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## Amartya Sen's Capability Approach and Education: Enhancing Social Justice

*L'approche par les capacités d'Amartya Sen et l'éducation : en faveur de la justice sociale*

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### **Résumés**

English Français

Competition, a defining characteristic of Anglo-Saxon capitalist models, has shaped universities. Most higher education policies embrace the instrumental view of education, prioritising the development of human capital, with the ultimate objective of promoting economic growth. Added to this viewpoint, is the perspective of education as a right, which highlights its intrinsic value. This paper suggests that incorporating Amartya Sen's Capability Approach when assessing higher education provides a broader, multi-criteria framework that answers the need for a normative ideal. Indeed, it focuses on social justice as the metric for evaluating and shaping universities. The paper, therefore, relies on the assumption that education needs to address not only the human capital needs of society, but also the development needs and aspirations of individuals as defined by the Capability Approach. The Capability Approach integrates social justice in the list of priorities and raises additional questions that go beyond the mainstream neoclassical boundary: how can universities contribute towards building a more just society, taking into account human dignity and wellbeing for all. Section one highlights the neoclassical economic theory underlying the competitive higher education models in Anglo-Saxon countries, where the human capital theory prevails. Education is also subject to the overarching cost-benefit analysis methodology, a perspective that is too narrow and instrumental to capture the complex

realities it needs to address. Section two elaborates on the theoretical and conceptual insight Sen's capability approach provides to capitalist economic models in general, and to university education in particular. It considers education as a right, but also as intrinsically important in many other ways. Furthermore, this approach sees the instrumental role of education in ways that surpass the neoclassical view, emphasising its transformative potential.

Les modèles du capitalisme anglo-saxons sont caractérisés par la concurrence qui a également influencé les universités. Les politiques de l'éducation supérieure ont adopté la vision de l'éducation comme un moyen, qui favorise le développement du capital humain avec pour l'ultime objectif la croissance économique. La perspective de l'éducation en tant que droit s'ajoute à ce point de vue, soutenant sa valeur intrinsèque. Cet article soutient l'idée que l'approche par les capacités d'Amartya Sen permet d'évaluer l'éducation supérieure d'un point de vue plus large et multidimensionnel, tout en répondant au besoin d'une idéale normative. L'article se focalise sur la justice sociale en tant que mesure d'évaluation des universités, et est fondé sur l'hypothèse que l'éducation doit répondre non seulement aux besoins de capital humain, mais aussi aux besoins de développement et aux aspirations des individus, telles qu'elles sont exprimés par l'approche par les capacités. L'approche par les capacités intègre la justice sociale dans la liste des priorités et soulève des questions supplémentaires qui vont au de-là de la frontière dominante néoclassique: comment les universités peuvent-elles contribuer à la construction d'une société plus équitable, en prenant en compte la dignité humaine et le bien-être pour tous. La première section porte sur la théorie néoclassique qui fonde les modèles compétitifs de l'éducation supérieure dans les pays anglo-saxons, où la théorie du capital humain domine. L'éducation est aussi soumise à la méthodologie d'analyse des coûts et des bénéfices, une perspective qui s'avère trop étroite et instrumentale pour pouvoir saisir les réalités complexes qu'elle doit traiter. La seconde section développe la compréhension théorique et conceptuelle qu'offre l'approche par les capacités, d'une part, aux modèles économiques capitalistes, et, d'autre part, à l'éducation universitaire en particulier. Cette approche considère l'éducation comme un droit, mais aussi comme étant intrinsèquement importante dans d'autres manières. De plus, elle attribue un rôle instrumental à l'éducation, plus large que celui accordé par la perspective néoclassique, et qui souligne sa capacité transformatrice.

