

Significant value orientation and insights on rethinking higher education in present context with social inequalities – Past knowledge, present state and future potential aspects

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Abstract

Higher education's goals and effects on the economy and society at large have changed in a variety of ways over time. Context cannot be ignored because institutional and policy processes in higher education vary over time, but also among nations and political systems. This essay compares the instrumental and the intrinsic conceptual frameworks to examine the goal of higher education and its institutional aspects. Different instructional traditions are examined critically and utilized as examples, which could help guide current policymaking. This article makes use of the proper conceptual relationships since higher education cannot be separated from the other lower levels of education. Its importance stems from the natural synthesis of social science literature, which offers suggestions for the future based on existing traditions that, up until now, have been neglected due to an overreliance on market-driven procedures. This provides fresh insight into how conceptual "bridging" and reconciliation might help theories guide policy making. The current developments of rising social inequality in the west, its relationship to the mass model of higher education, and the pertinent policy decisions for a continual growth in participation are all considered in the context of the debate on the purpose of higher education. The current policy emphasis on labour market-driven policies in higher education, according to this article, has resulted in an ever-increasing competition that has turned this social institution into a regular market place where attainment and degrees are seen as a currency that can be converted to a labour market value. Moving away from its initial purpose of providing an environment for human growth, education has evolved into a tool for economic advancement. Higher education consequently becomes highly pricey, and even while regulations are geared toward openness, in reality only a select few can afford it. Policymakers should view a change to a hybrid paradigm, where the intrinsic value of higher education is equally acknowledged along with its instrumental value, as the way ahead to build inclusive educational systems and just and informed societies. India is currently at a crossroads in its evolution, comprising social, cultural, and economic changes, among others. On the one hand, there are fewer job openings, but on the other, business graduates aren't up to industry standards in terms of skills and expertise. In order to close the gap between academic curriculum and industrial requirements, commerce education must be comprehensive, targeted, and tailored with an emphasis on attitude, corporate awareness, grooming, and the development of managerial abilities. Therefore, restructuring and reorienting the business curriculum to make it more applicable to society is urgently needed. Therefore, the government should work to develop the new floats to enhance the nation's educational system.

Keywords: Instructional traditions, restructuring, comprehensive, social inequalities, educational system

Introduction:

The human capital theory, which is the dominant viewpoint in the western world, views education as an ordinary investment, with the high returns anticipated from the accompanying salary premium when one joins the labour market serving as the primary motivation (Becker, 1964, 1993). However, in reality, things are more complicated, and this series of occurrences is unlikely to continue, especially during recessionary times like the one we are currently experiencing. The intrinsic view, on the other hand, holds that education should prepare people to "make their own free, independent decisions about the life they will lead" and is partly similar to the American liberal arts tradition (Bridges, 1992: 92). This particular decision may have an economic basis, but the intrinsic idea allows for additional subjective impulses that are not necessarily influenced by economic conditions. According to Robinson and Aronica (2009), education has evolved into a faceless, assembly-line-style procedure that is akin to factory production. They contest this idea and advocate for less uniform pedagogy

