

DEFINING EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE QUALITY

Shreekant G. Joag
St. John's University, New York, NY
joags@stjohns.edu

ABSTRACT

Education of their citizens is of great importance in modern societies for their existence, smooth functioning, and sustained prosperity. With rapid developments in sciences, information technology, and artificial intelligence, the very definition of what constitutes education has become fluid and constantly evolving. What jobs humans must perform, what is needed for a person to do a job well, and the techniques of assembling, preserving, and transmitting education needed to acquire those abilities keep changing at an ever-increasing pace.

There are several issues involved in defining, measuring, and sustaining quality education. This paper aims to identify these issues, examining a few important ones. Specifically, how do we define education in terms of its many facets, how do we define and measure quality of education; what does quality of education mean at the level of an individual vs for the society as a whole. Further, how education quality is affected when education is treated as a social service vs when it is marketed as a service business for profit. The ultimate objective of such deliberation is to develop a system and a procedure that will not only create high quality education but also sustain it in the long run in a society.

INTRODUCTION

Education of their citizens is of great importance in most modern societies. It is critical to a society's very existence, smooth functioning, and sustained economic prosperity.

It stores accumulated knowledge of the past, enhances it with new inventions, innovations, discoveries, and learnings, and disseminates it to the next generations for preservation and use in sustaining economic and social advancement. And that is even more true in the case of less developed countries since education is one affordable way for them create a competitive workforce at home and engage their citizens productively in the globalized world markets to bring economic wellbeing home.

(Joag 2016)

That is why most societies do not spare any effort or economic sacrifice in creating quality educational institutions and making them accessible and affordable to all their citizens. And often, the government's role is critical in this regard because creating and operating educational institutions requires long term investments and invisible returns at the institutional level which does not make an attractive business model for private initiative and investments. (Joag and Kavil 2014)

There are several issues involved in defining, measuring, and sustaining quality education. This paper aims to identify these issues and examine a few important ones. Specifically, these are: how we define education in terms of its many facets, how do we define and measure quality of education; what does quality of education mean at the level of an individual vs for the society.

Another important development is that many higher educational institutions today conceptualize themselves being in the business of service marketing to satisfy the needs and desires of their various "markets" or interest groups on the one hand and make education financially successful and self-sustaining on the other.

That raises another important issue of how education quality is affected when education is treated as a social service vs when it is marketed as a service business for profit. (Katz 2009; White 2009; Stote 2012)

Therefore, critical scrutiny of education marketing business is necessary to ensure that education retains its quality and remains true to its core mission:

to be fair, just, and accessible to all individuals helping them achieve their highest potential, and to transform individuals into educated, skilled, and productive members of society.

The ultimate objective of this research is to develop a system and procedure that will not only create high quality education but also sustain it in the long run.

WHAT IS EDUCATION?

Dictionaries define education as the process of formal or informal, learning or training through study or experience, and the outcome of gaining knowledge, i.e. information and understanding, about a subject matter to create in a person the ability or skill to

perform a task, function, or responsibility. (Cambridge Dictionary, American Heritage Dictionary)

Further, both knowledge and skill evolve over time and become more efficient and effective with experience.

In conclusion, education is defined by three critical components:

- Knowledge consisting of information and understanding of it
- Skill to apply the knowledge, to real-life situations involving tasks, problems, functions, responsibilities, and situations and
- Experience in actually applying the knowledge to real-life situations

Even if there is general agreement on the components of education, several issues remain in defining education quality.

DEFINING EDUCATION QUALITY

Review of published research on education quality indicates that relatively fewer studies actually discuss the problems in defining education quality and point out the lack of agreement on the proper content, value, and aims of leading to the conclusion that the issue is not easy to resolve. (Allen & Reich 2013; Moore and Leckenby 1973)

EDUCATION QUALITY DEFINED FOR THIS RESEARCH

Knowledge is vast and limitless. Therefore, defining education quality in absolute, in terms of the amount of knowledge a person has, would place the construct on an infinite scale. Thus, for every very knowledgeable person, it is always possible to find another person who is even more knowledgeable, and therefore has greater quality education. However, such a definition will be of little practical use. Because, it has no answer to the question: So what?

