

education and national prosperity

by

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ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ. Στο άρθρο αυτό υποστηρίζεται ότι η αποκλειστική χρήση οικονομικών κατηγοριών και επιχειρημάτων στην εκπαιδευτική πολιτική παραβιάζει τα κριτήρια της παιδείας και αλλοιώνει τον χαρακτήρα της.

Η παιδεία δέ μπορεί να έννοηθή σαν κατανάλωση, σαν επένδυση ή σαν και τα δυο μαζί—παρ' όλο που μπορούμε, για όρισμένους σκοπούς, να την δοθμε και έτσι. Η ανάπτυξη της ευφυΐας, ή καλλιέργεια της ευαισθησίας, ή διαμόρφωση του χαρακτήρος, κτλ., επιδιώκονται όχι άπλως γιατί είναι χρήσιμες για την επίτευξη άλλων σκοπών, αλλά γιατί είναι αυτές καθ' εαυτές αξίες. Η αξιολόγηση των αποτελεσμάτων αυτών της παιδείας με κριτήρια που βρίσκονται έξω από αυτήν (οικονομικά, πολιτικά, κτλ.) μεταβάλλει την παιδεία σε άπλη εκπαίδευση ή προπαρασκευή και θεωρεί τον άνθρωπο σαν μέσο για την επιτυχία άλλων σκοπών.

Η αντίληψη αυτή δημιουργεί σοβαρά λογικά, ήθικά, κοινωνιολογικά και παιδαγωγικά προβλήματα.

Επί πλέον, το οικονομικό πρότυπο οργάνωσης της εκπαίδευσεως βασίζεται σε μίαν άμφισβητήσιμη υπόθεση: ότι δηλαδή η ad hoc εκπαίδευση αποτελεί το ασφαλέςτερο μέσο οικονομικής αναπτύξεως και προόδου.

The aim of the present article is to examine some of the thinking on education that is especially prevalent among economists.

A basic assumption made by economists is that education, like all other goods and services, must be consumption-valued for its own sake or investment-valued as means for other goals, or it must be both consumption and investment.¹

This *analogy* between investing in physical capital and investing in human capital has various limitations. The first limitation is stated by Schultz as follows:

Most relevant activities clearly are in the third class, partly consumption and partly investment, which is why the task of identifying each component is so formidable and why the measurement of capital formation by expenditures is less useful for human investment than for investment in physical goods.²

However, a more fundamental problem than the one mentioned by Schultz concerns the appropriateness and limitations of the economic reasoning about education. In order to discuss this problem we must be clear about the basic terms we employ.

a) education and training

The terms 'education' and 'training' behave differently in ordinary language. Those differences, however, are often overlooked in discussions on educational policy. The confusion between 'education' and 'training' is partly due to the fact that 'education' is an ambiguous term. We may use 'education', for

1. John Vaizey, *The Economics of Education*, London: Faber and Faber, 1962, p. 26.

2. Theodore W. Schultz, «Investment in Human Capital», *The American Economic Review*, Vol. LI (March 1961), p. 8.

example, to refer to schooling or we may use 'education' to refer to a cluster of activities (teaching, training, instruction, etc.) or the desirable outcome of such activities (the educated person). The last two aspects of education (the task and achievement aspects) are the most central ones. The reason is that education, in this sense, suggests certain criteria (knowledge and value criteria) on the basis of which we can evaluate the work of teachers and educational institutions. Thus not all training is educational but only that which satisfies the criteria of education. Similarly, training schools that violate some of the criteria of education cannot be classified as educational institutions.¹

But 'education' differs from 'training' in some other respects. Training is an activity. That is why we say that a person was trained (but not educated) *as a doctor, for a certain job, or in a certain area*. A person who has been trained in an area has acquired a certain competence in that area. However, the educated person is one who is distinguished by breadth of knowledge.

b) consumption or investment? an inappropriate analogy

There is no reason why all schools should be educational. There will always be need for schools that provide specialized training. *Educational* institutions, however, cannot be reduced to mere training schools without losing their special character. The view that the whole educational system of a country should be used in order to guarantee, or contribute to, economic prosperity destroys the character of education.

The purpose of the argument here is not to dispute the legitimacy and limited usefulness of economic reasoning on education. It is certainly quite useful to examine the contributions of various educational and training programs to the economic growth of a country, or the earnings of people according to the amount of education or training they have received, etc.

