

## **Education a Common Good for Common Good: Socialization of Education**

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### **Abstract**

This paper is an advocacy to make education a common good and using it as an instrument for common good. Paper explains the concept of common good and illustrates with the examples of common goods. A common good is something for which an individual is inherently entitled to. It may be tangible like natural resources-air, water, forests etc. as well as non-tangibles like- human rights, justice system, personal liberties and the like. Education is in the process of becoming a common good, but yet it's long way to go. Author attempted to outline essentials for making education a common good for common good. These essentials are policing for common good, universalization of education, building appropriate mindset & attitudes, delivering both in context and context free knowledge, designing suitable curriculum, ensuring social mobility and making information technology an essential feature of education. Education by nature and its origin has been a social/common good; it is just rediscovering the facts for giving its justified place in the scheme of common goods. Everyone has responsibility for contributing a bit in this common good venture.

**Keywords:** Education, Common good, Social good, Private good

### **Introduction**

Common good is something which is intrinsically essential by human beings like of air to breathe food to feed, emotions to express and so and so on. Common good is essentially shared, participatory, inclusive, guaranteed, and available in abundance and is of common interest. Mostly common goods are talked about by Economists in terms of natural resources like air, water, land, forests, oil fields, grazing lands and the like. The concept of common good has originated from the very concept of formation of society advocated by Confucius, Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero. And it is being threatened by dominant western philosophy of individualism, dignity, liberty and privacy. American political economist Elinor Claire "Lin" Ostrom (1933-2012) the first lady to win the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences (in 2009), stressed on the need of cooperative systems as tools of delivering common goods. As per her opinion common resources such as water need not be congested and exhausted if viable cooperative systems are developed. Thus a common good is essentially needed to be cooperative one. Smith (2015) opines besides natural common good there are equally important socially constructed common goods, the systems and structures that encourage and enable equitable opportunity, practice of tolerance and civility, and respect for the rights, capability and agency of individuals. By virtue of this expansion of definition of common good Education naturally comes in its ambit for civilized world. Moreover, education by its origin is social in nature or we assume it is discovered and devised by society. Here we need to distinguish education and learning in philosophical sense which are being used synonymously in educational literature. Education is a social/cooperative phenomenon whereas learning is a singular phenomenon. Together we are educated whereas individually we learn and use the learnt concepts in our individual contexts. This individual and contextual use is responsible for diversity among people even when taught through the same school of thoughts in education system.

Education is given to human beings for reasons varying from making children busy to making him intellectually superior to negotiate complexities of life. It comes by virtue of belief that education

is not an end in itself; rather it is more of a process of developing human mind for capability to learn. All the subjects taken for study in institutions correspond to the nature of faculties of mind which need to be trained. In other words education helps in igniting and sharpening of faculties of mind. But why do we want human beings to have capability to learn? Answer is very simple ability to learn helps in understanding other perspectives and other's prospective of the same phenomenon. This is first requirement for making education a social good.

### **Some Examples of Common Good and Education Environment**

As per compendium of social doctrine of church "Care for the environment represents a challenge for all of humanity. It is a matter of a common and universal duty, that of respecting a common good, destined for all, by preventing anyone from using 'with impunity the different categories of beings, whether living or inanimate—animals, plants, the natural elements —simply as one wishes, according to one's own economic needs". Environment is an issue which affects all both in positive as well as negative sense. Every individual born on this planet have right to clean environment and products of environment in the form of air, soil, water, vegetation and the like. Environment is a resource which needed to be used in a justified manner for developmental goals. In other words development has to be sustainable in its approach. Problem comes due to uneven distribution of wealth among people. It is education which can educate people about intrinsic value of environment for which everybody is entitled, irrespective of financial status. Education by virtue of its content and methodology can make environment a common good.

### **Health Care**

Like environment health is also a common good, reason being everybody needs to be healthy and comfortable living. Only a healthy person can be a contributing and productive social being. Health is a complex issue starting from inputs to sustenance to culmination of life. These stages may involve issues like vaccination, nutrition, hygiene, psychological wellbeing, medical therapies, yoga, meditation and the like. All these aspects of health are nothing but learning about content and process of health and hygiene. Education is a perfect tool to ensure health by virtue of its content and practices. If we ensure education to every human being we are near to ensure health for everyone.

