

İNSANLARIN DEĞERLİ BİR YAŞAMI GERÇEKLEŞTİRMESİ ADINA ÖZGÜRLEŞTİREN EĞİTİM: KABİLİYETLER YAKLAŞIMI ÇERÇEVESİNDEN EĞİTİME BİR BAKIŞ

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Öz: Bu çalışma, bir ekonomist ve aynı zamanda bir filozof olan Amartya Sen'in ortaya koyduğu kabiliyetler yaklaşımının eğitime katkısını esas alır. Kabiliyetler yaklaşımı, Sen tarafından ortaya koyulmasının ardından Martha Nussbaum tarafından geliştirilmiştir. Bu yaklaşıma göre, ülkeler arası yapılan refah karşılaştırmalarında, insanların ve ülkelerin refah durumunun sadece gayri safi milli hasıla dikkate alınarak değerlendirilmesi yanlıştır. Asıl önemli olan insanların sahip oldukları maddi kaynaklarla neler yapabildikleridir. Bu yaklaşım, aynı zamanda John Rawls'un birincil değerler anlayışını hem eleştirir hem de ona bir alternatif sunar. Bu yaklaşıma göre, birincil değerlere sahip olmanın değeri, insanların bu değerler sayesinde gerçekten ulaşabildikleri özgürlük ve fırsatlara bağlıdır.

Sen, bireylerin gerçek anlamda refah düzeyine erişmesini onların özgür bir şekilde değer verdikleri işleyişleri gerçekleştirmeleri ile ilişkilendirir. Bu yaklaşım doğrultusunda bireylerin refahı, sahip oldukları kaynaklar aracılığıyla özgür bir şekilde değer verdikleri işleyişleri gerçekleştirmeleri ile ölçülür. Bireylerin işleyişlerini özgürce yerine getirebilmesi sahip oldukları kabiliyetlerin göstergesidir. Bu bakımdan bu yaklaşım eğitime önemli katkılar sunma potansiyeline sahiptir. Kabiliyetler yaklaşımı özgür bir şekilde değer verdiği eylemleri gerçekleştirebilen bireylerin var olduğu bir toplumu savunur ve gerçek kalkınmayı bireylerin özgürlük alanlarının genişlemesi olarak görür. Bu nedenle, temel bir kabiliyet olarak ele alınan eğitim bu konuda önemli bir konumdadır. Eğitim ile bireyler zihinsel ve pratik becerilerini geliştirerek kendi değer verdikleri işleyişleri gerçekleştirme kabiliyetini elde eder ve değer verdikleri bir yaşamı inşa edebilirler. Bu nedenle, bu çalışmada eğitim konusu kabiliyetler yaklaşımı açısından ele alınacak ve bu yaklaşımın vurguladığı özgürlük bağlamında eğitimin bireylerin değerli bir yaşam anlayışı oluşturmaları konusundaki kritik önemi tartışılacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Amartya Sen, Kabiliyetler Yaklaşımı, Değerli Bir Yaşam, Eğitim, Özgürlük

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LIBERATING EDUCATION FOR A GOOD LIFE: A CAPABILITY APPROACH PERSPECTIVE ON EDUCATION

Abstract: This study is based on the contribution of Capability Approach, developed by Amartya Sen—an economist and also a philosopher—to education. Capability Approach, originally proposed by Sen, was later developed further by Martha Nussbaum. According to this approach, it is incorrect to assess the welfare status of individuals and countries solely based on Gross National Product (GNP) in cross-country comparisons. What truly matters is what people are able to do with the material resources they possess. This approach also both criticizes and offers an alternative to John Rawls's conception of primary goods. According to this perspective, the value of possessing primary goods depends on the actual freedoms and opportunities that individuals are able to achieve through them.

Sen associates individuals' attainment of genuine well-being with their ability to freely achieve the *functionings* they value. In line with this approach, individual well-being is measured by the extent to which people can freely realize valued functionings by using the resources they possess. The ability to achieve these functionings freely is an indicator of the capabilities individuals have. In this respect, Capability Approach has significant potential to contribute to education. It advocates for a society in which individuals can freely perform actions they value, and it defines real development as the expansion of individuals' spheres of freedom. Therefore, education—which is regarded as a fundamental capability—holds a crucial position within this framework. Through education, individuals develop both intellectual and practical skills, thereby gaining the capability to realize the functionings they value, and ultimately build a life they consider worthwhile. For this reason, this study examines the issue of education through the lens of Capability Approach and discusses the critical importance of education in enabling individuals to construct a conception of a good life, within the context of the freedoms emphasized by the approach.

Keywords: Amartya Sen, Capability Approach (CA), Good Life, Education, Freedom

1. Introduction

Capability Approach has gained attention in recent years due to its departure from the way of thinking that considers the level of development and well-being of individuals and countries solely on an economic basis. This approach, introduced by Amartya Sen, significantly differs from views that commodify human beings, as it emphasizes real-life conditions and opportunities. In this approach, the human being is at the very center, and this centrality entails the effort to make human life more meaningful and of higher quality. At this point, one of the first issues that comes to mind in terms of enhancing this quality is undoubtedly education. Because education not only increases people's economic well-being, it also provides people with the opportunities and means to improve their capabilities in life. Through education, people can develop their talents and skills, broaden their horizons, and gain perspective to see and evaluate opportunities for improving their lives. By reminding people of this value of education, CA opens the door for people to have a good life through their education.