To be able to answer that question, and make definition of education quality meaningful, we must define the purpose of the education first and only then attempt to define its quality as a construct. In other words, we can meaningfully define education quality only for “Education Needed (necessary and sufficient) for a Particular Purpose” such as: to do a Job, to handle a responsibility, or to perform a particular task.

Once the “Education Needed” to do a job is determined, the education quality of anyone having all the needed education be rated at 100%. Anyone with less education would be less suitable for the job and the education quality of such a person will be rated at less than 100%. However, the education quality of anyone with more than needed education will still be rated at 100% and no longer on a quality scale since the excess education of the person is not needed and does not add to the suitability of the person for that job.

Thus, a detailed job description specifying precisely what all a person must know to be able to do a job well in complete detail must be the basis for defining and measuring the education quality of individuals wanting to take that job as well as evaluating the quality of curriculum designed to train individuals for that job.

“EDUCATION NEEDED TO DO A JOB WELL” - a Fluid and Evolving Concept

With rapid developments in sciences, information technology, and artificial intelligence, the very definition of what constitutes education (and its three important dimensions: knowledge, skills, and experience) has become fluid and constantly evolving. In other words, “What is needed for a person to do a job well” keeps changing at an ever-increasing pace. And so do the techniques of preserving knowledge, and the need for, and tools of teaching, learning, and applying it.

Consider the education needed for a person to become a good passenger car driver: When we only had stick-shift cars, the important controls the driver needed to know, and use were as below:

- the key to open the car and start the engine
- the clutch that must be operated by the left foot to connect or disconnect the engine power and the wheels
- the gear stick that must be used to put the car in appropriate gear for its current and desired speed and direction
- the brake and accelerator that must be operated by the right foot to control the speed
- the steering to take the car in the right direction

Not only the list was too long to remember, but once on the road, one would not have the luxury of looking up the list since many controls must be operated simultaneously and instantly.

As a result, one needed to not just remember but internalize all controls so that they became extensions of our own limbs and develop skill to operate them instinctively and instantaneously.

However, to drive the modern hybrid or electric cars, the driver only needs to know and use the following controls:

- the key in pocket (or no key at all) as you walk to the car: the doors open recognizing your face, finger touch, or the presence of the key in your pocket. The touch of a button starts the car.
- the gear stick that must be used to park, start forward, or reverse the car
- the brake and accelerator that must be operated by the right foot to control the speed
- The clutch does not exist, so the left foot is no more required to anything

For normal driving, you only need to put the car in drive gear once and then forget about it.

All gear changes needed to match the current and desired speed are automatic. When driving long distances, cruise control can maintain any desired speed making operation of accelerator unnecessary.

Also, cameras automatically apply brakes if an obstruction appears on the road even if the driver is not alert or distracted. Further, parallel parking is a breeze - just press a button.

Consequently, the need for extensive training and skill has almost entirely vanished. All you need is the skill to flow with the traffic and know the route to follow.

Thus, the very definition of education i.e. the detailed job description specifying precisely what all a person must know to do a job well has become time-sensitive and must be updated continuously.

NEED FOR STANDARDIZATION IN EDUCATION QUALITY MEASUREMENT

To measure whether and to what extent an individual has the necessary knowledge, skills, and experience needed for a job, and to be able to compare that with other individuals, the measurement techniques used must be clear, complete, and universal. In other words, standardization is critically needed in defining the contents of education and measuring and comparing the suitability of individuals for any given job. Fortunately, both these are technical issues, and it should not be difficult to have a consensus on the matter.

EXAMPLE OF THE EDUCATION NEEDED FOR MARKETING UNDERGRADUATES

The remaining part of this paper presents an example of how the education needed for marketing undergraduates can be defined in such detail.