### **Peace**

Wilson, S. (2016) quotes four zings i.e. principles given by Pope Francis for common good and peace in society. Four principles are-Time is greater than space, unity prevails over conflict, realities are more important than ideas and the whole is greater than the parts. The last principal is remarkable departure from individualism propagated in present era. Peace is a crucial common good essential for every social being. Peace is requisite of progress and prosperity and these two are signs of life. Peace can be ensured by respecting each other's rights and duties as well. Peace lies in ability to perceive other's point of view and skills for conflict resolution. If we want to understand other's point of view we need to have knowledge of other perspectives and sensitivity for others feeling and needs. Conflict resolution skills are also learnt from critical analysis of situation and one's own submission to criticism by others. All these are targeted in the learning outcomes of education. Thus education can best serve as creating peace in the minds of people and hence in practice as well.

### **Security**

Security is another social good nearly closely associated with peace. The only difference between two is peace being a preventive strategy for security whereas security is proactive action for maintaining peace. As per QCEA (2010) occasional paper, security threats may be related to economic instability, social marginalization, health issues, state dominance, extremism, violence, cybercrime etc. Security basically ensures freedom of making choices, living style, independent

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thinking, progress of art and culture and the like. Security is threatened by the ignorant people by virtue of being dissidents, separatists, radicals, extremists etc. Education is a moderate instrument which helps in reducing chances of coming in to being of such extreme groups. Thus education needs to be a common good to ensure security for commoners.

### **Art and Culture**

Art and culture are common entities by virtue of their nature. Culture is a form of justified uniformity among people in terms of geographical location, habits, customs, traditions and values, whereas art is a form of conversation among the people. No one alone has personal authority on art and culture rather both are shared and propertyed by all human beings in a community. Art is created, shared and enjoyed in a group; culture helps in maintaining identity of a community by virtue of art owned by the community. This identity building helps in cohesion and unity among people which make them a united force which can initiate and sustain a change. Education is the tool to ensure building and propagation of culture, creation and spread of art. This means we need to turn education in to a common good for bringing every individual in the domain of art and culture.

### **Values**

Values are part of a culture, which need to be adapted by all human beings in a community bound by commonalities. These values may include truth, beauty, goodness, peace, philanthropy, egalitarianism, freedom, loyalty, solidarity, sharing, honesty, sincerity, aesthetics, intellectualism, mobility, compassion, tolerance, gratitude and the like. Although every individual has a set of preferred values, but awareness of adopting values is pre requisite for building such a set. Another important aspect of values as common good is avoiding contradiction between individual values and collective values. In the spirit of common good, one should give priority to collective values over individual values. Individual needs to participate in building collective values which should be adopted on the basis of collective wisdom. None other than education can be the best instrument for making human beings able to participate in such intellectual processes. Thus education needs to be a common good to build a common set of values which help in refining of all individuals as per their individual capacities.

### **Development**

Development is a modern social good demanded by all aware societies and individuals. It is nothing but a promise to deliver good comfortable life for citizens by virtue of material progress. Governments fight elections on the issue of promising development of country, society and hence individuals. But it is necessary to understand what development is really mean? Only material production is not really the development, reason being material also bring problems along with comfort in life. For instance environment pollution is an outcome of uncontrolled and unaccounted material development model adopted by countries. It is a composite phenomenon ranging from physical development to spiritual development. As far as material development is concerned Midence (2017) while terming development as common good in Nicaragua economic model opined that it should be ruled by two basic principles: generating goods and redistributing them in the fairest possible way. In other words development need to be even and gap between 'haves' and 'not haves' should not be great. It is only possible if people are educated for 'holistic development' or 'sustainable development'. Word holistic is used for human beings and institutions of humans and sustainable for developmental outcomes involving natural resources. In conclusion we assume that education must be made a common good for taking genuine advantage of development as common good.

### **Education: A Common Good**

Education can be thought as common good in terms of three dimensions as discussed below.

#### **Education and common good**

As per present arrangement education has become a confused lot, half baked, halfhearted run entrepreneur in most of the developing countries. Governments are failing to support even school education and higher education has been to great extent left to the private players and customers seeking education. In develop countries also higher education has become a saleable commodity. It is being run on the line of a service industry, thus taking it away from the reach of commoners. Anything which costs so much is difficult to be brought under the ambit of common good. Another essential aspect of education as a common good is the reach of people to quality education, which makes it further difficult to be a common good. In some places it is being subsidized by grant-in-aid system and NGO's working in the field of education. But at the same time people are now more aware about significance of education for an individual and community's life. People who are well educated, with the help of knowledge acquired through education pursue their own goods and contribute to common goods like maintenance of natural resources, law and order, peace, happiness, security culture etc. Also education has emerged as the biggest remedy for majority of social problems hence definitely is a common good. In summation we see education is caught in the dilemma of being a common good or a private good.

