse to the enhancement of people's skill and income, it only seems to say that earning power and economic values are not the only dimensions of human flourishing that are important. As Unterhalter rightly remarks, education has a wider value for individuals beyond enabling than to contribute to economic growth or enhance their own or their family's earning power (2009:214).

There are aspects of human flourishing that education enhances that are neglected by the human capital approach. This is the aspect of education enabling human being to live freely and fully. The development of human capacity to think and reason. This facilitates the ability of individuals who are educated to exercise critical reasoning about their lives and about the society in which they live. This can facilitate the ability of the individuals to challenge existing power structures within the society which may be excessively domineering and does not allow individual freedom. We all know that individuals value freedom and autonomy. This may not be a motivating reason for the government to put in place and implement policies that will favour education especially is the government of the day in one that is authoritarian in nature.

Education develops in the child certain capabilities that are valuable – both in the present and in the future because they enable capability expansion. As Brighouse argues “all children should have realistic opportunity to become autonomous adults” (2000:65). The reason, for him, is that autonomy enhances dramatically the ability of individuals to identify for themselves and live and live lives that are worth living. Children needs to be equipped with skills that enable them to think rationally on alternative choices about how to live, so as to enable them to make good rather than bad choices about how to live their lives in the future. Someone can have a good income and be able to contribute to the economic growth of his nation, thereby yielding desired returns on education both at private and public arenas, but still make bad choices about how he lives his life. Ultimately this bothers on the content of education. If the government thinks of human being only in terms of capital developments, it will never include in the curriculum contents that enhance choosing the good life.

Some remarks are apposite on the contents of education, that is, on the curriculum that the children are exposed to at the learning period. The human capital approach favours subjects or courses that are tailored toward direct utility such as the science. And so, educational policies that are grounded in the human capital tend to marginalize the humanities. Nussbaum (2002) provide a critique of the marginalization of the humanities. According to her, economic science is too narrow in its vision and that the value of education will be lost if we justify it only in terms of advancing economic growth. She remarks that though the humanities are diverse both in contents and methods, this diversity is held together by a set of themes and problems that may be referred to as “the problem of how to live with dignity as rational animals in a world of events that we do not fully control” (2002:39). According to her, economic thought is a pseudo-science that represents an intellectual strategy for turning people away from the realities of human life. The humanities focus on human life and existence in its totality, not just the economic aspect, and “are essential to public life because they keep our eyes on the human meaning of public policy and a rich human ethical set of ends for our actions.

In Nussbaum's perspective education is a general preparation for citizenship and for life and a formation of citizens for our public culture (2002:47). The humanities provide essential ingredients which include clarity of mind, knowledge of the world and an expansive and subtle imagination. She writes:

- The cultivation of the imagination that comes with the study of literature, the cultivation of the ethical sensibility that comes with the study of philosophy and religion, these are essential equipment for citizens and policy makers in a world increasingly united, and driven forward, by the profit motive. The capacity to look at a single life with understanding and

love is not automatic, and can also be lost. We need to think clearly about this danger, and try as best we can to prevent it, through strong support for the future of these disciplines.

It may be the understanding of the fact that education is a preparation for life that is responsible for the suggestion of Brighouse (2006) that children should be exposed to four different kinds of educational experience. According to him, firstly, children should be having classes where they learn about family life, including good parenting and emotional development. Secondly, he said they should learn about what is sometimes called 'work/life balance', and how people deal with the demands of the workplace. Thirdly, they should learn simple facts about how credit markets work, investing and saving, and their obligations as taxpayers. Finally, he noted that they should learn something about what makes for a flourishing life, of the place of consumption and expenditure in that, and about how to use leisure time fruitfully (Brighouse, 2006, 254-255). The import of this is that an adequate education leads to more than acquisition of skills and knowledge for economic reasons but it also enables the educated to lead flourishing life.

