

Rationale for Communitarian ‘Common Good’ as the Aim of Education against Neoliberal Perspective for ‘Economic Growth’

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Abstract

The debate and conflict between neoliberalism and communitarianism is quite old in modern educational thought. This paper has been written in a form of review article aiming to make a contrast between these two philosophies, illuminating their backdrops and potential shortcomings in educational context while making an attempt to find out the better alternative from the two. Prospects of neoliberalism as alternative to communitarianism have been described and criticised. Philosophical communitarianism (as demonstrated by James Arthur) and political communitarianism (as manifested by Amitai Etzioni) both believe that our identities are constructed by the relationships we build with communities in which we belong to. The idea of the common good, again prescribed by both groups of communitarians opposes the neoliberal trends of privatisation and marketisation of education. Friedman’s complaints through the feministic lens against communitarianism have been reviewed and attempts have been made to refute them. Dewey’s progressive education has been incorporated to communitarian ‘common good’ to argue that common good and not free choice or ready workforce or economic growth should be the aim of education. No theory or philosophy, however, can be an immediate blueprint of a social problem or disorder. Literature review of relevant articles has been adopted as methodology.

Keywords

Communitarianism, Neoliberalism, Common Good, Economic Growth

1. Introduction

The aim of education is at the heart of every educational approach; because any

theory or philosophy, paradigm or perspective outlines some features and certain objectives to reach its aim. Communitarian perspective is one of the major approaches deployed by educationists who broadly oppose the atomistic liberal and neoliberal agenda in modern educational thought. Concentrating on the community, communitarianism appeared as a social and political philosophy towards the beginning of the 1980s as a critique against liberalism or more radically neo-liberalism backdrop (Zeidler & Lagiewska, 2021). Communitarians do not renounce individuals' self, their freedom and rights but insist on recognizing 'others'. If there is no 'other' there will be no 'self'. This is because 'self' does not evolve out of nothingness, as the community nurtures the 'self' to grow and develop (Kaul, 2021). A person's thinking, behavior and lifestyle are governed by societal structure. As such, communitarians prescribe a social structure where the individuals attain their identity through the bondage with community and where collective goals and efforts are more significant than the individual's interest (Ploeg et al., 2022). In this paper I will focus on James Arthur's (1998) views on communitarianism and its implications for education to argue that 'common good' should be the aim of education. In section 1, I will discuss Arthur's conception of community and communitarian education as pivots in his belief and understanding. In section 2, I will make a review of Friedman's (1989) criticism of communitarianism to respond to other alternatives. In section 3, after incorporating Dewey's progressive education into communitarian thinking I will say that the common good can create a balance between individuals' rights and responsibilities for a just society. I will argue that 'common good' as the aim of education might potentially be understood and accepted by people irrespective of socio-political stand.

2. Communitarianism and Education

Like most other philosophical movements communitarianism does not conform to a single definition as it is conceived and explained differently by thinkers, policymakers, educationists and politicians. Communitarianism originates to reclaim a sense of solidarity, of togetherness and connection against an absolute atomised world to rebalance the rights and responsibilities of the individuals embedded in a community (Frazer, 2017). By offering a critique to liberalism and neo-liberalism it aims to prescribe an alternative approach to understanding individuals, community and education. Generally, communitarians believe that our identities are constructed by the relationships we build with communities to which we belong. Smith (2001) is in favour of dividing communitarians into two groups—philosophical and political. He argues that philosophical communitarianism believes in three themes: collective selfhood, social capital in terms of 'reciprocity, trust and solidarity', and some shared values for common good. Smith (2001) notes that, James Arthur and Bailey (2000) looking beyond the political aspects of communitarianism manifests ten agenda for education where he priorities the role of family, school and community to uphold traditional norms and values for common good of a society. On the other, Amitai Etzioni's (1995) political

communitarianism has got a voice in the US and to some extent in UK too. In the succeeding passages I will say that both sides of communitarians share the characteristics of common good as a single aim of education.

2.1. Arthur's Views on Community and Communitarianism

Arthur (1998) argues that community, and not the individual or state should be the focal point of all analyses. He notes the communitarian theorists who do not favour any 'specific public policy statement', and popular communitarians who look for a 'policy agenda' on different public issues including education—are agreed to the concept of 'community' (p.354). All versions of Communitarianism believe that we should focus on the role of community that has been ignored by liberalism; because it is important to understand 'who we are'. In fact, we are socially constituted selves in terms of family, relations, neighborhood, religious entity, clan, tribe, nation, and so on.