#### **Education as a common Good**

In the era of private regime of education, it is difficult to assume education as a common good. It is seen as a service involving service providers (institutions and faculty) and clients (parents and students) typically a format of business operation. Clients also want a spectrum of services to choose the best one, thus challenging the notion of common good for education. The unequal distribution of wealth and taking over by market economy around the world are making the task tougher. For making education a common good, it has to be socially constructed and institutionalized where governments are to take lead. It needs to be seen as inherent right for every individual irrespective of variations of possessions and status. And public authorities must arrange public and/or social resources not to be exploited for personal gain. It must be noticed that people working in the education sector has been trained and groomed by public and social resources, thus should owe to society in the form of serving education as social good. But then licensing of private institutions and other procedures need to rethought in favour of education as common good.

#### **Education for common good**

Majority of the world live in poverty thus most of consumer of education system are poor. The best way to turn it in to a social good is training and inspiring of teachers and others in the field of education, taking pride and drawing satisfaction from the service they deliver. At the same time the profession needs to be highly valued among the community members. Service providers need to set very high standards of behaviour for getting respect from the society. Education as a common good assumes immense importance when we are educating a special child, a child from marginalized community, from a poor family, teaching adult learners, contributing in literacy mission, educating for social causes, diseases and the like. Learners so produced are agent of common good by virtue of becoming source of building communities, connecting people, bringing development, improving social and economic fabric of the country. Education is a sacrament of community, a pious mean to achieve the common good although invisible, brings long term changes, for all the members of community.

## **How can we make Education a Common Good?**

### **Policing for common good**

Educational policing has to be such which makes it a common good. For instance education needs to be universal, free and compulsory to deliver what it intends to deliver. It can't be done by just promising or announcing, it needs to be planned, budgeted, executed, monitored and evaluated carefully. This requires lot of political will, awareness, social support and public participation, cutting defense or some other budget allocations and so on and so on. Policing education for common good has to be done at macro as well as micro level i.e. at government and ministry level to institutional level and even at family level. At home people need to prefer educating children instead of offering comforts of life. Once people are educated they definitely gain ability to force authorities for turning education a common good.

### **Universalization of Education**

A precondition for the education to be a common good that people recognize themselves as mutual members of a civil society. Denying a member or a class of member access to education is equivalent to treating him/them less than full members of the society. Education needs to be available to every individual to appropriate level as per one's ability. Universalization of education is not only a financial and administrative ask, rather a social ask as well. Parents and society need to be convinced about utility and vitality of education for every individual. In case education is denied to a person it diminishes his possibility to progress and exploit his full potential for achieving his possible best. It is totally against the spirit of common good. Lack of education is a challenging state of affairs for being education a common good. In this context civil society faces triple challenge: to hold the education as a common good, to be an advocate of universal access to quality education, and to organize itself in such a way as to extend education to the poorest among the poor.

When people are convinced and they send their wards to educate without any exception, it automatically turns out to be a common good for common good. It is general perception that universalization of education is only responsibility of governments; this is not true. It should be a joint venture of public private entrepreneur. Private institutions need to be run by non-profitable organisations. But in the present era of market economy, it is difficult to actually realize. The only option left is subsidizing education by society in the form of NGO's and philanthropic forums. The administrative option for making education as a common good at school level could be the kind of common school system as suggested by Education Commission of India (1964-66). It advocates diminishing boundaries between public and private education systems and turning it in to only an 'Education system'. In other words all other options to make education a social good will vanish in absence of universalization of education.

### **Mindset & Attitudes**

People don't send their wards to schools not necessarily for lack of resources, rather bigger reason is lack of mindset and right attitudes towards education. Attitudes are built and can be changed if desired so. The most important elements for attitudes building are awareness, knowledge, and suitable environment and experiences. Raising awareness of people for significant learning outcomes of education, necessity of credible knowledge, creating congenial environment for spread of education and arranging decent experiences for learners at institutions can results in right attitudes. Mindsets are product of inheritance and social interactions. We are inherited with some alliances and oppositions and these are reinforced or resisted by impact of social interactions we do in daily life. In educational context teachers and institutions should understand interactions are never neutral, these affect either positively or negatively. Thus interactions should be guarded carefully to have right mindset among the learners for creating a space for education a common good.

