This paper intends to explore the role of education, particularly as a subcomponent of development. First, we will come to an understanding of what development in looking at the works of Gilbert Rist and Amartya Sen, predominantly in response to Rist. After doing that, we'll establish the purpose of education within the context of development. Finally, with this background established, we'll place together how education fits into our conceptualization of development, showing the particular importance to the development of divergent thinking.

Conceptualizing Development

Development as a Buzzword

Gilbert Rist calls 'development' a buzzword—a word having no real meaning and a sort of understanding what the word means. In this sense, he had hoped to convey how the word had lost its apparent meaning and was used to the extent where its meaning had become diluted. Rist believed he had a better understanding of development and aimed to define it as the:

> *…general transformation and destruction of the natural environment and of social relations in order to increase the production of commodities geared by means of market exchange, to effective demand*. (Rist 2007, 488)

In essence, development transforms and destroys the natural environment for predominantly capitalistic reasons. I find that this is precisely the wrong approach to conceptualizing development for several reasons.

In his words, "…to formulate a proper, sociological definition of 'development' one has to put aside its emotional and normative connotations…" and to have it "…based on actual social practices and their consequences…"(Rist 2007, 488) His definition fails to pass both criteria.

The first criteria—that a definition be free from emotional and normative connotations—is defied by his definition. Rist defines development in a rather emotive manner, which is ironic given his criticism for the overly optimistic and undefined prior conceptions of development. Instead of being overly optimistic, his definition is overly pessimistic in an attempt to be realistic. His definition argues that the *entire* conceptualization of development necessitates the destruction of the natural environment and social relations, which is empirically untrue.

Furthermore, the second criteria—that a proper definition has adequate empirical backing—is defeated by a broadened understanding of development. His definition poses that *inherent* in development is the "transformation and destruction[1] of the natural environment and…social relations." This definition poses the argument that development *must* take have some reductive impact on the local environment—that development must take from the environment or social structures. That development causes destruction is paternalistic in its assumption that developing countries are destroying social relations or the environment by developing their countries. Enhancing infrastructure, rooting out fraudulent social policies, and improving the quality of living is not destruction. And even if it is a destruction or dismantling, I think it's worth noting that destruction isn't inherently bad, as is suggested by the polemical writing surrounding this definition. As an example, the destruction of an institution or toxic social relation could easily benefit a country in the long-term. Thus, not only is there empirical backing for ex-

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[1] Note that this definition uses 'and' rather than 'or'. This implies that there is some sort of mechanistic process where there occurs an initial transformation and a subsequent destruction. Had Rist used 'or' the definition could be somewhat malleable.

amples contrary to what he had posed, but the statement itself turns out to be fundamentally flawed.

More problematic than Rist's obvious neglect for empirical certainty and his inability to create a logically sound definition is his clear intention to further an agenda without providing sound argument for his rationale. This definition attempts to frame development as inherently destructive without posing any discourse into proving or explaining the definition established. This definition intends to meet his specific agenda—that development be understood as the destructive process that he sees it as. There are certainly ways of defining development that could illuminate that perspective—as Sen goes on to do—but Rist's definition doesn't attempt to do that. Rather than attempting to provide a nuanced perspective, it establishes an ethical certainty; something fundamentally problematic in trying to adequately define what development is. It ends, rather than encouraging, further discussion. [2]

Development as Expansion of Freedoms

I tend to align myself more so with the definition and the understanding posed by Amartya Sen, for, overall, the analysis and the breadth seems to be holistic in a way that doesn't seem to lose depth, unlike the definitions posed by Rist. Amartya Sen seems to look for the root of development—what *actually* enables a country to be considered more developed? What does the process of development look like? How does a country develop in a manner that does not involve the 'destruction of the natural environment and of social relations'? According to his definition, Rist believed it was impossible to develop a country without this destruction, but Sen has an entirely different perspective—development is freedom.

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[2] In some ways, I think the purpose of this assignment was to give us something easy to attack—like Rist's definition of development—and then having us redefine it, likely using Sen as a better alternative.

Sen creates five distinct categories for freedoms to fall under—we can look at these as components of development. These are: *political freedoms, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees, and protective security*. (Sen 1999, 10) Sen believes that through the attainment of these freedoms a country is able move up the development scale—the attainment of these all being the ultimate goal of a developed country.

I think it's important to go over, if only briefly, what each freedom entails and how they're relevant to development. The first of these freedoms is political freedoms, which in essence, is the ability to determine and influence how they participate in their governments and to have general rights such as free speech and an uncensored press. The second of these freedoms are economic freedoms, such as the ability to participate in markets and to "utilize market resources for the purpose of consumption, or production, or exchange." (Sen 1999, 39) The third of these freedoms is social opportunities. These are, generally, the freedom to live a good and healthy life, mainly provided for in the forms of education, healthcare and other various forms of social structures. Fourth are transparency guarantees, which help to ensure that there is a general baseline of trust within the society. Examples of violations of this freedom are corruption, abuse of power, and financial neglect. Finally, the fifth freedom—protective security—maintains that there is a generally safety net in existence for all members of society.