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## ***Entrées d'index***

**Index de mots-clés :** Amartya Sen, capacités, capital humain, éducation, éthique, justice

**Index by keywords :** Amartya Sen, capabilities, education, ethics, human capital, justice

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## ***Texte intégral***

- 1 The purpose of this paper is to propose a theoretical argument for incorporating the issue of social justice, as articulated in Amartya Sen's capabilities approach, in evaluating the capitalist models of higher education. Building on existing work on the capabilities approach within education, it is emphasised that the notion of capabilities provides a useful theoretical and conceptual framework for a more meaningful understanding of issues relating to education.
- 2 If variety and diversity underpin capitalist models,<sup>1</sup> one of the main characteristics of the Anglo-Saxon capitalist models is the importance of competition. Higher education in capitalist models is also driven by competition and, if one uses the viewpoint of global university ranking, the competitive education model is considered the most successful.<sup>2</sup>
- 3 Neo-classical economic principles are at the core of the theoretical framework that moulds the social policy on education in the Anglo-Saxon models. Competitive market conditions are considered the most efficient answer to provide quality higher education. The theory of human capital<sup>3</sup> prevails in capitalist economies, where "as in any advanced economy, a high average standard of living in the Anglo-Saxon countries depend on heavy investment in human capital".<sup>4</sup>
- 4 The second main paradigm of education pertains to the rights-based discourse according to which education is perceived as a human right. In keeping with their liberal, democratic political and social systems, Anglo-Saxon education models embrace this view, although, as we will argue, it is done in a manner that is incomplete. Indeed, the very notion of rights are called to account by Sen, who points out that it leads to an incomplete understanding, and therefore execution, of these rights.

- 5 The Capability Approach has emerged as an alternative to standard economic theory by incorporating ethical principles to the capitalist model. Sen's approach has had tremendous impact on changing the perspective on poverty, inequality and human development generally. He builds his Capability Approach by criticising traditional welfare economics that are based on utilitarian assumptions. He opposes the conflation of wellbeing with income or with utility, an argument upon which much of the human capital theory of education is founded. He also disagrees with the neo-classical view of human motivation and its corresponding conclusions on human behaviour, which is also conceptually inseparable from the Anglo-Saxon higher education models.
- 6 Sen's work has also been praised for broadening the informational base of economic and social evaluation, refocusing on people as ends in themselves, rather than as means to economic activity. By recognising human heterogeneity and diversity, he has drawn attention to group disparities and has embraced human agency. He advocates participation, public discussion and deliberative democracy in decision-making processes, as well as when forging goals, making choices and influencing policy.
- 7 In order to underline the inadequacy of neo-classical economic foundations shaping educational policy from the point of view of justice, we begin by discussing the standard theoretical framework and its impact on the instrumental view of education, while presenting Sen's criticisms. We turn next to the rights-based view of education and its conceptual and practical limitations.
- 8 In section two we present Sen's view, by first listing the roles he attributes to education, then more specifically, explaining how the Capability Approach fills the gaps in neo-classical educational social policy. His approach is not as much an alternative as an improvement on the two views, stemming from his more faithful representation of people's wellbeing, as well as of the potential of education in human development.

## Education and competitive markets

### The neo-classical theoretical framework

- 9 Neo-classical economic theory relies on the assumption that people, the economic agents, are rational. Stating that people are rational implies, according to utilitarian foundations, that they are consistent in their choices and that they seek to maximise their utility.<sup>5</sup> In seeking to be more scientific, mainstream economic theories are thus based on the conception of human beings as representative agents, in other words, all alike as rational maximisers. Economists do not question the preferences that lead agents to choose the best possible option, but assume that agents are consistent in their choices. It is thereby agreed that man can be characterized by his single-minded pursuit of profit. This conception of human motivation and its role in the analysis of social achievement are necessary to uphold the view that markets provide the best outcomes for individuals and for society as a whole.
- 10 Since Adam Smith made the case for the government to undertake the task of educating the people, rather than leave it to market forces to impose the price,<sup>6</sup> the perception of education has undergone many changes in economic theory, as well as in social policy. In the case of higher education, it is incorporated, by contemporary neo-classical theory, in its competitive market model, subject to market forces. The resulting social policies match the free market theory.

### An instrumental view of education

- 11 The Anglo-Saxon social policies relating to education are based on neo-classical utilitarian economic theory that promotes the instrumental view of education, as well as its market-oriented implementation. In order to understand the limitations of this perspective, it is important to fully grasp the utilitarian theory on which it is grounded.