Education needed for Graduating Marketing Undergraduates – An Example

Important Dimensions of Knowledge Needed for Marketing Graduates

Discipline-specific Knowledge Needed

- Marketing Concepts and Case Histories of successful and failed marketing operations
- Consumer and Organizational Psychology, Needs, and Behavior
- Concepts in other disciplines such as accounting, management, finance, economics

General Knowledge Needed

- Economic Activities in the Country
- Impact of Environmental Factors on people, organizations, and Society
- Quantitative Information about important states, the country - USA, and major countries of the world about
 - Geography
 - Infrastructure
 - Economy
 - People

Important Dimensions of Skills Needed for Marketing Graduates

Discipline-specific Skills Needed

- Ability to analyze real-life exchange and nonexchange situations involving persuasion, apply marketing concepts to describe and analyze them, and develop an action plan to make persuasion more effective
- Ability to analyze any real-life situation involving any of the other business disciplines and develop a course of action needed

General Skills Needed

- Reading comprehension
- Problem solving, Creativity, and Innovation
- Critical Thinking

- Written Communications

Mathematics Skills Needed

- Computing and Arithmetic skills
- Manual Computing, Estimation,
- Precision computing using calculators, computers, and advanced software

Communication Skills Needed

- Effective Presentations
- Persuasive Communication strategies and tactics
- Reading, writing, and speaking ability in other languages
- Ability to communicate using Morse code, Sign language, Braille, Phonetics, and Music languages

Important Dimensions of Experience Needed for Marketing Graduates

Discipline-specific Experience Needed

- Working in marketing departments of business, nonprofit, government, and charitable institutions

General Experience Needed

- Working in business, nonprofit, government, and charitable institutions
- Dealing with disadvantaged and challenged members of the society
- Teaching knowledge and skills to others

Other Conclusions of the Investigation

On each dimension listed under knowledge, skills, and experiences:

- Syllabi should have an exhaustive listing of topics with complete details of what students need to learn and know
- The topics should be separated into theory, research, practice, and case studies categories
- Syllabi should specify:
 - what information students need to memorize and be able to recall unaided,
 - what information they should be able to refer to and use, and
 - what information they should know how to search for, obtain, and use

Other Challenges in defining, measuring, and certifying quality of education required for and acquired by marketing undergraduates.

- Educational institutions are conceptualizing education as a business in service marketing and viewing students as the customers to be satisfied.
- This approach creates the inherent conflict between the dual objectives of
 - motivating individual students to do, be, and feel their best on one hand, and

- objectively measuring and ensuring that they acquire the quality of education needed to do the job

- And the easiest, and often preferred, way to resolve this conflict is to sacrifice quality for student satisfaction.
- There is no easy solution to the puzzle: What should be the true purpose of evaluation and certification? to: Motivate Students, Measure Student effort and improvement, or Measure and certify the quality of outgoing students' learning and competence.

CONCLUSION

Defining education in absolute is neither possible nor meaningful. To be of practical use, any definition of education must be specific to "the education needed for a certain purpose." Once the purpose of education is specified, education can be defined in terms of what a person must know to do a job well. Such detailed job description can then form the basis for several things: to define the education needed for the job, to measure the quality of the curriculum to train individuals for the job, and to measure and compare quality of trained individuals available for the job.

REFERENCES

1. Joag, Shreekant G., "Ethical Issues in Education Marketing: Findings of a Pilot Study," in *Journal Global Awareness Society International*, Volume 16-17, No. 1, Spring 2017, 14-18.
2. Joag, Shreekant G. and Sreedhar Kavil (2014), "Ethical Issues in Education Marketing," in *Proceedings, Global Awareness Society International's 2014 (23rd) Interdisciplinary Conference, Montego Bay, Jamaica, May 22-27, 2014*, 1-8.
3. Michael S. Katz (2009). R. S. Peters' Normative Conception of Education and Educational Aims. *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 43 (1):97-108.
4. John White (2009). Why General Education? Peters, Hirst and History. *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 43 (1):123-141.
5. Michael A. Slote (2012). *Education and Human Values: Reconciling Talent with an Ethics of Care*. Routledge.

6. Cambridge Dictionary

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/knowledge>, accessed Aug 19, 2023.

7. American Heritage Dictionary

<https://www.ahdictionary.com/word/search.html?q=education>, accessed Aug 19, 2023.

8. Allen, Danielle & Rob Reich, ed, EDUCATION, JUSTICE, & DEMOCRACY, The University of Chicago Press, 2013. 357 pp. reviewed in Harvard Educational Review v83 n3 (Fall 2013) 529-531.

9. Moore, Frazier and John Leckenby, The Quality of Advertising Education Today, in Journal of Advertising, 1973, 2(2), 6-10.