that is more tailored to each student's needs and abilities. Since students care deeply about the quality of education they receive as opposed to automobiles, which could care less about the manufacturing process, education is not like a manufacturing production line. Accordingly, Waters (2012) adds that this manufacturing process is achieved through a rigid, rationalized, productively efficient, but completely impersonal bureaucracy, operated in a way that views children as raw materials for the creation of adults, which is the final product suitably equipped to reproduce "itself" by being a parent to a new born "raw material," and so forth. Waters (2012) follows Weber's (1947, 1968) rationale on the role of bureaucracy in modern societies. According to Durkheim (1956, 2006), this is a method by which older people exert control over younger people in order to preserve the status quo. But rather than concentrating solely on the dissemination of existing knowledge per se, which becomes a repeated process and an unquestionable absolute truth, primary attention should be paid to learning in such a way that educative and social functions could be amalgamated (Freire, 1970; Heidegger, 1988; Dall'Alba and Barnacle, 2007). This is because education involves both ontological and epistemological implications. Since higher education is the last step before entering the workforce, it is the subject of this article. Compared to lower levels of education, the instrumental view predominates over the intrinsic view at this stage. Universities have historically provided higher education. The Institution of Bologna was the first established university in Europe, and the concept of "academic independence" was originally introduced there as the foundation of its culture (Newman, 1996). Graham (2013) makes a distinction between three main higher education model types. These are the technical university, the research university, and the university college. He gives a brief overview of the development of these three paradigms throughout history. The oldest college is the university, where Christian ideals were emphasized. Later, as scientific knowledge began to cast doubt on the universality of theological truth, another sort of institution was founded where the primary objective of the scholarship was study. Following the arrival of the liberal arts tradition, this style of university has changed and thrived in the US. The pursuit of knowledge and its dissemination to the larger society were the two main goals of the research university model, which had its beginnings in Cambridge around the turn of the 16th century and was established in Berlin with the founding of the Humboldtian University. The technical model of higher education is the third type. It was founded during the Industrial Revolution in Scotland, specifically in Glasgow, on the grounds of what is now the University of Strathclyde. While the advent of capitalism fundamentally altered the structure and format of labor relations, the technical model was predicated on the notion that industrial skills needed to be learned through formal education and institutionally validated before being applied to a larger society. For the first time, the formerly separate disciplines of education and industry began to be conceptualized as being tightly intertwined in a relatively linear fashion.

Although these many higher education cultures and traditions still exist, universities all around the world use a hybrid method where all cultures work together. However, there are some institutions that continue to uphold the prestige and heritage of a particular model, which in some ways sets them apart from all others. The purpose of this study is to give an institutional and policy narrative that explores the role of higher education and how it relates to social inequality, with a primary focus on the western world. It is outside the scope of this study to analyse this in detail. Today, in a world that is changing quickly, the primary discussion focuses on how higher education institutions are changing. Based on Trow (1979, 2000), Brennan (2004) divides higher education into three categories. The first is the elite form, whose primary goal is to prepare and mold kids from the most dominant class in terms of mindset. The second is the mass type of higher education, which transfers the technical and economic functions that students eventually play in the job market with the knowledge and abilities learned in higher education. The third option is the universal form, whose major goal is to help students and the general public adjust to the quick-changing social and technical landscape.

The remainder of this essay illustrates why, when applied separately, both the intrinsic and instrumental techniques are bound to fail in practice. Social theories and practices ought to work toward reconciliation rather than obstinate competitiveness in an increasingly divergent and polarized world where social inequities increase inside and across countries. In that vein, the intrinsic and instrumental approaches are actually seen as complementary in this paper. Such a viewpoint can guide the development of educational systems that are more tightly integrated into society as a whole. This article challenges the current instrumental world-view of education, at least as it is evident in the western world, by departing from and expanding on the arguments of famous critical pedagogues like Freire, Bronfenbrenner, Bourdieu, and Kozol.

As the two competing theories are put into practice as a single, reconciled pedagogical technique, the paper then offers a justification for an organic synthesis of the body of knowledge. This argument is based on studies by Lu and Horner (1999), Payne (1999), and Durst (1999) (2009). According to Durst (1999), a "reflective instrumentalism" is conceivable when critical pedagogical canons are used in conjunction with students' pragmatic belief that education is only a means of obtaining a well-paying job. Payne (1999) suggests a similar strategy, in which students are given the skills they need to enter the workforce; however, instructors should critically engage students with this information so that they might create something new. Similarly, Lu and

Horner (2009) point out that in order for career choices to be critically debated in a social context that is always changing, educators and students need to collaborate in a way that allows for both parties' perceptions to be open to change.

The purpose of higher education in western societies:

According to Mokyr (2002), education should be integrated through both inculcation and emancipation in order to promote both social and intellectual advancement. In order to represent the kind of society that its citizens want, Shapiro (2005) highlights the necessity for higher education institutions to fulfill a public purpose that goes beyond narrow self-serving considerations. A more recent plea for a more expansive conceptual framework in higher education comes from Barnett (2017, p. 10), who writes that "the duty of an adequate philosophy of higher education...is not only to comprehend the university or even to defend it, but to alter it." Bo (2009) has also questioned the meaning and goal of education in modern western countries, arguing that it has evolved into a contradictory idea that allows no room for liberation because it gives pupils no possibility for creative expression. As a result, rather than feeling emancipated, the students feel trapped within the system. Bo concurs with Mokyr when he emphasized the importance of remembering the fundamental principles of education from ancient philosophies: that education should be combined by both inculcation and liberation in order to serve both personal intellectual growth and social advancement (Mokyr, 2002; Bo, 2009).