Using social justice as the metric of evaluation for universities, and in this respect, Amartya Sen's capability approach provides the best tool to highlight, some of the shortcomings of the existing views on education in capitalist Anglo-Saxon models, as well as to delve deeper into its underlying theoretical foundations.

12 The competitive model has influenced the conceptual and theoretical framework concerning education. The dominant theory developed within this framework is the human capital theory, advanced in the 1960s by Gary Becker and Theodore Schultz. The instrumental value of education is at the core of the neo-classical paradigm that paved the way for this theory, which is well established in standard economic theory. It values education in terms of its contribution in developing individual skills, which in turn increase both private and social returns. Education provides skills and knowledge that make people more productive and therefore more suitable for higher wages. Education is thus considered as an investment whose returns are calculated through productivity gains and the resulting increase in wages. These individual returns, as well as the collective returns, calculated in terms of economic growth as a result of the more skilled and efficient workforce, explain how the value of education is measured and how the success of education is assessed.<sup>7</sup>

13 It is important to point out that the human capital theory, like other aspects of mainstream economics, highlights only the economic reasons explaining human behaviour. The benefits of education taken into consideration are only the economic ones, disregarding other reasons for human behaviour. As Robeyns aptly puts it : "That people might act for social, religious, moral, emotional, or other non-economic reasons cannot be accounted for by this theory".<sup>8</sup>

14 By limiting the value of education to its instrumental role of providing skills and enhancing productivity, human capital theory evaluates education on the basis of a standard cost-benefit analysis, which only accounts for material effects. Important intangible effects that surpass the narrow utility-based prism of evaluation are overlooked, as are other important roles of education.<sup>9</sup> By pointing out these limitations of the human capital theory, Sen's intention is not to replace it with the capability approach, but instead to acknowledge its relevance and to add broader, non-economic effects that extend its scope and reach, as we shall see in section two.

15 The utilitarian framework and human capital theory have a strong effect on the evaluation methodology of education. Mainstream approaches to education evaluation are built upon the economic principle that measuring utility, resources, or outcome captures the essential factors and provides the most relevant results.

16 Similarly the basis of evaluation of education according to the human capital theory is efficiency. Educational institutes, viewed as the source of skills that develop human capital, are generally evaluated on their efficiency in doing so. Current evaluations of education systems only look at inputs (for example, the cost of tuition and level of teacher qualification) and outputs (students' results and their corresponding skills in specific domains).<sup>10</sup>

17 However, this type of assessment does not consider the issue of the conversion of resources. By conversion, we refer to the possibility and ability of transforming the instrumental means into genuine ends for the individuals concerned. Individuals must be able to derive intrinsic value from these resources. "The conversion argument says that the importance of these primary goods or resources is derivative on the individual capability to convert them into valued functionings."<sup>11</sup>

18 Human capital refers to investments in personal skills and abilities with the aim of producing a return that would increase individual welfare along with general economic productivity. As Sen<sup>12</sup> points out, 'human capital', relating "to broadening the account of 'productive resources' [...] concentrates on only one part of the picture [...]. It does need supplementation. This is because human beings are not merely means of production, but also the end of the exercise". It is thus necessary "to bear in mind [...] that] education, and other features of a good quality of life are of importance on their own [...] and not just as, human capital', geared to commodity production".<sup>13</sup>

19 Another characteristic of the instrumental view arises from its dependence on market rationality and competitiveness.<sup>14</sup> Human capital discourse relies on the view that markets are efficient in matching the acquired skills with occupations. Consequently,

cases of discrimination, segregation, exclusion from labour markets are not taken into account by this theory.

- 20 Inequalities in education associated with race, class, or gender are not a focus of the theory, where instead it is dealt with as either promoting or preventing the development of human capital for the purpose of economic growth. The solution therefore, is to provide education because otherwise it will impede growth.<sup>15</sup> Growth depends on the competitiveness of the economy, which in turn requires high skills levels: “In the sphere of vocational training and education, firms face the problem of securing a workforce with suitable skills, while workers face the problem of deciding how much to invest in what skills. On the outcomes of this coordination problem turn not only the fortunes of individual companies and workers but the skill levels and competitiveness of the overall economy”.<sup>16</sup>

## Education as a right

- 21 The second role of education accepted in mainstream economic theory, namely the intrinsic value of education, has led to the right-to-education model. However, where the instrumental role of education allowed for economic calculation of its value and effect, the right to education model is justice-based and dwells outside the realm of economic estimation. It is widely accepted nonetheless and embedded in contemporary economic theory as a “public good”,<sup>17</sup> excluded thus from the functionings of markets.