### **Knowledge in context and context free**

As mentioned earlier, knowledge is crucial for turning education in to a common good. It is not only the knowledge but the quality of knowledge does matter for having its true effect on commoners. A scientific, credible, authenticated, prejudice free knowledge should be made part of education. As far as context is concerned knowledge hugely varies with context. All knowledge related to culture, social issues, local geography etc. is true only with the context. For instance what should we eat, what should we wear, and how family unit is built and held together are part of local knowledge rather than a universal one. A child needs to know local wisdom in terms of language, traditions, customs, food habits, homemade ailment remedies and the like. On the other hand there is knowledge which is context free i.e. universal. For instance knowledge of science & technology and mathematics remains true irrespective of time and space. This sort of knowledge keeps people connected and communicates even without language. In other words, child needs to be associated with world inside and outside i.e. he must possess both in context and context free knowledge. Thus education must include both in context and context free knowledge to be a common good in reality.

### **Curriculum**

Curriculum is focus of educational process at every stage. It is about deciding the content to be learnt by the learner in the process of education. And content is decided on various criteria ranging from institutional philosophy to country's political system and priorities of the era in which people are being educated. But most of the time learner and learner's needs are ignored. Learner's needs may be classified as individual and social needs. Both forms of needs are to be attended by virtue of syllabus and activities to be taken up in the institution. Social needs are common needs of the students thus should give an impression that education is a common good for commoners. The contents need to be as per average level of the learners in the view of concept of a common good. Another need is medium of instruction to be local language or mother tongue of learners. Illustrations and examples need to be localized. Besides these, curriculum should focus on problem solving framework and problems should come from local life. In this way learners should be able to perceive education as a common good for common good.

### **Social mobility**

Social mobility means movement of an individual or group of individuals in social position over a period of time. This can be horizontal (among equal social positions) or vertical (among differing social positions) mobility. Here vertical mobility is our concern, when an individual or group of individuals moves up in the social ladder. Social mobility is measured in terms of income strata, designation, educational qualification, employment level etc. Out of all these education seems to be the single factor which can empower the powerless and hence can cause social mobility at quicker rate. And social mobility will ensure more education and hence will turn education as a common good for common good. Social mobility can be prompted by governments in the form affirmative actions like reservation, subsidies, scholarships, educational loans, free books and the like. Society can help in it in the form of sponsorships, evening hours work for adult students, associations for poor students and the like.

### **Information Technology**

Information technology has become important tool of empowerment in modern times. It helps in bringing transparency, accountability, justice delivery, speedy communication and better quality of services. Information technology helps in delivery of education in all forms i.e. formal, non-formal and informal with almost equivalent efficiency. This makes education within reach of larger population, thus turning in to a common good for common good. This is to be done at public as well as private level. Government needs to work from level of satellite to facilitating transmission of signals, whereas at personal level individual has to be techno savvy for taking maximum benefit out

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of it. Institutions need to build attitudes, infrastructure and procure soft wares to make it a reality. Teachers and other staffers need to adapt to technological ways for creating a culture of accountability and transparency. Particularly teacher should use technology to deliver the content effectively; efficiently and judiciously. In other words information technology must be embraced in totality for making it a greater tool for turning education an equity item, turning it a common good for common good.

### **Conclusion:**

Common goods, also called social goods like air, water, soil, forests are non-excludable from life of common people. Most of the time common goods are consumable rather than usable ones. But in modern times many more common goods have emerged which do not fall in the domain of economics. Most of the governments have offered human rights, freedom of expression, legal justice system, defense system, transportation system, choice of occupation as common tangible as well as non-tangible goods. Education however is not offered as common good in greater part of the planet. Non-tangible common goods did not come naturally, rather acquired by the people with conscious effort and resistant movement against the rulers. But even in modern time governments and people have to think with higher order of thinking to make lives more refined, thus need to bring more and more entities in the list of common goods. Education needs to be most natural entity to be brought under public domain. This can be done by number of initiatives as discussed in the paper, but at the same time education needs to be an instrument for common good. This is very interesting, because it will definitely demand refined behavior from educated lot. This will create a just society; consequently, more education will be advocated and hence will become a self-reinforcing process. Let us create an environment where education be felt as essential as air to breath and food to feed. It will automatically be turned in to a common good for common good.

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