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## Review Article

# Beyond the economy: Education for development

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## Abstract

This paper explores the meaning of development and the limitations of economic development which centers on capitalism, and argues that by understanding the role of education in development, we can overcome some of these limitations. The study discusses definitions of development, especially the concept of 'good change'. Then, the case of South Korea is considered in order to illustrate the links between development and education. This paper puts emphasis on the need for a balance between materialism and humanism when understanding the relationship between development and education.

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## Introduction

In many parts of the developing world, there seems to be a potential conflict, whereby short-term economic needs may take priority over long-term investment in education and learning. If this is the case at the level of individuals and households, then the country, as a whole, may have some important repercussions, particularly for enabling development. But what is development and what is the role of education in promoting development? These are the two central questions that I focus on in this paper. The first part of this paper starts with exploring the role of economic change and the main focus that international organizations and governments have put on economic growth, and discussing Chambers (2004, 2007) definition of development as 'good change'. The relation between education and development is reflected on with respect to the concept, and I suggest proper roles of education for development. Then, I move on to the case of South Korea to consider the roles of education for development. The case of South Korea is used in terms of its rapid change in social

and economic structures which has enabled South Korea to be seen as a strong economy today. In viewing South Korea's transformation, the questions asked are: 'what has been the role of education?', 'has the investment occurred over a short time or planned over a longer period?', and 'has South Korea changed socially and institutionally as well as economically?'.

## Education and Development: The Basis for 'Good Change'

Fundamentally, human beings are eager to better their lives. If this is so then, we must ask ourselves, 'how do people accomplish good changes to better their lives?' It would be impossible to consider development without considering the economic benefits that provide us with a more comfortable and convenient life. Development may be a response to the economic needs of individuals in society. However, no one can simply focus on a single dimension of development because development is about the transformation of the economic, social, and cultural spheres of a country (Sumner & Tribe, 2010). Education may have a central role to play as a more sustainable way of development. Based on this concept, I try to provide an understanding of

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development through Chambers (2004, 2007)' definition of 'good change' beyond the concept of development in the economy and to suggest proper roles for education in development.

#### *Development in the Economy*

Furtado (1977) states that development, which has the meaning of 'change' in society, seems to be closely connected to economic change and particularly connected to economic growth. According to him, it would be impossible to improve one's life without considering the economic factors because the latter is related to comfortable living. However, Gillis, Perkins, Radelet, Roemer, and Snodgrass (2001) argue that 'economic growth' should not be recognized as 'development', and that these two concepts are intrinsically different. According to them, an increase in national per capita earnings or national product defines economic growth. However, economic development involves more than this. Economic development is accompanied by changes of structure, participation of nationals, and consumption patterns, not simply an increase in income. First of all, economic development has to embrace the fundamental changes of structure. The first change pattern is that as national product increases in industry, it decreases in agriculture. Population growth in urban areas relative to rural areas, mainly due to the explosive rural-to-urban migration, is the second change pattern. A rise in the population in urban areas rather than rural places is especially considered when thinking about this pattern. In other words, when countries start to undergo economic development, they usually pass through very dramatic periods of accelerating and decelerating population growth. The authors also describe the patterns of consumption as a change. People start to spend more money for extra factors such as leisure and services instead of spending all of their earnings on necessities. Moreover, they emphasize the participation of the people who drive these changes as a key element. Participation is a part of the development process, which implies enjoyment and the benefits awarded to society. It cannot be considered as development if growth only benefits the small, wealthy minority.

Gillis et al. (2001) use a comparison (between South Korea beginning in 1960 and the result of the discovery of petroleum in Libya) to explain the difference between economic growth and economic development. The two cases are fundamentally different. There has been a large rise in per capita income in both countries; however South Korea has been evaluated as having economic development while Libya has not. In Libya, foreign corporations and foreign technicians, mainly from the United States and Western Europe, led an increase in income for the country after the discovery of oil. This meant that the government and people of the nation had had little involvement in the discovery although they were able to benefit monetarily from the discovery.

To sum up, a country needs to have participation of its own nationals and change in the social structure and consumption patterns as well as economic growth to achieve 'economic development'.

#### *Development as 'Good Change'*

Development refers to changes in the social structures and in recent years, market forces and economic growth have driven it. However, this view of development remains highly limited to the agency of individuals and the possibility of grassroots movements for change. Chambers (2004) provides four approaches to development (Table 1).

At first glance, 'good change' may come across as a Utopian perspective of development. Needless to say, the important factor is that development itself pursues good effects. Though negative effects are not intended, they are extra factors. The reason this paper tries to emphasize 'good change' is to consider the balance among diverse perspectives of lives, especially, between materialism and humanism in terms of development and education.

Furthermore, there are no limits to development. The pursuit for a better environment is endless. In the past, people could never imagine sending robots to Mars that operate from Earth, yet today it is possible. Our society has continued to develop and will only further develop as time passes. Still, with this 'good change' idea of development, a central question still needs to be answered: What is the role of education in producing 'good change'?