Arthur (1998) states that, communitarians neither think of a 'monolithic society' nor believe in an 'unencumbered self' (p.355). To explain this, none of us can ignore our individual likings, freedom and rights but at the same time we cannot deny our surroundings to which we have certain duties and responsibilities. Arthur (1998) argues, as modern individualistic and egocentric society has destroyed the sense of solidarity and togetherness there is an emergency to bring 'equilibrium between rights and responsibilities' (p. 355). This is perhaps the most grounded rationale for the rise of communitarian philosophy. Arthur (1998) mentions that for some people communitarianism is a corrective approach, for some others it is a reform of liberalism and still for others it is a distinctive way of seeing the world (p.366). No theory, however, can be an immediate blueprint of a social problem or disorder. Then, to be concise we can cite what Arthur (1998) says about communitarianism—"a midway position between socialism and capitalism" (p.366). He is quite positive to promote that the world will be livable if human life is constructed and governed by common values (p. 365). Arguably, if common and shared values of a community are justified and upheld by the members of a society, we can expect that the common goodwill be followed.

2.2. Communitarian Education and Common Good

James Arthur thinks that community, education and the common good are key concerns for any form of communitarian beliefs. Arthur (1998) observes that schools are considered as the 'second line of defence after families' by political (or popular) communitarians. "We hold that school can provide essential moral education—without indoctrinating young people" (Etzioni, 1995: p. 8). This group of communitarians also believes that school should be a substitute for families and neighbourhoods, if they really fail. Etzioni (1995) also thinks that poor values in family breed poor students and workers with deficiency. Too much individualism has created a society with too much autonomy but without any moral obligation for duties and responsibilities. Communitarian education, therefore, looks for

strong moral character; co-curricular and extra-curricular activities are granted as mandatory parts of educational experiences. Sex education should not be imparted just as technical subject and without a moral context. Grades will be awarded according to overall achievement; physical education will be encouraged for upholding 'team-spirit and co-operation' (Arthur, 1998: p. 361). Thus, Arthur (1998) notices a pledge to preserve traditional values and morality in communitarian education though this has encountered feminist criticism which I will discuss in section 2.

Arthur (1998) notes, liberal thinkers believe that society cannot assume the common good since it has no single vision in a pluralistic world (p. 356). Liberalism is in the belief that Common good will be derived out of concerning values and practices if the states take a neutral role. Then, Arthur (1998) argues that our birth, upbringing and values are often involuntary which are more picked up than rationally chosen (p. 356). It seems that too much individualism may create exploitation or anarchy for some, and frustration and desolation for others. In my observation, post war generations often discover themselves in hollowness and sense of nothingness; because they have no commitment to fulfill. Modern art, painting, sculpture and literature teach us this lesson that atomistic self and free choice often leads us to miserable conditions. As such, a good life and well-being can neither be attained nor measured by an individual's intuition and free choice.

Individual's rights and free choices should not lead one to oblivion about collective goodness. Sandel (1992) explains, "Liberalism is the politics of rights, while communitarianism is the politics of the common good" (p. 16). This belief leads Sandel to discard the idea of 'the right is the prior to the good'; because this kind of right opposes the principles of good life and justice (p. 73). That is why we should refuse absolute autonomy and adopt a balanced life for the common good. As opposed to the atomistic self, communitarianism believes that individuals cannot be or should not be the bearers of rights. The importance of community lies before individual self; because communitarians believe that our memberships of a community make us the individuals we are. According to Amitai Etzioni (2022):

Communitarianism is a social philosophy that believes that we are not individual freestanding agent.....but we are members of community; we are social animals (as in Aristotle's 'Politics'). We need each other to be flourished; the 'me' need 'we' to be....

From the perspectives of both philosophical and political communitarians, all individuals have some commitment to the community they belong to. As part of this commitment, members of a community are connected to one another by virtue of community service and good citizenship which in turn ensure the common good. After focusing on the features of community, communitarianism and communitarian education (though I will return to this discussion with more affirmation in final section) now I will move to the critics to weigh the strengths and weaknesses of my undertaking on communitarianism.

