**Topic**

**The use of education in promoting economic development**

Food insecurity and illiteracy involve more than 800 million people today. In the proposed paper, I argue that education is a fundamental factor in achieving food security for rural populations in developing countries. I base my arguments on the Human Development Approach, according to which, education is both intrinsically and instrumentally relevant for education. In this paper I focus on the instrumental role of education for food security, by posing the question: Is education, both basic and higher, an essential tool to fight against food insecurity in the rural areas of developing countries? I answer this question by examining the theoretical and empirical causalities between the two variables: education and food security. Traditional Economic theories developed since the 1960s within the endogenous growth theory promoted the concept of human capital, according to which education is considered as a means to ensure economic growth. On the contrary, following Amartya Sen’s human development paradigm, I argue that education can play an instrumental role in two different ways: through economic production and through social change. While there is a literature, albeit short, on the contribution of education on development, this does not occur for food security. In this paper I argue that especially basic education, and not training or vocational education, can improve the capacity of individuals to live a decent life and to escape from the hunger trap. The basic idea is that being educated improves rural people’s capacity to diversify assets and activities, to access information on health and sanitation, to enhance human agency in addition to increasing productivity in the agricultural sector; these are all essential elements to ensure food security in the long-run. The theoretical study is, then, accompanied by an empirical analysis. Based on data taken by the Demographic and Health Survey, I construct a cross-section model, aiming to show the impact of education on “household food insecurity”. Both variables concerning basic and higher education are included to show the best predictors. Food insecurity is, instead, measured by an aggregate indicator, chosen according to available data and theoretical foundations. The model focuses first on rural areas, usually the most disadvantaged by national educational policies, and then on total countries, in order to explain the difference between urban and rural areas, defined urban bias. My aim is to prove that basic education has a good (negative) explanatory capacity of food insecurity. Moreover I seek to specify if higher education gives a statistically significant contribution or not, although probably lower than basic education variables. As a conclusion, the policy implications of my study are the following. I argue that education is both theoretically and empirically proven to be relevant in fighting food insecurity and, therefore, governments and donors aiming to tackle these problems should focus their attention to this sector. Such a policy, indeed, should be made with a specific emphasis on rural areas and keeping in mind the multiple-advantages provided by an educated and skilled society.

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