On the goals and functions of higher education in the modern world, not all people and societies concur. In any case, it is a location where teaching and research can coexist in an orderly manner to advance a variety of knowledge types, both applied and non-applied. The development of labor market competencies coexists with the identification and use of people's abilities and talents as well as the pursuit of employment, morality, and citizenship. It is a location where money and moral values compete and collaborate at the same time. The mass model of higher education has served as the hallmark of the post-World War II era. Upper education was previously only available to members of higher socioeconomic levels (Brennan, 2004). This concept was used as the basis for educational policies throughout the western world, including Europe (Shapiro, 2005). These policies have been strengthened by the development of information and communication technologies (ICT), which strengthen ties between nations and institutions of higher learning on both a commercial and non-commercial level, changing the role of higher education even more and making it more accessible to all (Jongbloed et al., 2008). The limits of higher education have become hazy, and the "social compact" that has been established in advance between its institutions and individuals who engage in them is harder to describe in absolute terms. Universities today are characterized by intense economic competitiveness in a highly competitive global market setting where governments are no longer the dominant players (Brennan, 2004).

Additionally, the demographics of students in higher education are always shifting. Today, higher education is a business with a global presence. As more nations offer more graduate and postgraduate posts to foreigners, typically at a higher cost than to citizens, the competition to recruit talent from around the world is escalating quickly (Barber et al., 2013). Rapidly developing nations like China and Singapore are spending enormous sums of money to improve their higher education systems and make them more welcoming to smart individuals from around the world. The old model of higher education has evolved as a result of new technology, and physical attendance is no longer a need (Yuan et al., 2013). Because it is considerably simpler to study while working, older students now have the option of pursuing graduate or post-graduate degrees. The potential for profit has expanded as a result of all these advancements, but they also come with a significant financial investment requirement for new infrastructures, resources, and technology. Diversification of financial sources is simply necessary, and as a result, all other industries inevitably get more interested (Kaiser et al., 2014). In addition to all of these factors, climate change, the rise of terrorism, the ongoing economic uncertainty, and the automation of labor will probably increase intra- and inter-national mobility, which will inevitably lead to an increase in demand for higher education, particularly in the recipient nations of the economically developed Western world. In conclusion, the environment in which higher education institutions operate is very fluid and unexpected, so strategies that are based on flexibility and adaptability are absolutely essential. This is similar to the hybrid method we suggest, where instrumental and intrinsic values are balanced.

Higher education is today viewed from the perspective of a digital, knowledge-based society where the economy is king. Skills like technological proficiency, critical thinking, and multitasking are in high demand on the labor market, which raises competitiveness and quickens the pace of the workday (Westerheijden et al., 2007). According to Haigh and Clifford (2011), having high competency in both hard and soft skills is insufficient because higher education must focus more on modifying attitudes and behaviors so that they become the foundation of a globalized knowledge-based economy. However, there has been significant epistemological as well as ontological criticism of the trends of knowledge and skill transfer by universities, which "increasingly instrumentalize, professionalize, vocationalize, corporatize, and ultimately technologize education" (Thomson, 2001: 244) (Bourdieu, 1998; Dall'Alba and Barnacle, 2007). According to Livingstone

(2009), seeing education and the labor market as concurrent economic activities with strong causal conjunctions is illogical because they have separate philosophical foundations and institutional tenets to uphold. According to Livingstone, the fundamental goals of education and the modern labor market are more incompatible than complementary, and any attempt to view them as the latter produces arbitrary and unclear results that mislead policymakers instead of informing them. The current paper challenges this position by introducing a "bridging" reason between the two theories, which can also be actualized in practice and guide policy decisions. It does this by elaborating on the arguments of Durst (1999), Payne (1999), and Lu and Horner (2009).