3. Friedman's (1989) Criticism of Communitarianism

As a feminist Friedman (1989) is critical of communitarians for their tolerant 'traditional communal norms', more particularly to traditional gender roles which result in gender subordination, inequality and discrimination. Both feminists and communitarians share some common understandings against absolute individualistic and self-atomised liberal (and neoliberal) approaches to education. Friedman (1989), however, sees some obvious reasons to differ and to be meticulous about 'perilous ally' between communitarianism and feminism (p. 277). The structures of families-neighborhoods-nations, Friedman observes, are shaped in such a way that oppress and suppress the women, though the communitarians remain in oblivion about it (p. 277). From a feminist perspective Friedman (1989) marks three dissatisfactory factors in communitarianism (p. 279):

1) The concept of an 'inherently social self' is not acceptable to the feminists. Our inherent social self is basically a patriarchal self which sets the 'ideals of rights and justice' for male and the 'ideals of care and nurturance' for female counterpart (p. 280). 2) Community's claims regarding hierarchies often are not legitimate. Communitarians fail to understand that some communities may try to perpetuate domination and suppression as an excuse of conventions and common practices. Marginalised people, outsiders in terms of 'ethnicity and sexual orientation' are also not privileged in a hegemonic society (p. 281). 3) Believing in the structure of community embedded in family-neighborhood-nation is a faulty paradigm. Friedman (1989) argues that formation of a community should not be simplified or generalized by the concept of family, neighborhood, school, church, clan, tribe, nation etc. (pp. 282-283). Rather, community may evolve out of shared interests, hobbies, likings, idiosyncrasies etc. Thus, apart from community of place, Friedman proposes a discovered or chosen community. As such, different trade unions, social or political activists, alcoholic groups, other sexual groups are strong evidence of this kind of community. After a brief presentation of Friedman's critique of communitarianism, I should say her feminist thinking about communitarianism must have some underpinnings to education:

First, Friedman (1989) is not against social self, as she is deliberately against atomistic individual self. She only rejects the idea of 'inherently social' self which is 'more male than female' in nature and which build the 'foundation for patriarchy' (p. 279). It can be remembered that our world has immensely been changed by the time Friedman composed her paper more than three decades ago. In the third decade of twenty-first century the world is more democratic and in many parts of the world women are more empowered due to spread of urbanization and female education. Subsequently Industrialization, however, has diminished women's social self by segregating them from production process and income generation. Thus, I have been convinced that our 'social self' is not absolutely inherent; rather it is created and subject to be changed.

Second, it is anticipated that communal norms, beliefs, tradition and practice may be exerted through education over the members of community to form a

moral claim disregarding rationality and justice. [Friedman \(1989\)](#) observes that some practices of many communities are ‘exploitative and oppressive’ to some weaker members (e. g., women) (p. 281). If this is the case, then there is a possible danger of re-endorsing the arbitrary negative characteristics in education which may influence generation after generation.

Third, for [Friedman \(1989\)](#) community is very much relevant to ‘identity’ as it is the principal determinant of one’s community (p. 284). It is a matter of hope that Friedman’s concept of discovered or chosen, or voluntary community in terms of ‘friendship’ and ‘urban relationship’ has widely been accepted in present time. [Friedman \(1989\)](#) also notes that knowledge, experiences and skills obtained from communities significantly contribute to the formation of ‘identity’ (p. 285).

Through the lenses of feminism, [Friedman \(1989\)](#) identified communitarian education might be gender biased and polarized to patriarchal self as to extending and perpetuating the gaps between the sexes. We can remember that inclusion, equity and societal justice are at the core of communitarian beliefs which broadly oppose the idea of segregation (and deprivation) both in community and education system as well. From a normative point of view countries of the world are working towards inclusive and equitable education. But practices are not always what the theory and policy is. Understanding the reality, I argue that communitarian education for common good should have some assertions on—how gender disparity in many communities (particularly in the region of Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia) should be dismantled. With this in mind, now I will move to neoliberal approach to education, but I will return to Friedman while responding to neoliberal critique in the final section.

3.1. Neoliberal Approach to Education

Neoliberalism is a form of liberal economic thinking that promotes the total free will of individuals as economic actors and advocates for strong private property rights. [Christmas \(2020: p. 1\)](#) observes ‘the neoliberal label signals a turn away from libertarian political philosophy’. Neoliberalism believes in ‘free, possessive individual’, the state should not instruct people, regulate the market or interfere with loss and profit of individuals’ wealth (Hall, 2011 cited in [Cowden and Singh, 2017](#)). Like other sectors neoliberalism prescribes for privatized education. Educational institutions, therefore, will be like business centre and students will be like customers, and the responsibility of education will be shifted from government or state to individuals or their families. The neoliberal approach to education, however, gives more emphasis on the development of skills and human capital to accelerate economic growth in a free global market ([Sahlberg, 2016: p. 132-133](#)). Thus, we see the essence of neoliberalism is to make money from a competitive market. Education is valid only if it can make profits for learners or for investors ([Hastings, 2019](#)). As a consequence, [Arthur \(1998\)](#) observes young people are leaving schools with ‘underdeveloped characters’ and without any commitments to social values (p. 361). Neoliberalism believes in Human Capital Theory