However the categories and the arguments employed by economists, though useful for their limited purposes, become inappropriate and misleading when they are generalized out of context. Thus the argument that education, like other goods and services, must belong to consumption or investment, or both, is misleading in important ways. The *analogy* is not quite appropriate here. Education cannot be called

consumption or investment because, *if it is educational*, it transforms people's lives by developing their intelligence, tastes, attitudes, habits, feelings, etc. Unlike economic investment, educational investment is good for its own sake and not for the sake of an external goal that lies beyond education. Education does not need to be justified in terms of economic or other external gains; it contains in itself its own justification.

c) further problems with the economic model

There are two major views on educational planning that are based entirely on economic considerations. There is the view that education is investment in human capital that gives returns to both, individuals and society. Then there is the view that education should prepare the qualified manpower that a socio-economic system requires.

Both approaches, regardless of their emphasis, use the same instrumental type of reasoning: they measure the value of education in terms of *economic returns*. This type of argument, however, raises many serious problems.

i) *The Logical Problem*. The men of business, who are unwilling or unable to see education as an end pursued for its own sake, will inevitably be confronted with this question: What would be the next goal if the present goal were reached? If they refuse to realize that certain things are worthwhile in themselves, then they are bound to entangle themselves in circular reasoning or in an infinite regression.

The problem here is not an empirical one. Certainly one could control other people's lives in such a way as to render them useful instruments for his own goals. The following rhyme describes aptly that form of human bondage:

I dig the ditch to earn the money;
I earn the money to buy the spaghetti;
I buy the spaghetti to build the muscle;
I build the muscle to dig the ditch.

The problem is how long one can maintain this line of argument intelligently.

ii) *The Moral Problem*. The educational system that regards education as an instrument of production also teaches children to regard themselves as such. However, treating human beings as mere instruments of economic growth is inhuman. Not only does this view use people as means for the achievement of other goals, it also limits the opportunity for human beings to cultivate their minds by learning to appreciate the whole scope of human excellences and achievements. It is one of the clearest and most important

1. For the most careful recent examination of the logical behavior of the concept of education see Paul H. Hirst and R.S. Peters, *The Logic of Education*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970, pp. 17-41, and R.S. Peters, «Education and the Educated Man», in *Proceedings of the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain*, Vol. IV, January 1970.

violations of the right for equal *educational* opportunity.

iii) *The Sociopolitical Problem.* A narrow economic view of education ultimately reduces education to a mere servant of the prevailing *status quo*. Any such system is bound to be repressive in many and subtle ways. Creativity, dissent, and critical thinking will be encouraged as long as they serve the *status quo*. As soon as it is realized that free inquiry threatens the prevailing socioeconomic system, it will be discouraged or suppressed. The consequences of such an approach to education inevitably lead to cultural impoverishment and decay.

In addition, the emphasis on training for immediate economic gains, like all other kinds of exclusive specializations, is one of the causes for the breakdown in communication among people. As B.R. Clark argues, this kind of education

makes mutual understanding and communication more difficult rather than less. Ways of seeing are also ways of not seeing; the more men devote themselves to specialized modes of thought, the less they are able to don other perspectives and to see the world as differently trained specialists see it.¹

The «one-dimensional man», the alienated person, the person who has come to resent his culture in our days is, at least partially, the result of this narrow economic outlook that has prevailed in education.

iv) *The Educational Problems.* Perceiving education not in its human consequences but in terms of its market value is responsible for many poor practices and policies in education.

The universal practice in all educational systems of using grades, credits, examinations, etc. and of limiting educational opportunities only to certain ages are evidence of the widely held instrumental view of education. As R.M. Hutchins very aptly observed:

Education has been thought of as a children's disease. Having had it once, you need not, in fact you often cannot, have it again. This attitude has been reinforced by the organization of educational systems into stages: as each stage is reached, the one that is behind is «finished». And if education is regarded as instrumental—to a job, a marriage, a degree—its purpose has been fulfilled when its object has been attained. If education is a means to anything that stops at a certain date, it must be irrelevant after that date.²

If we were interested in continuous human growth, we would have made provisions in our educational

systems for uninterrupted educational experiences for all citizens of all ages.