Human capital, as solely informed by the investment approach, cannot be seen as the most appropriate tool to explain the benefits an individual and society can gain from education when education, and especially higher education, is considered as a public social right that everyone should have access to. Citizenship can be seen as one of these tools, and concepts like social and cultural capital, or *habitus*, which, in contrast to human capital, acknowledge that students are not enrolled in higher education solely to succeed in the job market and earn high returns, should also be given equal weight when trying to explain why certain people choose to pursue higher education Coleman (1988; Bourdieu, 1986). For instance, according to Bourdieu (1984), degrees and credentials serve more as covert criteria used by the ruling class to distinguish persons from a specific social background than they do as indicators of academic or employable knowledge or signals of ability. The human capital theory is not rejected by Bourdieu, but he is very skeptical of its limited social application because it is a tool of the ruling class that they employ to perpetuate social inequality and hold on to their positions of power. Higher education attainment cannot be evaluated independently of an individual's talents since its conceptual framework assumes a social construction of competing and interacting individuals doing a particular and, occasionally universal, task every time. The fact that it comprises both innate characteristics and learned skills in a vibrant social environment indicates that capabilities exist both within and outside of this context. According to Sen (1993: 30), capability is "the alternative combinations of things that a person is able to do or be; [it] indicates the possible combinations of things a person is able to do or be." Sen further contends that capabilities should be viewed as an end in and of itself rather than just a means to an end (Sen, 1985; Saito, 2003; Walker and Unterhalter, 2007).

Since abilities are a requirement for wellbeing, social institutions should encourage people to achieve this goal in order for them to feel content with their life. Equal levels of life satisfaction, as these are experienced by persons of diverse demographic and socioeconomic features do not necessarily imply social and economic equality, however, as satisfaction is typically considered as a subjective concept. The perception of life satisfaction is typically based on past experiences, goals, and future expectations that are influenced by people's socioeconomic situations (Saito, 2003). The capability approach contends that without taking into account a learner's ability to transform resources into capabilities, tasks like evaluating a person's level of education or the effectiveness of their teachers and curriculum are not as helpful. The human capital hypothesis, which views education as an ordinary investment made by people, is contested by Sen's (1985, 1993) capacity approach. Additionally, it continues to be skeptical of structuralist and post-structuralist viewpoints that favor institutional settings and authority above individual acts. Sen (1985, 1993) argues that measuring educational achievements based on student enrollment, test scores, or projected future wealth is exceedingly difficult because these metrics do not adequately reflect the primary goal of education, which is to promote human welfare. Furthermore, the capability approach does not suggest that education can merely improve a person's capacities. It also indicates that education, if provided ineffectively, can be harmful, inflicting serious lifetime disadvantages on people and nations (Unterhalter, 2003, 2005).

Today, the liberal arts tradition is seen as the provision of multidisciplinary education throughout the social sciences and beyond that, with the objective of preparing students for the problems they will face as both professionals and members of civic society. As Kozol points out, things are very different in reality (Kozol, 2005, 2012). Kozol spent a significant portion of his career researching the social backdrop of US schools, paying particular attention to the interactions between parents, teachers, and students and how these have changed over time. He emphasizes how local differences and segregation in US schools are always rising. The US educational system today serves as a mechanism of replicating social inequality, and urban schools in particular are considered as notable examples of institutions where social discrimination thrives. Kozol is extremely critical of market-driven education's instrumental goals since they make corporations and commerce the "primary players" in shaping the goals, subjects, and curricula of schools. The teachers, parents, and students—all of whom should have played crucial roles—are simultaneously reduced to the status of token participants. Hess (2004) may concur that US schools have evolved into hubs for escalating social inequality, but his suggestion is substantially different from Kozol's. Schools must become accountable in the same manner that regular businesses are, at least when it comes to the teaching of fundamental knowledge, because they are social institutions that function and continually interact with the rest of the economy. Hess maintains that high quality instruction in basic knowledge and literacy should be available in every school in the US. This