(HCT) which implies that education is a key investment, and one's rewards and economic benefits will be according to one's merit and educational qualifications (Gillies, 2015: p. 1). This belief takes it for granted that, highly qualified and skilled workforce can contribute best to national economic growth. The practices of HCT shift curriculum from inquisitive knowledge to transferable skills, and a 'high performing teacher workforce' is felt essential to produce economic growth (Gillies, 2015). Combining all these features and purposes of neoliberalism we might say that one single aim of education, according to this perspective, is to create a 'ready workforce' with a view to accumulating as much profit or growth as possible. Now, I will say why neoliberal approach to education is not acceptable and why 'ready workforce' or 'economic growth' should not be the aim of education.

3.2. Problems with Neoliberal Approach

Neoliberalism imposes a number of illegitimate economic and political agenda on its educational thinking. I want to focus on at least three points of argument against neoliberal approach before my strong claim in favour of communitarian approach in final section of this essay.

First, there is a risk in considering education as an investment or commodity. The flow of investment seems to be closed if the return or profit is not as high as cost (Hastings, 2019: p. 15). Everything we achieve through education cannot be or should not be counted by instant profit. When we fix a standard for education we should set the aims, and when we come to aims and purposes we should think about the ends or consequences (Biesta, 2009: p. 37). More importantly, education should have some room for critical thinking which may not be guaranteed by a ready workforce. Biesta (2009) argues that more importance should be given to 'what constitutes good education' than to 'effective education' (p. 43). Furthermore, neoliberal approach does not consider what purposes education can serve for the destitute of a society (Hastings, 2019: p. 15). There is little credibility in thinking of a welfare state without any viable solution to mass people through education.

Second, we see meritocracy, individual endeavor and triumph, competition for a standard at the centre of neoliberal education. Besides undermining intrinsic value of education, it encourages and promotes competition among individuals (Harvey, 2005). Competitions often turn into clashes and conflicts. Biesta (2009) states neoliberals' effective or quality education only brings certain outcomes but does not say whether those outcomes are expected for a just society (p. 35). To the worst, if one fails it simply means one must work harder (Hastings, 2019). Thus, it denies taking responsibility for individuals' failures, sorrows and sufferings. In such a society youths are not secured as they must chase academic credentials to get into 'future education or workplaces' (Lakes & Carter, 2011: p. 107-108).

Third, neoliberal education undermines democracy, supports hierarchical society and thus reproduces social inequality. It has been argued as a threat to democracy for restoring 'power and profits to economic elites' and for narrowing

down curriculum to ‘economic pursuits’ without an alignment to democratic way of life (Hyttén, 2017, as cited in [Hastings, 2019: p. 16](#)). [Biesta \(2009\)](#) shows how neoliberal education creates ‘a commonsense view’ about language, science and mathematics, or whether academic knowledge or vocational skill is more useful - entirely depends on the access of a particular group to ‘benefit from the status quo’ keeping things unaltered (p. 37). These self-centered or egocentric views do not match the normative values of democratic or welfare state.

3.3. Connection between Communitarianism and Neoliberalism

Ideally, communitarian pays more attention to the community and social responsibilities for the welfare of individuals while neoliberalism is more focused on individualism to promote privatization and economic growth in all relevant fields. Though apparently there is stark contrast or big gap between two perspectives, a close connection might be observed through the lens of a group of intellectuals. Both of the philosophies share their common agenda at least in two ways: i) the state or governmental power should be reduced. While communitarianism believes that local institute or organisation, civil society, church or religious entity collectively should have more authority than the government ([Etzioni, 1995; 2002](#)), neoliberalism wants government not to interfere in market economy. In fact, [Laes and Bombaerts \(2022\)](#) observe that ‘neoliberals want to limit state power’. Thus, both of them are advocating for more decentralized and localized authority where state/governmental supreme power will be minimized. ii) Again, Both are concerned with communal/societal values. While communitarians cannot imagine the existence of wellbeing of any individual without communal harmony, neoliberals believe that growth and prosperity are driven by social standard and communal values. Thus, both of the ideologies respect tradition, customs, norms, values and cultural heritage of a community. Though, in some extent there is a consensus between the two, particularly in the question of ‘social cohesion’, policy formation to stop ‘social in-cohesion’ does not follow the same notion ([Cowden & Singh, 2017](#)). I argue, this happens because communitarianism wants withdrawal of government power in socio-cultural aspects while neoliberalism wants such withdrawal in economic-political aspects.

