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**[Liberal Education]**

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**To what extent is a liberal education valuable in today's society?**

## **Introduction**

Liberal education refers to a learning approach which aims to empower people and prepare them to face change, diversity and complexity. It focuses on providing students with knowledge (broader) of the world (e.g. society, culture and science) and also a comprehensive study related to a particular area of interest. Liberal education assists students in developing a sense of responsibility (social), and also transferable and strong practical and intellectual skills including problem-solving skill, analytical and communication skills. It further helps in applying skills and knowledge in real-world settings. This essay aims to evaluate the value and importance of liberal education in modern society.

## **Discussion**

Liberal education holds significant importance as it indoctrinates students with the crucial understanding required for them to be productive and meaningful members of society. The term 'liberal education' is not related to politics and does not indicate the beliefs of a politically liberal person. It does not involve delivering education to individuals with political ideals (liberal). Zakaria (40) in his book argued that societies have been subjected to struggle regarding the competing requirements in education systems, curricula and prospectuses have been continuously undergoing changes. The author highlights that there is still need for improvements, specifically in enhancing the students' scientific literacy. In the modern society, liberal education

contains utmost importance in improving the well-rounded education of a student. Courses in college including philosophy and humanities encourage students to think about a particular aspect. It motivates students to think critically, so that it may improve his/her problem-solving skills. Students are taught to determine their emotions, values and beliefs, and how they can apply based on different scenarios. It enables the minds of students to come up with unique concepts or ideas that would provide them with sufficient benefit in personal life as well as in professional life. Scientific techniques require a common sense of an individual. It has certain differences with the methods applied in business (Carroll, 76). Based on specific conditions, an individual may need to apply crucial methods that solve critical problems. In this regard, a liberal education provides individuals with the critical thinking skills which are necessary to achieve the desired outcome.

Zakaria (200) in the third chapter, highlights '*learning to think*'. The author attempts to defend the liberal education. One of the significant aspects that are indicated in the book includes that liberal education teaches to learn, to think and to write. It encourages individuals to develop their skills to solve the complexities. Another critical aspect which Zakaria (226) highlights involve the international test scores, including assessment test programs, on which the United States and other countries do not perform up to the mark, which shows lack of competence and preparation regarding various subjects by the students. However, it is also crucial to consider that the results do not decide the global success and competitiveness. Further, it is not possible to measure everything that matters. A quote in the book stated, "*Yours is a talent meritocracy, ours is an exam meritocracy. There are some parts of the intellect that we are not able to test well—like creativity, curiosity, a sense of adventure, ambition. Most of all, America has a culture of learning that challenges conventional wisdom, even if it means challenging authority. These are*

*areas where Singapore must learn from America*". It indicates that ambition and creativity cannot be measured, rather they should nurture in order to enhance the skills and capabilities. () explored that competence can be gained through utilization of rigorous education. One that sharpens and builds the abilities of critical analysis and thinking; the capability to determine the social, natural, cultural, economic and ethical aspects of the world; to communicate effectively and to exercise judgment. As explored by Zakaria (300), teachers should strive to teach the students about how to think. It enables to nurture students' skills and knowledge for developing the courage to shape their beliefs, perspectives and principles. Considering different aspects, including science, disagreement continues to exist related to certain phenomenon or techniques.

The liberal education seems to be left behind, as it is not related to any particular type of skill. Bailey (27) argued that it is critical to consider that most of the students may be on a wrong path to chase success. Encouraging undergraduates to go into engineering, business and other professional fields generally result in a handsome earning after graduation. In the modern era, which is rapidly progressing, the chances of an individual doing the same kind of work until the process of retirement are outdated, unsustainable and may diminish in the future. Outsourcing of products is becoming a common phenomenon in various manufacturing firms. Zakaria (150) quoted one of the sayings of Steve Jobs, "*Technology alone is not enough. It is technology married with liberal arts, married with the humanities that yield us the results that make our hearts sing*". This statement argues that in order to gain sufficient knowledge regarding various aspects of technology, it is critical for an individual to get equipped with a liberal education. Liberal education is significant to the society in a way that it attempts to offer more competitiveness as compared to trade-skill education, including engineering. It is an evident fact that fields related to science and business require exceptional communication skills, critical

thinking, design and creativity (Newcomb, 440). A liberal education provides us with a way to enhance creativity skills for the purpose of solving various complexities. Employers have started to realize that writing and communication skills cannot be taught easily. One of the significant questions that arise involves what form of training and education tends to significantly increase certain skills of an individual. In order for the individual to become a productive member of the society, the element of liberal education is necessary. The significance of liberal education is unfortunately not recognized worldwide, there is a need to develop understanding among the people regarding the significance of liberal education.

Zakaria (230) in his book, highlighted three significant aspects of liberal education. One of the virtues involves teaching individuals how to write. In the modern society, writing tends to be a significant component. Exceptional writing skills can have a crucial impact on the company's future. Improving the literacy rate can eventually lead to developing excellent writing skills among the students and employees. Apart from the technical skills, writing skills are considered significant in delivering the message correctly to the audience. It is argued that writing skills can only develop if the clear thinking skills are nurtured. For people in the business profession, thinking skills are necessary as they face decision-making situations regularly.

Another potential benefit of liberal education involves teaching people communication and oral skills. In the modern world, the phenomenon of entrepreneurship is becoming common among the youth. They seem to develop innovative concepts and ideas. The problem that exists involves communicating and promoting the idea. This issue arises due to lack of communication skills. There are famous personalities which can be considered a role model, including Steve Jobs in terms of possessing exceptional communication skills. The speeches of Steve Jobs are persuasive, he achieved the top position in the tech market by exceptionally presenting his

unique ideas to the world. Liberal education's last virtue includes thinking analytically. With the rapid increase in the use of robots and machinery, the need for developing analytical skills is evident. New technology and computers possess the capability to replace manpower. For keeping the jobs, workers need to nurture their analytical skills. Liberal education strongly emphasizes on developing analytical skills which are necessary to perform regular job activities and duties. However, one of the significant issues that exist in the society aims to make the choices regarding career complicated for the students. If students focus on pursuing technology and science, their intelligence would be rewarded and praised. Whereas, one of the risks that they may face would be related to unable to compete in a creative manner. In the professional life, the need for developing analytical and critical thinking skills is evident. Liberal education aims to provide the guidelines as to how to perform social responsibility and to apply critical thinking skills in order to attain the desired goals and objectives.

## **Conclusion**

This essay attempted to analyze the significance of liberal education in the society. The book written by Zakaria is the focus of the essay and some other additional sources. Based on the analysis, it is concluded that liberal education contains utmost importance in order to nurture certain skills of an individual. The essay explored three significant virtues of liberal education including writing skills, communication skills and analytical skills. In order to perform efficiently in the professional field, an individual must be equipped with critical and analytical skills. By gaining a liberal education, an individual can perform his/duties significantly in the society. The societal pressures force students to adopt professions that are popular generally, however, the important point which is generally missed includes that in order to excel in engineering or business profession, the element of critical thinking skills is necessary.

## Work Cited

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