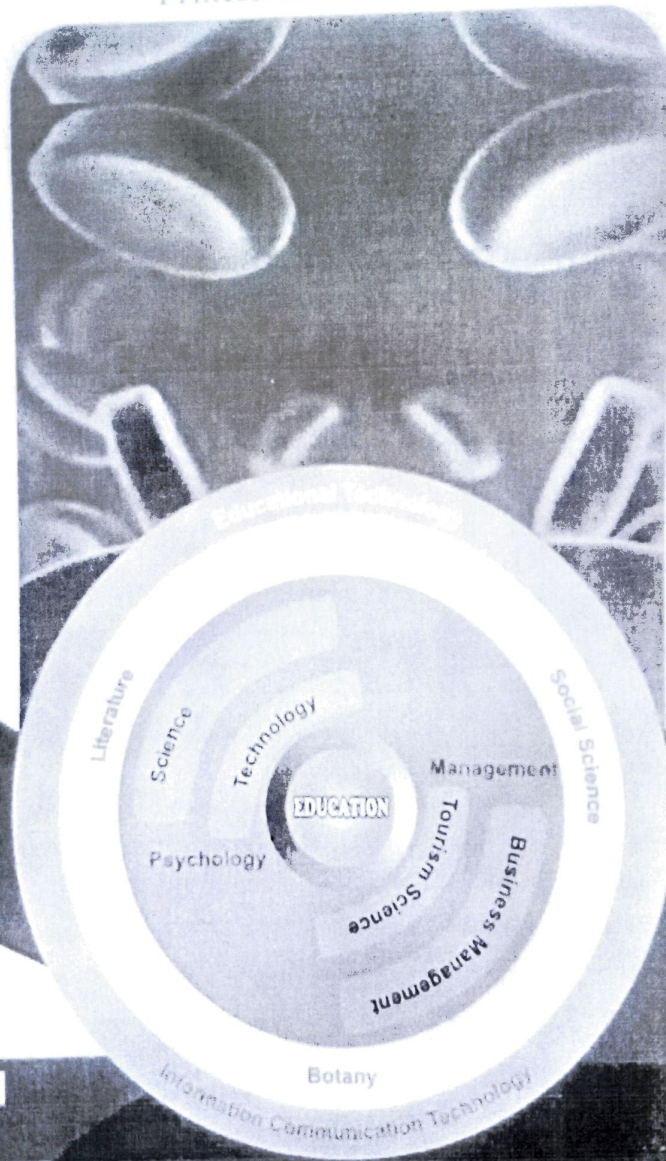
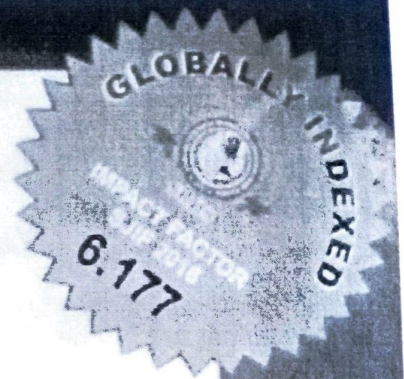


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## MEASURING HUMAN PROGRESS: THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX AND RELATED INDICES

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### Abstract

This brief note reviews the contributions of the human development approach and, in particular, of the HDI in the context of the discussions and debates around the findings of the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress (CESMP), set up by President Sarkozy of France and led by Joseph Stiglitz, Jean-Paul Fitoussi and Amartya Sen. We highlight the kinds of analyses and insights which have made the HDI a useful policy tool since 1990. There are important complementarities and synergies between the work of the recent Commission and the HDRs over the past twenty years. Both stress the need to focus on the ultimate objective of human prosperity and well being. They converge on the point that GDP is only one of the "intermediate" indicators used in attempts to measure the achievement of that final objective. Finally, but not least, we review ways in which the 2010 HDR, entitled "The Real Wealth of Nations: Pathways to Human Development", published twenty years after the first HDR, has addressed some key challenges on the measurement agenda, and continued the HDR tradition of "pushing the frontiers"

**Keywords:-** human development approach, complementarities, synergies.

**Introduction:** Since its launch in 1990, the Human Development Index (HDI) has been an important marker of attempts to broaden measures of progress. Published annually in the UNDP's Human Development Reports (HDR), the HDI serves multiple functions for academics and policymakers, as well as activists. From the outset, it has been recognized to represent a work-in-progress, as well as a rallying cry for all those seeking inclusive and humane societies, by assessing past trends and patterns and evaluating our current condition. This brief note reviews the contributions of the human development approach and, in particular, of the HDI in the context of the discussions and debates around the findings of the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress (CESMP), set up by President Sarkozy of France and led by Joseph Stiglitz, Jean-Paul Fitoussi and Amartya Sen. We highlight the kinds of analyses and insights which have made the HDI a useful policy tool since 1990. There are important complementarities and synergies between the work of the recent Commission and the HDRs over the past twenty years. Both stress the need to focus on the ultimate objective of human prosperity and well being. They converge on the point that GDP is only one of the "intermediate" indicators used in attempts to measure the achievement of that final objective. Finally, but not least, we review ways in which the 2010 HDR, entitled "The Real Wealth of Nations: Pathways to Human Development", published twenty years after the first HDR, has addressed some key challenges on the measurement agenda, and continued the HDR tradition of "pushing the frontiers"

**The HDI – contributions and some insights:** The idea that progress should be conceived as a process of enlarging people's choices and enhancing their capabilities is the central premise of the human development report launched by the UNDP in 1990. The work of the report was designed and led by Mahbub-ul Haq and was inspired by and drew heavily from the capabilities approach, as developed by Amartya Sen in his books and writings. The 1990 *Human Development Report* clearly articulated the concept of human development. The first chapter, *Defining and Measuring Human Development*, opened with the forthright statement that: People are the real wealth of a nation. The basic objective of development is to create an enabling environment for people to live long, healthy and creative lives. This may appear to be a simple truth. But it is often forgotten in the immediate concern with the accumulation of commodities and financial wealth. This goal was not new. Thinkers from Aristotle onward have voiced similar positions. The report argued for renewed attention to people in the light of countries' uneven progress in human development in the 1980s, a decade of economic crisis for many developing countries, particularly in Latin America and Africa. A hallmark of the 1990 HDR was the