4. Common Good as the Aim of Education

At the outset of this section, I will briefly discuss John Dewey’s philosophy of education with communitarian views to argue that common good should be the aim of education. [Dewey’s \(1897\)](#) thinking is deeply concerned with the problems of communities, societal issues and therefore of the state. Though Dewey’s ‘progressive education’ reflects some liberal aspects, there are many plausible ways to think that Dewey’s idea about ‘growth’ as aim of education, has little relevance with neoliberals’ growth; rather it promotes communitarian common good. For Dewey, growth means the development of every aspect of bio-psycho-social organism of a person, which is attainable in the context of family and community through

reciprocation. In this way I think neoliberals' narrow view of educational aim as 'free choice' or 'ready workforce' for 'economic growth' will fail to convince people.

I find John Dewey's philosophy of education is more aligned with communitarian belief of common good, as knowledge and learning are constructed through interaction between learners and social environment. For Dewey (1897) individual thoughts and actions are shaped by social experiences (article 1). Dewey's (1897) philosophy in ethical conduct to guide human actions within social context is much akin to communitarian belief in societal issues. He does not suggest any set of moral codes; rather as a pragmatist he prescribes a communal approach to solve the ethical challenges. Dewey (1897) argues, children should be socialized and formed the democratic practices from the early years of schooling (article 2, 5). Schools are like communities, nurturing children in everyday activities. Dewey (1897) argues that a child's learning should be started with 'social consciousness of the race' (article 1, 5). From a humanistic point of view Dewey is critical of capitalism. Dewey advocates for an organic and holistic education where learners indulge in a fine bonding with their community, school and society. Neoliberal approach, therefore, should not have any ground on his progressive education.

The concept of common good in education implies communal goodness or broadly speaking to public interests that 'serve all the members of a given community and their institutions' (Etzioni, 2009: p. 114). Etzioni (2009), also demonstrates that some common goods (i.e., 'basic research, national defence and environmental preservation') may not bring any instant benefits for its contributors but members of community believe that someday it will serve the community (p. 114). The idea of the common good opposes the neoliberal trends of privatisation and marketisation of education. I think that community's shared values and practices, traditional duties and responsibilities, mutual benefits and prospects should conform to common good. If public and private sectors, individuals, families and schools work together based on cooperation, integration and participation, then common good should be followed. For Etzioni (2009), community itself is a common good as it is the prime source of flourishing for each member of community (p. 115). To explain this, people in a weaker community usually feel unsecured and suffer from detachment and alienation. Thus, common good is a viable concept not only to ensure individuals' security but also to protect the community.

4.1. Responding to Neoliberal Critique

There are at least three charges labelled against communitarian education: that the concept of good and right is determined by community; that it leads to a re-endorsement and reproduction of the status quo; and that ultimately this leads to persistent inequality and inescapable oppression. While there are some seemingly characteristics of communitarian education to be attached to societal norms and traditional belief, it is not necessarily to bear the testimonies of once's evil forever.

Ignominious medieval practice of *sahamoron* (voluntary burning of a widow on the funeral pyre of her dead husband) in Indian Hindu community could not exist in seventeenth century. Society changes, tradition and culture is redefined, ideas about good and bad are also altered with passage of time. Obviously, all these things happen in a collective manner, not in individual's attempt. As a matter of fact, I think, the misunderstanding of communitarian approach is due to mistrust in 'individuals embedded in society'.

As communitarian education considers values and common good as integral parts of each other, it generally adheres to the beliefs and practices of community. Etzioni (2002) argues, 'values do not fly on their own wings'; family, school, community and society must undergird the values into individuals (p. 1). The neoliberalist stance, that there are no shared values, and there is no universal good or right, moral or immoral does not seem plausible to me. We live in the present and we take certain things for granted to measure ourselves in which we cannot ignore our lineage and cultural heritage.

Re-endorsement and reproduction of status quo has also been felt by Friedman (1989) for prevailing gender hierarchies in communities which I made a point in section 2. I agree that there are very important insights in Friedman's thinking for communitarians to beware of the link between patriarchal structure and gender subordination. As Friedman (1989) observes, abstract individualism, atomistic self and autonomy failed to identify women's position there might be no solution to this by neoliberal approach too. Rather, communitarian common good, if governed by conscience, intellect and rational attitude then it should be accepted by all strata of people.