Furthermore, education is significant in some other non-economic terms in the sense that it enables the acquisition of a basic set of cognitive functionings such as reading, writing, calculating, practical reasoning, and so on that are important components for achieving other important and valuable functionings. For instance, let us look at the functioning of being able to participate in effectively in the process of public decision-making. This, according to Akkoyunlu-Wigley and Wigley, will "bolster the ability of individuals to engage in public debates and reach an informed judgment about public policy and performance of elected representatives" (2008:274).

As a basic capacity, education enables that functioning of being able to avoid preventable morbidity and preventable ill-health. Akkoyunlu-Wigley and Wigley (2008) note that there are empirical evidences that suggests that educational attainment of individuals, especially females, is an important determinant of infant, child and maternal mortality rates. I do agree with them that part of what may explain this phenomenon is that those who acquire the basic set of cognitive functionings noted above are better equipped understand their own health and nutrition requirements and to more effectively utilise health care services. What this shows is that education is not only valuable for economic reasons alone.

The focus on resources may prevent some parents especially those who are uneducated, those who live in informal settings and those who live in rural areas from educating their children. This reason is that within that setting there are individuals with a level of resources (economic) that make them live comfortably. I remember when I was growing up in the village, a man in conversation with his friend who happened to be my father said if the returns on education is money, then he did not need to send his children to school. He said this because at that time he knew those who had some level of money but who were not educated. There are other effective ways of elevating someone's resource holdings above some threshold, the human capital approach does not require the individual to complete basic education. However, in the same village now, the common saying is that "eni ti o ba so wipe iwe ko ta ki o ran omo re lo so'ko", meaning that the person who says that there is no value in education should send his child to the farm. This is in recognition of the non-economic value of education. Education has a way of fostering some intellectual functionings that are intrinsic. Nussbaum (2003), for instance, thinks that a child who does not participate in an adequate education is denied the chance to cultivate the human power of imagination and inquiry.

What is germane in the capability approach to education is that it takes account of the non-resourceist value of education. It is the failure to take this into account that the human capital approach may not ensure that an individual can complete basic education if there are some other means of make up for the resources such as welfare programme or, in the case of a woman, dependence on the income of the breadwinner. Also, investing in the education of female children is considered of less value "if the presence of entrenched gender role means that women are less likely to be employed than men with the same level of education" (Akkoyunlu-Wigley and Wigley, 2008: 275) or if they are only going to end up in the kitchen or just rearing children. Let us consider the issue of investment in special education. The emphasis on the economic view of education cannot adequately account for special education, that is, the education of children with disabilities. Using the simplistic resourceist, investment-return measurement as a means of gauging the value of education. It is a known truth that special education, especially for those who are severely disabled, is very expensive and that the cost of education is not likely to be recuperated in simple economic terms (Gillies, 2014). From the capability approach, limiting the education of certain people because of the consideration for low rate of economic returns is to limit their capacity to achieve other essential functionings. For this reason, it is considered that "the government and parents have the moral obligation to ensure that each and every child can achieve the basic set of cognitive functionings (Akkoyunlu-Wigley and Wigley, 2008:275)

6. Conclusion

If development has to do with the widening of the choices of people, then education is paramount in this process. But if the human capital approach renders education principally as means to extract future economic benefit from human beings, then it is clear that its focus is too narrow. Therefore, the human capital approach becomes an inadequate metric for the value of education. Today, the challenge of modernity and economic growth has led to much focus on the economic value of education. But when we look at the traditional aim of education, we will quickly realise that a fundamental reform is an urgent imperative. This reform should include reshaping learning, the curriculum and the mean of measuring educational output. If we look at the traditional aim of education, we will see that it embodies three main purposes which include personal fulfilment, social aim or cultural transmission and vocational aim through preparation for employment. All of these would enhance human flourishing. What the human capital theory did is to, in the quest to create enterprising economic agents, over-amplify the preparation for employment aim of education. As we have shown in

this paper, the over-valuation of the economic return to education can have damaging effect: certain individuals or groups, such as women and the physically challenged, and certain aspects of the educational curriculum may also suffer extreme marginalisation.

7. References

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