#### *Suggestions About Education for Development*

Throughout the world, the development dramas rely heavily on education (Lee & Ramirez, 1995, p. 15). As considered before, the concept of development cannot be explained merely by its relation to the economy. It is also impossible to emphasize only essential factors such as human rights without consideration of material factors. Both factors have to coexist. Holistic education might be the alternative for their coexistence toward 'good change'. Therefore, desirable roles of education are suggested while considering various perspectives in this section. In other words, it might be more efficient to suggest desirable roles of education if both perspectives of materialism and humanism are balanced. Based on this remark, I examine the proper roles of education.

Carnoy (1999) suggests several roles of education for development. First of all, he mentions the importance of more equal access to education, improvement of the quality of education for the poor, and more effective knowledge. His argument seems to be fundamentally important and should be highly considered regarding education. He also states that it is necessary to meet the requirements of physical capital investment, innovativeness, and technical capacity. Even though these requirements are fulfilled, we still depend on an efficient and honest government for economic growth and effective education. He highlights the importance of an efficient public administration and a flexible education system. He exemplifies a life-long education for adults after they graduate from a regular course at a school. This extra education provides skills which are required in order to adjust to rapid changes in society.

**Table 1**  
Four approaches to development

Approach	Benevolent for welfare	'Participatory' for 'partnership'	Rights-based for empowerment	Obligation-based for responsibility
Core concept or value	Doing good	Effectiveness, efficiency	Rights of 'have-nots'	Obligations of 'haves'
Dominant basis and mode	Technical	Social	Political	Ethical, behavioral
Process	Blueprinted	Consultative	Transformative	Reflective
Relationships of aid providers to recipients	Paternal, providing funds, assistance	Instrumental to programs and projects	Influencing governments; empowering people	Reciprocal, learning and being guided
Primary stakeholders perceived as	Beneficiaries	Implementers	Citizens	Guides, teachers, sources of insight, inspiration and commitment
Accountability	Upward to aid agency, taxpayers, INGO supporters	Upward with some downward	Multiple*: upward, downward, horizontal ...	Personal: internal, values, and then mainly downward
Procedures	Bureaucratic conformity	More acceptance of diversity	Negotiated, evolutionary process	Critical reflection, immersions, experiential learning
Organizational drivers	Pressure to disburse	Balance between pressure to disburse and results	Pressure for results and impact assessment	Space for agency; expectations of responsible use of discretion

\* Multiple accountabilities include international human rights monitors and INGOs, and intra-community and intra-group accountabilities. Note: The four approaches are not comprehensive—there are others, notably variants of participation—nor are they mutually exclusive; they are delineated so as to sharpen and clarify characteristics as in practice they coexist and overlap. The challenge is to get the mix and balance right for each person, group, context, and time. Source: first four columns slightly adapted from [Groves and Hinton \(2004\)](#) with the fifth column added. Note. The table is adapted from "Ideas for development: Reflecting forwards" ([Chambers, 2004](#), p. 26).

Personally, I would like to stress four factors. First, it is remarkable to try to balance basic education and higher education, especially in developing countries. Basic education is fundamental to keeping people's basic necessities and rights in place ([Bonanni, 1977](#)). Higher education offers high technological skills and expands the range of knowledge to those who acquire it. In addition, the balance between vocational and general education is important ([Dronkers, 1993](#); [Hanushek, Woessmann, & Zhang, 2011](#)). Second, it seems that a long-term education plan is necessary. In South Korea, English Education began to boom, especially after the election of President Lee Myung-Bak in 2008 due to his presidential election pledges ([Joo & Park, 2012](#)). However, the government gave the educational budget to local educational offices without offering a proper curriculum plan, and compelled the money to be used to employ native speakers as assistants to English teachers. Assistants were hired without having any pre-training program.<sup>1</sup> This rough-and-ready policy was wasteful as well as inefficient. Educational officers should establish a long-term policy cautiously. Teacher education is the third topic. Teachers are essential players in promoting quality education. Their teaching skills and knowledge are directly linked to the quality of education ([Iredale, 1996](#); [Routhstein-Fisch, 2003](#); [Stuart, Akyeampong, & Croft, 2009](#)). Lastly, fundamental subjects, such as ethics, philosophy, and literature should be emphasized because these kinds of education can be the basement for the whole meaning of development.

The importance of the educational and economical parts of society to accomplish development is emphasized, since

education should be the base for economic growth, keeping its important elements such as delivering knowledge and protecting human rights. Moreover, it could be claimed that the real and genuine role of education is fulfilled when diverse roles of education are implemented in a balanced way by all people and for all.

### From the Developing to the Developed: The Case of South Korea

In this section, South Korean as a case study is used to solidify points mentioned in the previous two sections because it involves experiences for both a developing country and a developed country. Three separate areas of study are discussed: the history of South Korean economic development; deliberating on the limitations of development in South Korea; and a suggestion of the proper role of education, which can be helpful to overcome the limitations and to access to a 'good change'.