Saito (2003), who considers that Capability Approach yields highly significant implications for education, interviewed Sen on the subject and reported that Sen agreed with the educational inferences made. As Saito (2003, p. 17) states, Sen is not an educator, but rather an economist and a philosopher. For this reason, Sen did not directly study the concept of education in his works. However, Sen's Capability Approach appears highly suitable for investigation from an educational perspective. Furthermore, according to Hart (2012, p. 276), there is still work to be done in order to develop a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the potential application of Capability Approach to education. Thus, it is considered that significant contributions can be derived from this approach in the field of education.

In this context, the present study will address the importance of the role of education in enabling individuals to gain freedom and develop an understanding of a good life from the perspective of Capability Approach. The primary aim of this study is to highlight the liberating function of education within the framework of Capability Approach and to emphasize that only liberated individuals can form a genuine conception of a good life. Accordingly, this study will first provide a general overview of Capability Approach (hereafter referred to as CA), followed by an examination of its relationship with education. Finally, the study will underscore the significance of cultivating a good life within the context of education.

2. An Overview of Sen's Capability Approach

Amartya Sen is a professor of economics and philosophy at Harvard University. His areas of research include social choice theory, economic theory, ethics and political philosophy, welfare economics, development economics, public health, and gender studies. As a result of his contributions to welfare economics, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Economics in 1998.

Although Sen appears to have made contributions primarily in the field of economics as an economist, his work is also highly valuable in the social sciences and in philosophy due to its human-centered approach. Economists often address the issue of well-being, both at the individual and macro (national) levels, and conventional welfare theories tend to assume that examining income levels—most commonly measured by Gross National Product (GNP)—is sufficient to determine well-being. However, Sen does not agree with this assumption. For example, the per capita income in Brazil may be significantly higher than that of an individual in China, yet it is a clear fact that the life expectancy of people living in China today is much higher than that of people living in Brazil. Building on this, Sen draws attention to the mismatch between individuals' freedom to live a long and good life. He points out that a high GNP in some countries does not necessarily indicate a good overall condition, while in others with lower GNP, people may enjoy greater freedom to live well and for a long time (Sen, 2000, pp. 5–6). For this reason, according to Sen, individuals' income levels are insufficient indicators of their well-being. Therefore, Sen criticizes the contemporary discipline of economics

for prioritizing utility, income, and wealth over the value of freedoms. According to Sen, what truly matters are freedoms, and what indicates the level of well-being of countries and individuals—what he considers the real marker of development—is the expansion of people’s freedoms (Sen, 2000, p. 36). In this regard, CA contrasts with the way of thinking that evaluates the development and well-being of individuals and nations solely on an economic basis.

CA is not a theory that explains poverty, inequality, or well-being. Rather, it provides a tool and a framework for conceptualizing and evaluating these phenomena (Robeyns, 2005, p. 94). Sen focuses on the capabilities individuals possess. To understand capabilities, it is first necessary to address functionings, which are a fundamental component of the concept. Sen defines functionings as the various things a person may value being or doing. These range from basic aspects such as being adequately nourished to more complex human acts like having self-respect. Capabilities represent the full range of functionings a person is able to achieve. When individuals are able to realize functionings freely, these functionings become capabilities. Therefore, capabilities involve freedom. Sen defines capabilities as the freedom to achieve functionings or lifestyles that one has reason to value—essentially, the ability to accomplish valued functionings. A functioning consists of the various states of being and doing that a person may consider important. For this reason, functionings have Aristotelian roots, and it is their free realization that generates capabilities (Sen, 2000, pp. 74–75). Functionings refer to the actual realization of a chosen way of life, while capability refers to the freedom to promote or achieve valuable functionings (Walker, 2005, p. 104; Robeyns, 2017, p. 39). Since capabilities are the freedom to achieve valued functionings, within this approach, the focus is not on the means to achieve freedom but on freedom itself. If the functionings achieved by a person enhance their well-being, then the capability to achieve those functionings constitutes their freedom—in other words, their real opportunities for attaining well-being. At the same time, a person's well-being has the potential to provide them with the capability to realize functionings. In this respect, functionings are considered the building blocks of well-being, and capabilities are seen as the freedom to achieve well-being (Sen, 1995, p. 40). Thus, the life a person leads can be seen as a combination of functionings, while their capability is represented by the set of functionings they are able to choose. The capability set represents the genuine freedom of choice a person has over alternative lives they might live (Sen, 1990, p. 114). Capabilities can be seen as the sum of functionings and freedoms. In this sense, capabilities include not only the functionings a person actually achieves but also the possible functionings they have the freedom to achieve (Alkire, 2005, p. 121; Underwood et al., 2012, p. 292). Sen illustrates this with an example: one person may choose to fast of their own free will. On the other hand, another person may do so because poverty leaves them no other choice (Sen, 2000, p. 75; Unterhalter, 2003, p. 666). Although both individuals carry out the same functioning, only the first person has the capability,

because they freely perform the functioning as part of their chosen lifestyle, while the second person did not choose it but was forced into it.