It is important that I mention why these freedoms are so *fundamentally* important. It's one thing to say that the maximization of freedom is how we should quantify development—it's another to explain the mechanism behind that reasoning. As we discover from reading Sen, his reasoning was that: "each of these…rights and opportunities helps to advance the general capability of a person." This means the focus of these rights on the individual abstracted into the larger international system.

What results is that the resounding underlying message is that every human life is equally important and that human life demands unaltered agency. Without delving into the more philosophical underpinnings of human existence and the rights we're endowed, agency—the ability for an individual to be self-rationalizing and conscientious—is where the human race differs from animals. This is a gift that separates us from the other animals; thus, anything that limits this difference is a suppression of what defines our humanity. That is why in attempting to do our best for humanity, to develop the best government possible, to protect the agency—the "gift"—we've been given, we establish these fundamental "human rights".

Education As a Function of International Development

Whenever I consider what the purpose of education should be, one thing comes to mind—the development of divergent thinking. As information becomes increasingly more accessible, knowledge will decline in demand. Already we're seeing this dynamic shift in the economy of jobs available—routine, low-skill jobs are quickly becoming programmable and replaceable. As we move forward and into the modern era, we need to adapt, and this means developing a smarter workforce—one that can solve problems and think creatively.

There is a disconnect between the common educational goal of developing the ability to think diveregently and the attainment of those skills, though. As Sir Ken Robinson mentioned in his TED Talk on "Changing education paradigms", (Robinson 2010) divergent thinking is on the decline from the moment students enter the schooling process. Divergent thinking, the kind of thinking that most modern businesses cherish, is being made *rare* by the current schooling process. As explained by a functionalist perspective, schools—whether wanted or not—standardize and promote a general sense of shared rules. (Feinberg and Soltis 2009) In order for the school to

function efficiently and properly, these rules are needed, no? After all, without a sort of standard-ization of behavior, structures could ultimately become chaotic. This is unavoidable—in having a school system where there is a sense of order there must be a sort of suppression of divergent thinking. This, then, leaves us at a bit of an impass—if divergent thinking is the kind of thinking valued in this market, how can we retain divergent behavior in individuals while putting through a school system that *by function* normalizes and limits their behavior? That's the dilemma at hand.

In essence, what needs to happen is a reduction of the arbitrary norms and hierarchical structures evident in the existing, highly-systematic education structure. For instance, a unilateral removal of the concept of grades—one of these arbitrary norms—could serve to enhance the amounts of divergent thinking present in the schooling system. The removal of grades removes the large incentive that individuals receive for doing work, stripping it down to what is the truly important component—desire and interest in the relevant material. Additionally, the removal of the understanding that there is a 'correct' or appropriate narrative by means of a test or a text-book, this would encourage the type of analysis of information that happens in reality.[3] We read studies, articles, journals and there is immense disagreement on different narratives of within every field. In fact, one concept that schools tacitly promote—the hidden curriculum—is that in society there is often only one answer. Schools prepare individuals look for *one* answer in reali-ty, when things aren't nearly that clearly divided.

A system that encourages divergent thinking would be beneficial to most schools looking to further their developmental capabilities. The values and understandings encouraged by a type of schooling that practices divergent thinking (removal of 'correctness' as a norm, removal of

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[3] I think it would be fantastic to break down the education system through Foucault's understandings of the punitive (and inherently oppressive) forces that systems establish. Another paper…

grades) establish consequences that fall neatly with Sen's understanding of development. At the core, what the pursuance of divergent thinking does is it expands our ability to access our *agency*. The freedoms associated with having the intellectual and cognitive capabilities to make ones dreams a reality are perhaps the greatest form of access to agency in existence in the modern era. Why do so many non-academics pursue education? Simple—having a degree is essential in order to earn the amount of income to guarantee a lifestyle that would give the individual the most amount of control over their future. This control over the self is in the simplest sense best understood as agency. The agency that is often suppressed by governments and various social institutions can be encouraged and allowed to grow in a what would be a safe space for an individual to learn and develop their capabilities to pursue the future they'll not only be happiest pursuing but one that provides productively to the good of the nation.

At the end of the day, the society I believe that educators are hoping to build is one that only encourages individuals to explore the world in search of their interests and passions, such that the individual can exist happily and healthily within society. I truly believe the current education system poses an absolute reduction of human potential. Without measures to encourage the growth and development of ones cognitive capabilities (predominantly by supporting the development of divergent thinking) then the education system is promoting one narrative—one 'correct' way of living, which I find utterly unacceptable in this post-modern society.

Conclusion

As I've shown in this paper, Gilbert Rist's definition of 'development' is flawed, largely for its conflation of destruction with development. Rather, renowned economist Amartya Sen poses what is perhaps one of the most mature understandings of development—the pursuance of freedoms as development. In giving individuals the freedoms to pursue the future they idealize

we're supporting the concept that all individuals are self-actualizing agents, otherwise known as the promotion of agency. We then turned the conversation toward the purpose of education, which we defined as encouraging skills that promote divergent thinking, as these skills not only are the most relevant to our changing job market, but also encourage the pursuance of agency. Connecting what we've understood from Amartya Sen's definition of agency, we can see how the process of international development is encouraged by a system of education that promotes divergent thinking.

Resources

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