

Education is both a social good and structurally unjust. When I reflect upon that statement, I see many layers to it. My basic understanding of the contradiction is that it means education throughout the school system is for the social good- it is, as a matter of fact, good for students, good for families, communities, the economy, society, and the future of our world. It is structurally unjust because education is varied throughout neighborhoods. Socio-economic factors play a role in how “good” a school's education system may be rated. Higher earning communities typically have better rated schools with more advanced technology and newer, more physically appealing schools. Schools in a larger district may also have more funds allocated to them, which would allow them to pay teachers more, or as previously stated, have other positive factors, hence making them more appealing to educators. Education is unjust because some classrooms will be staffed at max student teacher ratio, while others will have a more reasonable ratio- thereby giving students either a better or worse chance at succeeding and having an educator readily available to meet their individual needs. It is unjust because a typical curriculum and even common core standards base education on a singular line as to what children should be familiar with and at what level. While in some cases this makes sense- there should be a baseline to be able to assess, it should also be noted that a child from a more impoverished background may not know what a child from a wealthy background may know based on lived experience alone- thereby being a barrier and making common core practices unjust. Education is unjust because as we have seen with many things making headlines, particularly these days- education favors learning about the world through a narrow lens. That lens being one primarily seen through through a white, christian, heterosexual viewpoint that questions the validity or importance of outliers in that realm.

Further expanding on this topic just lightly, we can see how higher education in community colleges and universities is without doubt a ‘social good.’ But is it structurally just? Is it fair and accessible to all who would like access to it? Absolutely not. First off, immediate financial barriers hold a large majority seeking higher education at bay. Financial barriers may stand alone, or compound with other hurdles. Things like knowledge of how to appropriately fill out scholarship forms or applications in general, no family help, accessibility to technology, or mental health are just some of the barriers that especially make higher education unjust.

I think the initial statement is a good one for all candidates to reflect on when entering into a teacher education program, and even to reflect on mindfully throughout their career. It can help shape an educator's mindset and curriculum to be mindful of how the profession can be unjust and what we as leaders in the forefront of education can do to help to change that.