knowledge is easily standardisable, and a national curriculum that is equal and the same in every US school can be created. By doing this, regardless of a student's social situation, all schools would be able to provide high quality fundamental education. Then, each school, teacher, and student are held accountable for their performance, and if they fall short of the national criteria, the schools will be closed, the teachers will be fired, and the students may have to change schools or possibly forfeit their chance to graduate. Hess makes a distinction between two types of reformers: those who support the status quo and do not question the state's control over education and those who support a non-bureaucratic educational system that is governed by market competition and subject to accountability measures akin to those used in the regular business world. The argument Hess makes that schools can only be reformed and flourish through the laws of market competition is not sufficiently supported because there are numerous examples in many industrial sectors where the actual implementation of market competition has ultimately generated enormous multinational corporation's corpora rather than creating opportunities for the more disadvantaged. The fierce competition in the financial, pharmaceutical, or IT software and hardware (Apple, Microsoft, IOS, and Android software, etc.) industries hasn't done much to help the underprivileged or the industry as a whole; instead, it's given rise to strong "too big to fail" businesses that control, if not completely dominate, the market. Hess does hold the opinion that the US educational system has a social responsibility in addition to educating students for the workforce. A well-functioning civic democracy requires active learners and critical thinkers who, in addition to having a job and a profession, are able "to frame and express their thoughts and participate in their local and national communities," which requires higher education that is solely focused on the labor market (p. 4). Setting high standards for fundamental knowledge in all US schools is a worthwhile and doable objective. However, when such objectives are based on competition and coercion like to that in a Darwinian world where only the strongest survive, they end up being very inapplicable for addressing the demands of human growth, equity, and long-term social progress.

The human capital hypothesis, which holds that education is an investment in future higher earnings and social mobility, is quite similar to the banking education method in its emphasis on educational attainment. The foundation of banking education and, by extension, human capital theory is the linearity assumption between past individual actions and future economic and social effects. To their surprise, policy makers today, at least in Western nations, appear to value a severe logical mistake that is introduced by this assumption very little. Freire (2009) contends that a pedagogical approach that "demythologizes" and "unveils" reality by encouraging dialogue between teachers and students creates critical thinkers who are engaged in inquiry in order to constantly create social reality by transforming it. This argument is made in addition to criticizing the current state of education. This problem-posing method for education connects its meaning with the intrinsic perspective of education, which sees human development as primarily independent of the acquisition of material possessions and the creation of riches through higher levels of educational achievement. The term *Bildung*, at least as it was understood after the Middle Ages, when everything was seen through the lens of a rigid and theocratic society, was developed in Germany, helped to shape the ideology that has guided the German educational system up to the present day (Waters, 2016). *Bildung* seeks to give each student's education the right setting so they can achieve high levels of professional and civic growth. It is a phrase that is closely linked to the mind's emancipation from superstition and social preconceptions. Though philosophical foundations are assumed, education must also have some practical application, just as philosophy as a whole, hence some context is required³ (Herder, 2002).

Higher education expansion and social inequalities: contemporary trends

Over the past 30 years, enrollment rates in higher education have been steadily increasing. Policies throughout Europe, particularly in the Anglo-Saxon world, are aimed at granting a wider populace access to higher education (Bowl, 2012). But because the population the policies are aimed at is so diverse, it is particularly challenging for policymakers to create a framework for openness in higher education. Such a population consists of people with very different social commitments and people from various socio-economic, demographic, ethnic, innate ability, talent orientation, or disability groups. As a result, the vested interests of each group conflict with one another, making the task of making policy extremely difficult (CFE and Edge Hill University, 2013). According to Chang et al. (2013), institutional goals frequently do not line up with what students hope to gain from their education. Most students have a more pragmatic and practical perspective of higher education's goal, which is primarily to prepare them for better-paying, higher-quality jobs. According to Arum and Roksa (2011), students do not significantly improve their ability to think critically and solve complicated problems while enrolled in higher education. However, it is noteworthy that students who claim to be striving for a "deeper purpose" in their education tend to perform better than those who view college through purely practical lenses (Entwistle and Peterson, 2004). These findings throw into question the validity of the instrumental view of higher education because it appears that students who are intrinsically motivated to pursue a degree outperform their peers both in the classroom and once they enter the workforce. Because of this, the

theoretical conflict between the intrinsic and instrumental approaches operates in practice in a somewhat dialectical way, where interactions between social actors tend to converge despite the emphasis placed on the instrumental view by policymakers.