#### *Economic Development in South Korea*

[Hundt \(2009\)](#) describes the case of South Korea as miraculous because it escaped from poverty to prosperity in only four decades. South Korea was one of the poorest countries due the Korean War. During the 1950's, the country needed a great deal of international aid. Since then, South Korea has modernized rapidly. In 1996, it joined Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which is regarded as a club of advanced countries. Moreover, South Korea became the 24th member of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC), OECD in 2009. This is very meaningful because once a supported country becomes a supporting nation, it can be regarded as a highly developed country.

<sup>1</sup> E-mail interview with Dr. Ha (Chinju National University of Education), January 23, 2014).

### *Limitations of Development in South Korea*

The structure of industry in South Korea has advanced from a typical agricultural society since the 1960's. It had a period of heavy and light industrial growth (1970–80's), and finally gained high technology such as IT. There was also rapid migration in urban areas. In 2008, over 20 million people of the total population of 50 million lived in the Agglomeration of Seoul-Incheon (*The World Fact Book, 2008*). People call South Korea a successful developed country based on such growth.

However, it still has problems, which may have been forgotten during the dramatic process to develop the country. South Korea tended to be constantly striving after economic growth. Politics were almost solely autocratic and many people died for democracy in the country (*Pirie, 2008*). Yet, it is still easy to see news about corruption within the country's government. The gap between the rich and the poor has also increased, and South Koreans are confused about traditional and modern values due to the rapid development. Furthermore, before becoming a member of DAC in 2008, South Korea's ranking of its ODA/GNI ratio was very low at only 25th (*ODA Korea MFAT, 2009*). Now, South Korea should do its duty to support other developing countries as a member of the DAC OECD. Though some of these limitations are directly linked to the economy, others are not. Overall, the main cause of the rapid development was due to the economy. The role of education plays a huge part in the genuine development of a country. Having noted this, South Korea could come up with a practical alternative to reduce their negative social factors through education and achieve the true development of 'good change'.

### *Suggestion for Proper Roles of Education for 'Good Change'*

In South Korea education has not only been regarded as an important part of its long history, but it has also played a pivotal role in development. As a country that lacks natural resources, South Korea has focused on rearing its human resources as its best resource. During this process, education was regarded as a tool for success and wealth. Therefore, the private education market in South Korea has grown sizably, and the equity of education has decreased. Moreover, business or management schools are favored because it is considered that they can earn money easily (*Choi, 2005*).

Nevertheless, the potential of education might help to mitigate Korea's developmental weakness. Strengthening public education to improve quality might be an alternative. Through this, South Korea might be able to solve the problem of overreaching pursuit toward private education and the equity perspective. For example, ability to speak English is used to indicate the gap between the rich and the poor in South Korea. If parents are rich, they can provide their children with an English education at an expensive private institute. On the other hand, children of poor parents learn comparatively less English from the ordinary course school (*Bray, 2006*). If the education in a public school is of better quality, then this concern might not exist. Moreover, the importance of science and humanities must

also be highlighted as applied subjects in higher education. South Korean students ranked 2nd and 7th in mathematics and science, respectively, putting them toward the top of world rankings (OECD, 2009 as cited in *Countries of the World, 2010*). Yet, South Korea has never produced a Nobel Prize winner in these subjects. Advanced countries like Japan have emphasized these subjects because they are the bases of "high tech" science. This result might come from the phenomenon of ignoring the natural sciences or engineering. Higher education might have a duty to support students in order to strengthen education as a whole. Furthermore, South Korea needs reform when it comes to international education. South Korea seems to lack awareness of the international society. If students can learn about it from an early age, they will naturally realize international refinement. Furthermore, they can learn their right and duty as a citizen of the international society.

Now, in the early 21st century, it is time to re-evaluate and reconsider the early stages of development in South Korea. I suggest that South Korea should consider what it lost during economic growth and what it should overcome for achieving a better change.

### **Conclusion**

Development seems to be linked to the notion of change and the overall change in society is affected by the economy. That being said, countries might first try to accomplish economic development. During this process, they just focus on economic success and tend to forget other factors. Therefore, many social problems occur and they are ignored. Education could be regarded as the alternative. From the perspective of materialism, education is a tool used to increase income. This point of view, however, could result in inequity of education and decrease the importance of education's original roles. On the other hand, education can play a role to protect fundamental human rights help to reduce social problems from the perspective of a human rights approach. In terms of education, both of these concepts might be considered for real development. This paper emphasizes the balance between materialism and humanism in terms of development and education.

If the case of South Korea were to be researched well, it might be quite helpful to a number of countries, since it has experienced being both a developing and developed country. South Korea might be at the early or middle stage of development of 'good change'. It still has limitations to become a 'well-changed' country. Hopefully, by strengthening the role of education and doing their duty as a member of the international society Koreans will be relieved of their problems. It might be time to consider the real meaning of development for all, by all.

### **Conflicts of interest**

None.

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