

Relationship between education and social justice



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Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) proposes to 'achieve universal primary education and aims to ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling'. With increasing education coverage, more children enroll in school than centuries ago, with 91% of young literacy rate in 2013 worldwide (UNESCO 2015: n. p.). Education has always played an important role in children and social development, and economic growth. Meanwhile, some argue that education leads to social injustice, between and within nations. I can understand their viewpoints.

What is injustice? It refers to the unequal distribution of resources among the community and uneven dissemination of opportunities, rewards and chances for improving the quality of life. The most prominent features through which social inequality could be observed and measured are education, income, wealth, and health care. It can be due to age, genders, races, disability or religions. This may also affect mental health or even lead to social instability as the rich tend to gain more resources and monopolize the market. As a result, wealth gap is widened that the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer. Then why education is responsible for the emergence of social injustice? Injustice and inequality are deeply rooted in the unjust practices of the education sector (Ball, 2010: 161). Children from wealthy family usually receive quality education from top-notch institutions and get a better job due to their outstanding academic performance. They usually engage in tertiary and quaternary industry such as financial, research and development, and other professional sectors with higher income. On the other hand, underprivileged children can hardly access schools, or even

illiterate. They can only earn very little as laborers. Their earnings can't support their standard livelihood and lead to a vicious cycle affecting their next generations.

Children with better academic qualification are always more competitive in the employment market and have more opportunities to well-paid jobs. In 2012, according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, a typical high school graduate, instead of a bachelor's degree holder, will earn \$400 less per week. The average weekly wage for a diploma graduate was \$652, while the median weekly income for someone with a bachelor's degree was \$1,066. The differences are approximately \$1,800 per month and \$21,500 per year. Income has a direct impact on one's quality of life and even their future generation. Recent research in the US has confirmed that there is a strong relationship between low-income family background and lower education achievements: greater levels of income inequality could lead low-income youth to perceive that investment in their own human capital yields a lower rate of return (Kearney and Levine, 2016: 2).

Within countries, access to education is not equal. Take China as an example. With the Gini coefficient of 0.614 in 2015, the huge income disparity is mainly because of poor government policy. In the 1970s, President Deng carried out reform and opening-up policy and propose 'let some regions get rich first'. This led to the uneven allocation of resource between the east and west. There is a visible difference of government funding and educational grants for the school districts of the lower class as compared to the school districts of a higher class. The quality of education, as well as educational resources assigned to the students in these sectors, <https://assignbuster.com/relationship-between-education-and-social-justice/>

deviates greatly. The quality of teaching and equipment is unsatisfied, therefore, poorer children can't receive quality education and become less competitive comparing to children from affluent urban regions. Even though China economy develops prosperously in recent years, rural areas can't share the profits of the country. As Cao (2008) has pointed out in relation to China, remote regions, rural areas and minority communities are beset by a combination of inferior educational resources and a less favorable socio-cultural milieu. In scattered rural communities with poor infrastructure, even the nearest school still takes children hours to walk to.

The idea of ' elitism' also fosters social injustice. ' Elitism' means people with wealth, outstanding intelligence and talents, should have greater authority and dominance society. They are considered as superior to the others. In affluent countries, government invest abundant resource in the education system and it is more mature compare to poorer nations, so children can receive ever-improving compulsory learning, while only minority of children in poorer nations can enter universities. In fact, the university fees are increasingly expensive globally, therefore only rich elites are able to afford. Dorling also examined the discourse and practice of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), underpinning the idea that only people who are clever enough to achieve upper-class positions to noble universities. Test scores are mostly not awarded on the basis of intelligence and hard work but on the basis of race and class. College enrollment is not based on merit or first come first serve basis. Rather, the students from wealthy families and stable backgrounds are preferred (Mirowsky and Ross, 2017: 73), whereby only the children of rich families achieve higher

education qualifications in top ranking universities. This exploits the chance for poor children to receive education. Even if a poor student is intelligent, passionate and hardworking, he is most probably judged and treated wrongly based on his family backgrounds.

United Nations (2014) promoted 'gender equality and empower women and aim to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015'.

However, there is unequal chance to receive education between men and women. Statistic reveals that 65 million girls across the world are out of school and world's 774 million illiterate adults, 2/3 are women. There are numbers of hinderance for girls' enrollment in schools, such as cultural misunderstanding and force of early marriage. In third world countries like Libya, Afghanistan and Nigeria, girls have lower social status than boys and are less likely to step into classrooms. Instead, they need to learn life skills like milking cows planting crops. Those uneducated girls usually encounter lots of social injustice, for example, they suffer from malnourished due to poverty. Even worldwide, women academic contribution is also overlooked. Scientific field is led by male with only 29% of female researchers. What's more, women's achievements are not been emphasized with only 6% of women Nobel prize winners. Thus, even both men and women receive similar level of education, women are neglected from society.

Still, education can help promote social justice. For instance, Chinese, for the older generation, has a gender stereotype that 'men as the breadwinner and women as the housewife', which means men are responsible to work and earn the livelihood, while women should take care of household affairs.

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However, this traditional, mistaken belief start to change in recent years due to education. Due to the influence of western culture, children know more about feminism that both men and women should share the same social status, therefore, women gain more opportunities in the job market, rather than discriminations. Nowadays, women's status in social is rising and taking more important nationally and globally. Significant figures include Liu Yandong, Vice Premier of the People's Republic of China, and Margaret Chan, former director-general of the World Health Organization.


Social justice is inevitable in modern, civilized world. Unfortunately, Discrimination transforms itself into biased behaviours and promotes a sense of inequality and injustice in society and the world. There is a crucial need to improve the educational systems to a greater extent. This has to be identified and responded to by government bodies so that fair and just treatment for every student could be ensured at all costs (Boliver, 2011: 235). Teachers must promote equality in treating their students and assess the ability of all students on a pure merit basis rather than giving preference to wealthy students and neglecting the poor ones. Knowledge is an important asset for children as it can affect their competitiveness and salary gained in society. As Malala Yusufzai said “ Let us pick up our books and our pens, they are the most powerful weapons”.

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