Brown and Lauder (2006) looked into how fundamental changes to schooling have affected the way that various socioeconomic and cultural aspects are taken into account when making policy. They come to the conclusion that it cannot be guaranteed that graduates would find employment and earn more money because they are still skeptical of the empirical validity of the human capital hypothesis. Contrary to Card and Lemieux's (2001) findings, the authors contend that only the highest-earning graduates have seen an expanding wage disparity over the past decade when the wage premium is divided into deciles among graduates rather than averages. There have also been rising cases of over education as a result of an ever-increasing supply of graduates in contrast to the relatively slow growth rates of high-skilled occupations. Any wage disparities between graduates and non-graduates can be more accurately attributed to non-graduates' stagnant pay than to graduates' increased income due to their higher educational attainment. More recently, Mettler (2014) makes the case that the US's emphasis on corporate interests in determining policy has turned higher education into a caste system that both reproduces and worsens socioeconomic inequities. The idea of "credential inflation" has been hotly contested by many academics who doubt the value of formal education and skill development at institutions (Dore 1997; Collins, 1979; Walters, 2004; Hayes and Wynard, 2006). The focus of Evans et al. (2004) is on the tacit abilities, which are mostly learned through job and life experience as well as informal learning and cannot be acquired through formal education. These competencies relate to the best technique to handle complex issues or resemble character attributes that can be used to deal with unforeseen circumstances.

Policy implications:

Higher education completion that results in a certain academic degree is a dynamic process with a predetermined outcome. This makes the knowledge that was learned there obsolete.

Policies like the Bologna Declaration promote a position that graduates should be further encouraged to participate in programs for lifelong learning and on-the-job training (Cornfield, 1999). Others contend that institutions should play a bigger part, recognizing the advantages that greater levels of education bring to societies overall by simultaneously fostering productivity, innovation, and democratization as well as reducing socioeconomic inequities (Harvey, 2000; Hayward and James, 2004). Enhancing graduates' employability is important, and several international organizations are attempting to create a framework that can make sure higher education achieves this goal (Diamond et al., 2011). However, since there is no special policy framework for low-skilled non-graduates on a par with the Bologna Declaration, transnational setting, this could have unfavourable side consequences, widening the employment gap between high- and low-skilled. Heinze and Knill (2008) contend that national cultural, institutional, and socioeconomic features work in concert to determine how higher education policy is converged as a result of the Bologna Process. It is still unclear whether and to what extent the Bologna Declaration has influenced national policy changes, even though it is reasonable to anticipate that more equal countries can converge much more easily in terms of these qualities.

However, the political narrative of equal opportunity in terms of participation rates in higher education does not appear to be particularly compelling (Brown and Hesketh, 2004; The Milburn Commission, 2009). The pertinent research seems to have come to the conclusion that there is a bias in favor of graduates from the higher socioeconomic strata, but it has been gradually eroding since 1960 (Bekhradnia, 2003; Tight, 2012). Nevertheless, even while participation rates for the most vulnerable groups, such as women and racial minorities, have increased over the past few decades, inequity is still evident on occasion (Greenbank and Hepworth, 2008). According to Machin and Van Reenen (1998), the link between parental income and participation rates is present even in secondary education, tracing the causes of under participation in a cross-generational context. Similar to this, Gorard (2008) points to under representation on the prior low academic performance, which causes early secondary school dropouts or low grades, which prevent entry into higher education. Other academics contend that despite the global governmental focus on increasing participation in higher education across all social strata, ironically educational inequality still exists today (Burke, 2012; Bathmaker et al., 2013).

Conclusion:

After World War II, higher education has grown significantly. New technologies force people to develop their abilities and skills, which lead to the development of a knowledge-based economy and an increased need for highly qualified labor. Undoubtedly, a larger population is at the center of policy goals for higher education in

the western world. This growth is viewed as a tool for reducing social and economic inequality. However, in actual practice, the implementation of such programs has proven to be very challenging due to institutional inability to target the most vulnerable individuals as well as existing conflicts of interest across groups of people. However, it has been noted that higher education is constantly being commoditized, which makes it less accessible to those from underprivileged backgrounds. As strict economic reasoning in higher education conflicts with political demands for its further expansion, concerns about policymakers' continued emphasis on the economic values of higher education have been raised more frequently.

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