- 22 Its appeal stems from its convincing discourse on rights, which is a standard part of modern economics. However, the very factor that explains its appeal can be a source of criticism. Robeyns argues that it sounds “overtly rhetorical”, and that once its objectives are pronounced, the responsibility of its execution may be ignored. Another criticism concerning this model is based on the distinction between legal and moral rights. The danger of education being limited to a legal right, and therefore, under the prerogative of the government, reduces its implementation and effect. If education is considered only as a legal right and not a moral right, the obligation to fulfil, or to prevent the violation of such a right is limited, whereas a moral right creates obligations that go beyond those of the government only.<sup>18</sup> Finally, this perspective places the responsibility solely on the government to fulfil the legal right to education.

- 23 Thus it can be said that evaluating education on the basis of efficiency as neo-classical economic theory tends to do, looking at resources and output as results, leaves many important aspects of personal satisfaction and development ignored, or only partially addressed. If neither efficiency nor rights-based criteria enable a proper understanding of people and agency and of the role education plays in this respect, shifting the theoretical framework towards the capability approach may provide the solution. The human capital model mainly acknowledges the instrumental economic role of education, and the rights-based approach the intrinsic personal role of education, whereas the capability approach acknowledges both, in addition to other roles. More importantly, we will see that it requires a shift from efficiency-based evaluation to justice as the main criterion.

## Education and capabilities

- 24 After briefly summarising the capability approach and its key concepts, we list some of the various roles Sen attributes to education. We then focus on the metric of justice, showing how Sen's idea of justice differs to its most significant alternative, that of Rawls. This will enable us to discuss Sen's idea of justice and its relevance in perceiving and evaluating higher education.

- 25 Building on his criticism of traditional welfare economics, particularly for associating wellbeing with resources (income) or utility (happiness), Sen distinguishes between commodities, functionings, capabilities and utility in his approach. He shows that utility is not a direct consequence of income, but is a result of a more complex relation

between the commodities that are obtained with income or resources, and the capabilities and functionings that lie in between. Thus, income or the commodity command is a means towards achieving functionings : “[...] wealth is evidently not the good we are seeking; for it is merely useful and for the sake of something else”.<sup>19</sup> Sen goes on to explain how people differ in their ability to convert income and commodities into achievements that they value. Therefore, evaluating wellbeing through the narrow lens of commodities a person can command does not give enough information in order to fully comprehend how well people are able to function with the income they possess.

26 Secondly, utility is not, according to Sen, the end-all of human existence, and there is more to life than achieving utility. While specifying that utility is important, Sen emphasises that there are many other things of import and value to people that are not considered in traditional welfare economics.

## The capability approach applied to education

27 His response is to introduce the concepts of functionings and capabilities, arguing that capability has intrinsic value and should be regarded as the “primary informational base”.<sup>20</sup> Functionings can be understood as what a person manages to do or be. It refers therefore to how a person utilises the income or the commodities she can command, and is based on the outcomes that a person values or has reason to value.<sup>21</sup> The second concept, the notion of capabilities, combines the concept of functionings with opportunity freedom, referring to a person’s ability to achieve these functionings. Capabilities are the freedom a person has to enjoy valuable functionings. Thus a functioning is an achievement, while a capability is the ability to achieve. For example, with regard to higher education, functionings would include, being able to study, being able to participate in university life, in addition to being able to pass an examination or receive a qualification.

