

Prompt: Education is both a social good and structurally unjust. Explain your understanding of this contradiction and ways it can be addressed.

Education is truly both, a social good and structurally unjust.

There is a lot of good to be said about obtaining an education. It provides the foundation of our knowledge base, and how we grow as individuals from this foundation. It gives us a broader and well-rounded perspective of the world and the communities we live in. Individuals with an education typically have better prospects for higher earnings. Many studies have shown that education directly correlates with a higher salary. More education simply leads to better, higher-paying jobs. In addition, the more knowledge that a person gains, the more they are given opportunities that allow for greater personal growth and happiness. On a larger scale, if everyone were well educated it would help socially, economically, and politically. Unfortunately, this is where the 'structurally unjust' part comes into play.

Obtaining an education is equivalently seen as structurally unjust. This structural inequality appears in many forms, especially in socioeconomic class and race. Historically, there has been a rich-poor divide in education. Those with money and inherited wealth are fundamentally ahead of those less privileged. For years wealthy families have had more access to good education. Those with less money and less privilege, are less likely to have that type of access or even the ability to catch up. As for schools, the wealthier school districts spend more money on their learners than the poorer school districts. This socioeconomic inequality continues to pervade in the more privileged families. Unfortunately, this inequality extends between the more privileged life and skin color. The highest privileged race in the United States (U.S.) is Caucasian. Whites historically have been the highest privileged race in the U.S. Education access for non-white or minority children is typically limited to the area they live in, which commonly correlates to high-poverty areas.

How can this be addressed? Although this is a systemic problem in the U.S., we as educators, parents, and mentors have the opportunity to encourage our students and learners to look beyond any barriers or challenges that may limit them from pursuing higher education. Although there is no easy solution to such an ingrained problem, it's essential that we inspire our students to find the importance of learning at all stages in life. I do believe that we need to teach our younger learners life survival skills that they can apply as they grow into adulthood and eventually inherit and lead our world. As these upcoming generations transition into leading roles for communities, schools, and society, they will be able to extend their knowledge as we have exemplified. Change takes time and work, but we need to continue evolving for all upcoming generations in order to achieve a sense of balance and impartiality in our education system.