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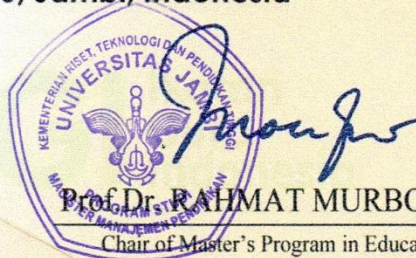
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## Education Matters: Intellectual, Economic, Social, Political, and Cultural Advantages

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this short paper is to shed light on our understanding of the five important purposes of education for human and country development. Particularly, this paper focuses on the intellectual, political, social, economic, and cultural goals of education. This short paper offers insights into what purposes of education should be taken into account by the governments, development economists, policymakers, politicians, educators, parents, sociologists, and researchers to promote students' intellectual, social, and personal potential to their uppermost level.

**Keywords:** intellectual, political, social, economic, and cultural

### Introduction

*Education is a means to develop students' intellectual, social, and personal potential to their highest level* (Nieto & Bode, 2008; Bennett, 2003) and therefore, school's mission is to provide all students regardless of their race, ethnicity, social class, ability, and other human differences with an equitable, equal, and high-quality education (Nieto & Bode, 2008). From the functional point of view, providing such an education is central in order to have "a highly integrated, well-functioning society" and to maintain social order, social cohesion, and harmony in a modern and democratic society (Sadovnik, 2007, p. 4) by creating programs, structures, policies, practices, curriculum that are "technically advanced and rational and that encourage social unity" (Sadovnik, 2007, p. 4).

The question of "What are the purposes of education" is very interesting and important for the reason that education is a human right and is related to human and country development. It has impacts on individuals,

the societies, and economies in which they live. In addition, education has been a topic of major cross-national comparative inquiry and has been a major concern to governments, development economists, policymakers, politicians, educators, parents, sociologists, researchers, etc. Cohen, et al. (2006) clearly stated that in addition to reducing fertility and poverty and improving health, education provided economic, social, political, and cultural advantages. This short essay will mainly look at the purposes of education from diverse perspectives (intellectual, political, social, economic, and cultural goals).

### Discussion

In terms of intellectual purposes, the functions of education are to provide students with basic cognitive skills (writing, reading, and mathematics); to transfer particular or specific knowledge such as history, sciences, and literature; and to provide students with higher order thinking skills ranging from knowledge, comprehension, analysis, evaluation, and



synthesis (Sadovnik, 2007). OECD (2008) claims in its report that the key role of education is to provide individuals with the knowledge, skills, and competencies needed to participate effectively in society and in the economy. In this perspective, education is a means to develop all students' intellectual and personal potential to their highest level.

However, according to the political perspectives, education is a way of instilling faithfulness, loyalty, and commitment to the current political order, of training students who later will get involved in the political order, and of teaching them the basic laws of the society (Sadovnik, 2007). Within this perspective, education should provide students with political skills, ability, and knowledge so that they are not alienated politically. In other words, education has a role to construct democratic societies that will lead effective governments and make important decisions, which affect the entire societies (USAID, 2005; World Bank, 2002).

The third purpose of education is to socialize students "into various roles, behaviors, and values of the society" (Sadovnik, 2007, p. 4). Education gives the trainings essential for teachers, doctors, nurses, civil servants, and myriad personnel who develop the capacity and critical and analytical skills that drive local economies, support civil society, teach children, govern effective governments, and produce vital decisions (OECD, 2008; World Bank, 2002). The process of socialization is important in the stability of any society. Schools can work together with other social institutions to solve social problems to make sure that society is stable and cohesive (Sadovnik, 2007). Schweke (2004) wrote that higher levels of crime and welfare dependency stemmed from educational

failures. It means that in support of the social and economic well-being of countries and individuals, it is essential to have a well-educated and trained populace (OECD, 2008).

In terms of economic purposes, it seems undoubted that education matters for human and economic development. Sadovnik (2007) wrote that the economic purposes of education were to prepare students for their jobs in future. Education functions to train and distribute individuals into various levels of jobs in society. Easterly (2001) claims, "No country has become wealthy with a universally unskilled population" (p. 84). According to Schweke (2004), incomes and productivity result from educational achievement. Education provides the high-level skilled individuals necessary for every labor market leading to productivity. In addition, Hannum and Buchmann (2006) argued that individuals who were educated in general would be able to improve their economic situations. Education lessens poverty reduction through redistribution and empowerment.

The last, based on the cultural perspectives, the purposes of multicultural education are to provide students with skills, attitudes, knowledge, beliefs, values, perceptions needed to participate "within their ethnic cultures, within the mainstream cultures, and within and across other ethnic cultures" (Banks, 2002, p. 40). This perspective views that it is necessary for every students to have a worldview regardless of their race, ethnicity, social class, language use, gender, sexual orientation, religion, ability, and other human differences (Nieto and Bode, 2008; Bennett, 2003). To gain these purposes, schools must change their current assumptions, approaches, techniques, programs, policies, and practices from the

dominant or mainstream perspectives to multicultural perspectives.

### Conclusion

In summary, it is hard to ignore that education matters. Based on the five perspectives of the purposes of education, education contributes to intellectual, economic, social, political, and cultural advantages. It provides students with basic cognitive skills and higher order thinking skills. Education raises people's productivity and creativity and promotes entrepreneurship and technological advances. It improves the quality of their lives, leads to broad social benefits to individuals and society, and secures economic and social progress. It constructs democratic societies and democratic governance and promotes individuals' political participations. In addition, education enriches people's understanding of themselves and world.

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