28 Speaking about basic education at the 2003 Commonwealth Education Conference in Edinburg, Sen explains how human development goes much further than the human capital approach in understanding and acknowledging that education enhances freedom. First, education has an instrumental role in facilitating people’s capacity to participate in decision-making processes at various levels.<sup>22</sup> Therefore it also plays a social role, since literacy is essential to foster public debate and dialogue. Sen also refers to its empowering and distributive role. Education can redress injustice by facilitating the ability of disadvantaged, marginalized and excluded groups to participate in social and political arrangements.<sup>23</sup> Thus education has redistributive effects between social groups, households and within families. Finally, education has transformative potential because people are able to use the benefits of education to help others, as well as themselves.<sup>24</sup>

29 These comments on basic education can be extended to higher education with increased reach and scope. If basic education is a prerequisite to foster public deliberation, higher education can only improve the process. Similarly, its social, redistributive and transformative roles have greater potency and more effective impact when agents are better educated.

30 The capability approach provides a useful framework and normative tool with which to articulate both the learning processes and social value of education. As said earlier, this approach is a response to the limitations of assessments that measure only outcomes or utility-based satisfaction. With the human capital theory, evaluations take the form of examination results or competency tests because the objective is to acquire skills that enhance productivity and employability. In the case of rights-based education, the discourse promotes the intrinsic value of education regardless of what education is expected to achieve. Distributing resources and granting rights are not sufficient if the specific capabilities of the individuals are not addressed. The capability approach to education goes beyond both these theories, evaluating not just outcomes, but also the links between capabilities and functionings. Thus, the questions raised probe into people’s aspirations and the opportunities they face as well as the choices they make.<sup>25</sup>

31 As has been emphasized earlier, the capability approach stresses the importance of conversion factors : given interpersonal heterogeneity, it should be understood that similar educational resources do not necessarily lead to similar learning outcomes. Possessing resources as instruments means that people must be able to convert them into ends, which are functionings. These converting capabilities are highly diverse among people, which weaken the supporting argument for a resource-based equality. Sen's approach considers the equality of capabilities in and through education. What this requires is acknowledgement of the heterogeneity and pluralism of human beings and the connection between individual experience and social arrangements by studying equality in the capability to convert resources into functionings. Therefore, instead of being satisfied with equal levels of input, resources in education, one needs to question if all individuals are free to participate, equally, in education in different settings.

## Justice as freedom

32 While the rights-based view of education embraces the idea of justice as being equal education for all, the capability approach is based on a more complex notion of justice than equality of input or output. Sen's approach is inspired by Rawls' notion of justice, but goes further to overcome its weaknesses. Rawls has argued that the "primary goods" at a person's disposition are rights and liberties, powers and opportunities, income and wealth<sup>26</sup> and justice needs to be allocative. In other words, promoting justice, according to Rawls, implies providing people with the resources they need to lead the lives they have chosen. Therefore, it is assumed that equal opportunities for individuals signify equal command over resources. Sen criticises how Rawls' approach concentrates on "means to freedom, rather than on the extent of the freedom that a person actually has".<sup>27</sup>

33 From this point of view the "resource a person has, or the primary goods that someone holds" may be essential but still be "very imperfect indicators of the freedom that the person really enjoys to do this or be that"<sup>28</sup> while a "focus on basic capabilities can be seen as a natural extension of Rawls' concern with primary goods, shifting attention from goods to what goods do to human beings".<sup>29</sup>

34 The capability approach takes into account the social context that sets the conditions for individual freedoms. The framework is sensitive to diverse social settings and group configurations. At the same time, it brings the focus back on the individual, which differs from the emphasis on aggregated outcomes and aggregated benefits in the human capital theory. Focusing on what people can do and be, rather than being exclusively directed towards their skills or the assets they have at their disposal, is the approach on education concerned with the capabilities of each individual. In terms of its normative implications the capability approach may thus be interpreted as individualistic. Sen's work is grounded in his ethical individualism, where each person counts, and this differs from the mainstream view based on ontological individualism, driven by narrow self-interest.

35 In keeping with Sen's idea of justice, education should be evaluated according to the impact on people's present and future capabilities. Good education is concerned with wellbeing, which neither depends on consuming resources or inputs, nor on the functionings a person might have achieved. Instead, it depends on the reach and scope of freedoms that people have reason to choose and value.<sup>30</sup>

36 As Walker has shown by applying the approach to the area of pedagogy in higher education,<sup>31</sup> following the ethical informed process means raising the questions of equitability, humane justice, becoming alert to the question of how we would like students to be, and what we would like them to become. The approach delves further than responding to imperatives in the form of efficiency, human capital or cost-benefit. Instead, pedagogies should be transformative and reach beyond the classroom to impact on processes of freedom.