4.2. Inclusion, Equity and Common Good

If pursuing inclusion and equity should be the principal way to establish democratic rights in modern education, then there are good reasons to find out a plausible perspective. It is often a dilemma while inclusive and equitable aspects of education apparently hinder individual autonomy, rights and free choice. But, for greater success, ultimate betterment and sustainable wellbeing of society there may not be any alternative to inclusion and equity in mainstream education. According to Dewey (1897), to segregate 'social factor from the child' or 'individual factor from society' means to leave the child in utter abstraction or inanimate world (article 1). As knowledge is a social construct by the interpretative school of thoughts, what will be the exact measure for liberalists and neoliberalists to practice mutual respect and tolerance in implementing inclusion and equity is a big question. Etzioni (1995) states, no community can survive without the sacrifices of its members for the common good. Again, Arthur (1998) quotes Etzioni: 'A communitarian perspective recognizes both individual human dignity and the social dimension of human existence (p. 359). Thus, on the one hand, communitarians can understand that every child irrespective of colour, caste, creed, gender, ethnicity and socio-economic condition has the right to be included in mainstream

education. Furthermore, children with 'special education needs' due to physical or mental impairment can also get into mainstream school. On the other, the belief in the common good leads one to be fair and just based on learners' need and merit. The potential limitations of neoliberal freedom will not recognize the difference between equity and equality. As such, learning resources can best be reshaped, redistributed and reshuffled according to learners' necessity in communitarian ideals. It appears to me that, as communitarians consider school to be the most important institution next to family, and common good is the motto of their pursuit, so inclusion and equity might be practiced in the most appropriate manner by them.

To reflect on my professional context, I must say Bangladesh government puts lots of emphasis on liberal education after its independence in 1971. Again, with a move to privatization and open market economy in nineties, and to keep pace with the capitalist developed countries, Bangladesh prioritizes neoliberal concepts in education to build a skilled workforce in global standard. Unfortunately, however, it has increased social disparity and disharmony, keeping a vast majority of people uneducated and unemployed. As a member of Bangladesh Civil Service (General Education cadre) and as a classroom teacher I have witnessed the country's higher secondary and tertiary education very closely for past seventeen years to argue that its education is yet to adopt an appropriate approach congenial to its socio-political and cultural fabric. After huge debates in last few years recently in 2023, we have designed a policy (with new curriculum) in which instead of rigorous quality and high competition, more focus has been given to communication, collaboration, coordination and creativity to enhance responsibility, accountability, mutual trust and respect. All these criteria, I believe, have a close tie to the communitarian concept of common good and may potentially bring positive outcome in near future.

To tie up and to synthesize all the threads together I would like to say, communitarianism is not against individual freedom, but it is concerned that one's freedom should not hinder others' wellbeing. Furthermore, freedom can only be valued and realized in context with some 'social control' in terms of rules and obligations. We can neither think of our existence without an origin nor claim our rights without accepting responsibilities. Being a 'midway position between socialism and capitalism' (Arthur, 1998: p. 366) and advocating an organic-holistic education in the form of common good, communitarianism can make a harmonious balance between individuals and community, between our rights and responsibilities. Thus, I propose that students should pursue the knowledge of their own interest with a view to cooperating with others and contributing to collective goals. 'Free choice' or 'ready workforce' for economic growth makes education too mundane and instrumental; such kind of human resources will be devoid of humane feelings and such kind of economic growth possibly will not be sustainable. Therefore, I argue that the concept of common good is more convincing than any other alternatives.

5. Conclusion

In this essay I have discussed Arthur's (1998) account of community, communitarianism, and communitarian education to argue that all forms of communitarianism believe in common good as the aim of education. I have focused on Friedman's (1989) critique and Dewey's (1897) philosophy to understand the prospects of communitarian common good for common people in a democratic state. I have argued that neoliberal free choice or ready workforce cannot build welfare state because, having an egocentric self and free choice of actions it keeps less room for others. Rather, with some modifications and adjustments concerning patriarchal self and dogmatic communal values, communitarian concept of common good has strong rationales to be aim of education. Overall, I have argued that, to escape the pitfall of neocapitalism's rigorous ideals hidden in neoliberal approach, we might opt for communitarian approach to education. Therefore, I argue that the common good and not free choice or ready workforce or economic growth should be the aim of education.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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