



Institute of Development Studies Kolkata &
University of Calcutta

MPhil/PhD in Development Studies (2018)

Entrance Test

October 14, 2017

Maximum marks: 100

Time allowed: 2 hours (12-2 pm)

- I. Read the following excerpt and based on your understanding answer the questions below. Limit each answer to approximately 50 words. [30 marks]

Education can play several roles. First, education can be intrinsically important. A person may value knowing something simply for the sake of this knowledge. For example, some people find the study of foreign languages, even when one is unlikely ever to use them, intrinsically satisfying: they like the poetic sounds of Italian, the fascinating architecture of German sentences, the beauty of Cyrillic or Arabic script, or they are captivated by the completely different grammar of Japanese in comparison with English or Dutch. Similar arguments can be made for people who are fascinated by understanding chemistry, folk stories and myths, or who are eagerly learning to read and write poems. Apart from this intrinsic importance, education has a range of instrumental roles that it can play. For the present purposes, let us focus on two dimensions: the personal versus collective, and the economic versus non-economic. The instrumental personal economic role of education is that it can help a person to find a job, to be less vulnerable on the labour market, to be better informed as a consumer, to be more able to find information on economic opportunities, and so forth. This role of education – assuming that the education provided is of minimally acceptable quality – is crucial with respect to people's standard of living, and their ability to protect themselves and their families from poverty and destitution. The instrumental economic role need not always be personal, but can also be collective: for example, if a large percentage of the population is illiterate, then the market for books and newspapers is automatically limited. More importantly, if economic growth requires the introduction of certain technologies that need to be taught, or requires a shift from an agriculture-based to an industry- and services-based economy, then an educated workforce will be necessary for economic growth. As we will discuss in more detail in the next section, both the personal and the collective instrumental economic roles of education are the core focus of the human capital approach to education.

The instrumental roles of education are not limited to economic roles: there are also non-economic instrumental roles of education. At the personal level, one could think of having access to information by being able to read the newspaper or a medical instruction leaflet, being knowledgeable about issues of health, reproduction and contraception, being able to speak with strangers in their languages, being able to work with a computer and communicate with people worldwide through the internet, and so on. Education can open the minds of people: they can recognize that they do not necessarily need to live similar lives to their parents, but may possibly have other options too. At the collective level, the non-instrumental roles of education include that children learn to live in a society where people have different views of the good life, which is likely to contribute to a more tolerant society. Women may discover that the holy books of their religion do not prescribe the submissive female role that their religious leaders advocate as being a duty according to the holy script. If women acquire this knowledge collectively, they may get organized to fight oppressive interpretations of their religion.