37 Sen's approach has also affected the information regarding the process and the evaluation of education. By discussing and collecting data on educational capabilities, greater insight is offered as to the significance of education in enhancing people's lives.

If we take the case of literacy, which is used as an indicator of the capability to read and write, it might be misleading when considering a set standard for everyone. Individuals who fail the standard literacy tests may feel, nonetheless, that they have the capability to read and write. There are different degrees of literacy, which can already be very empowering for many.<sup>32</sup>

38 As Madoka Saito puts it :

In short, on the one hand, education is an important factor in broadening human capabilities, which include human capacities. On the other hand, human capabilities play a role in influencing both intrinsic and instrumental values. Therefore, it seems appropriate to say that education plays a role in influencing both intrinsic and instrumental values. What the concept of human capabilities has contributed to this discussion is to clarify the process of influencing intrinsic and instrumental values through education. Clarifying this process helps to show education as concerned with both intrinsic and instrumental value.<sup>33</sup>

39 The 2002 UNESCO Report "Education for all" recognises the relation between the capability perspective and education, and suggests that policies should be designed and evaluated in the following manner :

They can be "[...] judged to be successful if they have enhanced people's capabilities [...]. From this capability perspective, then, education is important for a number of reasons. [...] The human capabilities approach to education [...] recognizes that education is intrinsically valuable as an end in itself. [...] Compared to other approaches] the capability approach goes further, clarifying the diverse reasons for education's importance. Although many of the traditional instrumental arguments for education [...] are accepted, the distinctive feature of the human capability approach is its assessment of policies not on the basis of their impact on incomes, but on whether or not they expand the real freedoms that people value. Education is central to this process".<sup>34</sup>

## Conclusion

40 This pair of statements captures the essence of liberal education in Sen's sense that promotes freedom. Education is both the means to achieving, as well as the objective of freedom. Instrumentally, education is a means, by creating and sustaining intellectual development. It is also intrinsically linked, by defining what intellectual development is. In both these ways education plays a role in the removal of substantial barriers to freedom.<sup>35</sup>

41 Taking into account, human diversity, which is an 'empirical fact', is crucial in assessing the demands of educational justice and equality. The capability perspective has the capacity to elaborate how different dimensions, including assets and commodities, observable outcomes but also unobservable opportunities are related with respect to specific individuals in specific circumstances.

42 The instrumental and the rights-based view both fall within the framework of the competitive market model. However, these views fail to fully comprehend and respond to needs from a justice-based perspective, where justice is not only concerned with providing primary goods.

43 The capability approach raises wider questions concerning equality and social justice in education. By distinguishing capabilities from human rights, it requires a change in the way we assess different forms of equality in education. It also addresses how education can affect and influence our thinking about social justice, where justice is conceived as fulfilling present and future capabilities by providing freedoms.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> "Several types of models of capitalism have been formulated, using many very diverse variables. Consequently, they lead to different taxinomies, somewhere the models are identified with geographical zones" (See Catherine Coron and Ruxandra Pavelchievici, "Le *workfare* au Royaume-Uni de 1997 à 2003 : influences des modèles américain et scandinave", in Stephan

Martens and Jean-Paul Révauger (eds.), *Vers un modèle social européen ?*, Bordeaux : Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux, 2011, 91).

2 Thus according to the Shanghai Jiao Tong University global university ranking, the most publicly-cited of world rankings, the majority of the top global universities are in Anglo-Saxon countries. <<http://www.shanghairanking.com/fr/ARWU2014.html>>.

3 “This paper is concerned with activities that influence future real income through the imbedding of resources in people. This is called investing in human capital”. Gary S. Becker, “Investment in Human Capital. A theoretical analysis”, *The Journal of Political Economy*, vol. 70, issue 5, 2, 1962, 9.