The problem of educating for leisure, which is becoming more serious every day, is a direct consequence of our preoccupation with training or indoctrination. The need for education for leisure increases as we emphasize training or indoctrination. It will disappear when we manage to educate everybody. When the young are successfully initiated into the worthwhile aspects of their respective cultures, they do not need additional education for leisure. When they learn to appreciate and practice what is excellent, they will also learn how to use their leisure time profitably and enjoyably. In addition, they will have no time or reason to feel alienated.

v) *A Questionable Assumption.* The argument that education should be subordinate to the economic goals of a country rests on an assumption that has been seriously challenged. This assumption is that education is the road to national prosperity and power—which is, in turn, part of the unrealistic belief that education is a panacea for all social, political and economic evils.

However, the relationship between economic growth and educational expansion is by no means a clear one. Although there is high correlation between the per capita national product and the number of years in school, «the notion that education should be directed to economic growth may rest on a confusion of causes and effects».³ The question is, as Hutchins observes, whether the years spent in school have resulted in the high GNP or whether the high GNP has resulted in the years in school. Is, for example, the United States a great industrial power because of its educational system, or is the educational system a result of its economic growth? At best the evidence is inconclusive.

T. Balogh and P.P. Streeten argue as follows:

The American data, which are mostly used, do not provide evidence as to whether expenditure on education is *cause* or *effect* of superior incomes; they do not show, even if we could assume it to be a condition of higher earnings, whether it is a *sufficient* or a *necessary* condition of growth.⁴

While the economic value of education is still disputed, the educational and other indirect benefits are recognized to be significant. These benefits cannot be measured in terms of national income because they are about improved attitudes and commitments, different perspectives and life-styles. Here is how B.R. Clark describes these benefits:

3. Robert M. Hutchins, *The Learning Society*, New York: The New American Library, Inc. (Mentor), 1968, p. 54.

4. In John W. Hanson and Cole S. Brebeck (eds.), *Education and Development of Nations*, New York: Holt, Rinehart. Quoted in Hutchins, *The Learning Society*, p. 55.

1. Burton R. Clark, *Educating the Expert Society*, San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Company, 1962, p. 38.

2. Robert M. Hutchins, *The Future of International Education*, New York: The United Nations Institute of Training and Research, 1970, p. 21.

A growing body of evidence indicates that education leads toward tolerant and humanitarian attitudes. Consistently it has been shown that the higher the level of educational attainment, the greater the degree to which 'democratic' attitudes are held. Similarly, education is a prime correlate of interest in politics and of cultural awareness or sophistication. College graduates are more tolerant than high-school graduates in their attitudes toward ethnic and racial groups; they are more supportive of democratic norms such as having a multiparty political system; they listen more to serious programs and read more magazines. High-school graduates, in turn, are more tolerant and more involved culturally and politically than are those with only grammar-school education. Level of education is related this way even when the influence of age, occupation, and income is 'controlled' or ruled out.¹

In a rapidly changing, complex, technological world like ours, education that is designed to meet immediate economic needs would soon become out-

1. Clark, *Ibid.*, p. 30.

moded, ineffective and wasteful. On the contrary, an education that aims at developing the intelligence, sensitivity and understanding of all people would seem to be, in the long run, the most useful economic and sociopolitical investment. T.W. Schultz suggests this point when he says:

While any capability produced by human investment becomes a part of the human agent and hence cannot be sold; it is nevertheless 'in touch with the market place' by affecting wages and salaries the human agent can earn.²

However this point should not be construed as a concession to the economists. The essence of education lies in developing the human mind, not in preparing the *homo economicus*.

2. Schultz, *Ibid.*, p. 8.

ENQUETES SOCIOLOGIQUES SUR LES EMIGRANTS GRECS, II (Lors du séjour en Europe Occidentale)

par Elie Dimitras

- I. Présentation de l'enquête
 - II. Morphologie sociale des émigrants au départ du pays d'origine
 - III. Psycho-sociologie du départ des émigrants
 - IV. Caractéristiques démographiques et géographiques des émigrants au pays d'accueil
 - V. Caractéristiques et psycho-sociologie de l'activité et de la formation professionnelles
 - VI. Caractéristiques et psycho-sociologie de la vie sociale des émigrants
 - VII. Caractéristiques et psycho-sociologie des liens avec le pays d'origine et des intentions et projets de retour
- Conclusion

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