4 Peter A. Hall and David Soskice (eds.), *Varieties of capitalism*, 2004, 172.

5 Sen strongly criticises the definition of rationality and its two underlying assumptions. On consistency of choice he explains : “A person is given one set of preference ordering, and [...] when the need arises this is supposed to reflect his interests, represent his welfare, summarize his idea of what should be done, and describe his actual choices and behaviour” (Amartya Sen, “Rational Fools: A critique of the Behavioral Foundations of Economic Theory,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Summer, 1977, 335). For Sen, this is an extreme type of reductionism and his words, if the person “has no use for these distinctions, he may be ‘rational’ in the sense of revealing no inconsistencies, but he must be a bit of a fool” (*Ibidem*, 336). As for the assumption of self-interest maximisation, which is reduced to maximising utility, Sen points out that despite its orthodoxy, ruling out any role of ethics in actual decision-making renders the view of human motivation “spectacularly narrow” (Amartya Sen, *On Ethics and Economics*, New Delhi : Basil Blackwell, 1987, 1).

6 “[...] Adam Smith, who provided the classic analysis of the power and reach of the market mechanism two and quarter centuries ago, wrote eloquently, [...], why it would be wrong to leave this to the market: “For a very small expense the public can facilitate, can encourage, and can even impose upon almost the whole body of the people, the necessity of acquiring those most essential parts of education” (Amartya Sen, “The Importance of Basic Education”, speech to the Commonwealth Education Conference, 2003).

7 “By regarding skills and knowledge as an investment in one’s labour productivity, economists can estimate the economic returns to education for different educational levels, types of education, etc.” (Ingrid Robeyns, “Three models of education. Rights, capabilities and human capital”, *Theory and Research in Education*, vol. 4, 1, 2006, 72).

8 *Ibidem*, 73.

9 Education is regarded as an investment that can be compared to other alternative investments through a cost-benefit analysis to decide which would provide the highest returns. Alkire explains how the project of setting up a literacy class for Muslim women in Pakistan would not be funded if the decision is made on the grounds of economic returns. Indeed, given that there is no market for female employment, the women would not earn higher wages. However, by looking beyond the scope of human capital theory, many other positive effects, such as greater self-respect and dignity, greater independence in solving problems and greater satisfaction at being able to study, made the project worthwhile. (Sabina Alkire, *Valuing Freedoms: Sen’s Capability Approach and Poverty Reduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

10 Séverine Deneulin and Lila Shahani (eds.), “An Introduction to the Human Development and Capability Approach”, London: Earthscan, 2009, 219.

11 Jean-Michel Bonvin and Nicolas Farvaque. “Social opportunities and individual responsibility : the capability approach and the Third Way”, *Ethics and Economics*, 2004, 10. <<https://papyrus.bib.umontreal.ca/xmlui/handle/1866/3314>>, retrieved in March 2015.

12 Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999, 295.

13 Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen, *India : Economic Development and Social Opportunity*, Delhi : Oxford University Press, 1995, 43.

14 Peter A. Hall and David Soskice distinguish between two types of market relations shaped by national political economies, “From this perspective, it follows that national political economies can be compared by reference to the way in which firms resolve the coordination problems they face in these five spheres. The core distinction we draw is between two types of political economies : liberal market economies and coordinated market economies, (...)” (Peter A. Hall and David Soskice, *Varieties of Capitalism. The Institutional Foundations of Comparative Advantage*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001, 8). Farther they point out that “market relations and hierarchies are important for firms in all capitalist economies (...)”. (*Ibidem*)

15 “In this framework, schooling assists growth, and a major social obligation is thus to increase schooling so as to facilitate this very growth” (Séverine Deneulin and Lila Shahani, *op. cit.*, 211-212).

16 Peter A. Hall and David Soskice, *op. cit.*, 8.

17 As Senior Vice President of the World Bank, in a report in 1998, Stiglitz explains the two characteristics of a public good: “A public good has two critical properties, non-rivalrous consumption – the consumption of one individual does not detract from that of another – and non-excludability – it is difficult if not impossible to exclude an individual from enjoying the good”. Stiglitz makes the case for public policy providing for education : “the central public policy

implication of public goods is that the state must play some role in the provision of such goods; otherwise they will be undersupplied" (Joseph E. Stiglitz, "Knowledge for development: economic science, economic policy, economic advice", *Proceedings of the Annual Bank conference on Development Economics*, 1998, 39).

18 "If it is agreed that the right to education is not only a legal but also a moral right, then everyone who is in a position to help realise this right should see it as her moral obligation to contribute" (Ingrid Robeyns, *op. cit.*, 77).

19 Amartya Sen, "Development as Capability Expansion," in L. Griffin & J. Knight (eds.), *Human Development and the International Development Strategy for the 1990s*, London: Macmillan, 1990, 44.

20 Amartya Sen, "Capability and Well-Being," in Martha Nussbaum & Amartya Sen (eds.), *The Quality of Life*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993, 38-39.

21 "An achievement or outcome is not a functioning if it is not something that is valued by the person concerned" (See Sabina Alkire and Séverine Deneulin, *op. cit.*, 32).

22 More directly, Sen lists the importance of education: "Basic education can be very important in helping people to get jobs and gainful employment". This in turn, has an effect on the economy, which he illustrates, citing Japan: "Concentrating on education determined, to a large extent, the nature and speed of Japan's economic and social progress" (Amartya Sen, "Development as capability expansion," in Sakiko Fukuda-Parr and A. K. Shiva Kumar (eds.), *Readings in Human Development. Concepts, Measures and Policies for a Development Paradigm*, Oxford UP, 3-16, 2003).

23 Sen explains how the lack of education prevents the deprived from understanding and benefiting from their legal rights. "Illiteracy can also muffle the political opportunities of the underdog, by reducing their ability to participate in political arena and to express their demands effectively" (*Ibidem*).

24 An example Sen gives in his speech is the positive impact education has on health and its ensuing benefits on society: "[...] basic education can play a major role in tackling health problems in general and epidemics in particular. [...] empirical work in recent years has brought out very clearly how the relative respect and regard for women's well-being is strongly influenced by women's literacy and educated participation in decisions within and outside the family" (*ibid.*) This has helped bring down fertility rates and reduce mortality rates of children.

25 "Focusing on more 'complex' functions, such as happiness, self-respect, or participation in communal life [...] the capability view does constitute a distinct alternative to equality of resources because the overall accessibility of these functions depends on factors additional to the possession of personal and impersonal resources, including an individual's own attitudes and ambitions as well as those of others" (Andrew Williams, "Dworkin on Capabilities", *Ethics*, 113, October 2002, 25).

26 John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971.

27 Amartya SEN, *Inequality Re-examined*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992, 81.

28 Amartya Sen, "Equality of What," in Sterling M. McMurrin (ed.), *The Tanner Lectures on Human Value*, Salt Lake City : University of Utah Press, 1980.

29 *Ibidem*, 219.

30 Walker presents the capabilities approach as a framework for evaluating higher education pedagogy and student learning within the context of the social and pedagogical arrangements which influence the possibilities for equality in learning opportunity (See Melanie WALKER, "Towards a Capability-based Theory of Social Justice for Education Policy-making", *Journal of Education Policy*, 21, 2, 163-85, 2006 and Melanie WALKER, "Widening Participation ; Widening Capability", *London Review of Education*, 6, 3, 267-79, 2008).

31 Melanie WALKER, *op. cit.*, 2006, 2008.

32 "(...) such as being able to read and write in the context of making accounts for one's small rickshaw business" (See Séverine Deneulin and Lila Shahani (eds.), "An Introduction to the Human Development and Capability Approach. Freedom and Agency", London: Earthscan, 2009, 224).

33 Madoka Saito, "Amartya Sen's Capability Approach to Education: a Critical Exploration, *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, vol. 37, 1, 2003, 25.

34 UNESCO Report *Education for All. Is the World on Track?*, 2002, 33. <<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001290/129053e.pdf>>, retrieved in March 2015.

35 Martha Nussbaum suggests a similar view of liberal learning when she asks: "What intellectual capabilities (freedoms) does liberal education minimally require ?" (See Martha Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity : A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1997, 441).

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