According to Sen, freedom encompasses both the processes that allow for action and decision-making, and the actual opportunities individuals have, given their personal and social circumstances. Sen conceptualizes the condition of *unfreedom* as resulting from two interrelated deficits: inadequate processes, such as the violation of political or civil rights, and insufficient opportunities, referring to opportunities that individuals lack to attain —such as avoiding premature death, preventable diseases, or involuntary hunger. Sen argues that both inadequate processes and insufficient opportunities can be addressed through the expansion of freedoms, positioning freedom as a foundational component of development. For Sen, what matters is that both processes and opportunities work in favor of individuals, enabling them to lead lives they have reason to value and to develop the capabilities to achieve such lives (Sen, 2000, pp. 17–18). Capabilities, in turn, are made possible through the freedoms people possess. Therefore, the idea of freedom lies at the basis of Sen's understanding of economic development. The level of development of countries and the well-being of individuals are to be assessed in terms of the substantive freedoms they enjoy.

One of the central concepts of CA is the individual's capacity to lead a life they have reason to value. Sen focuses on what each person is able to do and be through meaningful choices. Therefore, he emphasizes that people should have the freedom to choose a life they have reason to value. At this point, the issue of having reason to value is important, because it implies a reflective and conscious choice, and what is emphasized is developing people's capabilities to choose lives they value (Walker, 2005, pp. 103–104). In short, a person's ability to freely realize a functioning that aligns with their lifestyle shows that they possess that capability. Valued doings and beings—that is, functionings—can be transformed into capabilities only through free realization. CA demands that people be able to live such lives, and it evaluates well-being in terms of the capabilities individuals possess. People carry out various functionings in their daily lives. However, what matters most is that they continue their lives through the functionings they truly value. It is only when individuals achieve this that one can speak of a high level of well-being or a good life. At this point, Sen emphasizes freedom and views development as the expansion of the freedoms people can enjoy (Sen, 2000, p. 3; Solava, 2006, p. 399).

As can be understood from the information provided above, the transformation of functionings into capabilities is closely related to whether the action is valuable and carried out freely. As Brighouse (2016, p. 94) also states, what makes CA liberal is its focus on freedoms and opportunities rather than possessions. This approach is concerned with creating an environment conducive to freedom and human development. Capability refers to what people are actually able to do and to be, rather

than the resources they can access. In this respect, Sen's approach not only critiques the dominant understanding of welfare economics but also offers an alternative to philosopher John Rawls's concept of primary goods. According to Rawls, primary goods include rights and liberties, opportunities and power, income and wealth (Rawls, 1999, p. 54). Sen criticizes the focus on primary goods without considering their relationship to basic capabilities (Rawls, 2020, p. 226). For Sen, what matters are not the primary goods themselves, but the potential that lies beneath them. What Sen finds lacking in Rawls's idea is that it does not account for individual differences and excludes people's capabilities to convert these primary goods into functionings—that is, their real opportunities and freedoms—from the discussion on the standards of justice (Çelik, 2015, p. 93).

CA aims to provide ways of thinking that focus on the opportunities or freedoms people have to realize functionings, by drawing from debates in philosophy and economics (Unterhalter, 2003, p. 666). Sen's goal is to examine the relationship between the resources people possess and what they are able to do with those resources. He emphasizes that material resources are merely tools, and what truly matters is the freedom to benefit from those resources and the capabilities that such freedom can generate (Brighouse, 2016, p. 91). Alkire (2016, p. 2) notes that Sen does not disregard resources in welfare assessment; on the contrary, he acknowledges their importance but emphasizes capabilities to evaluate well-being. According to Sen, people's needs should be assessed not based on the resources they have, but on their freedom to choose among different life paths that they have reason to value. Real freedom is represented by the capability to achieve various alternative functionings or states of being (Sen, 1990, p. 114). Therefore, Rawls's primary goods are meaningless unless people are able to convert them into capabilities. For example, consider two individuals who have received the same education. One of them can freely utilize the knowledge and qualifications gained through education, while the other is unable to access such opportunities due to personal characteristics or the cultural context they live in, and is thus forced to work in undesirable conditions. Although both individuals received the same education and theoretically have the same rights and freedoms regarding job choices, they are not able to benefit equally from those rights and freedoms. At this point, the notion of capability can be meaningfully applied to the first individual, whereas it cannot be ascribed to the second. While Rawls's primary goods approach is important in terms of recognizing certain rights and liberties justly, Sen's approach evaluates these values in a way that is more aligned with actual human experience. Sen emphasizes that the conversion of primary goods into the freedom to choose and pursue a particular kind of life can vary from person to person, and that the equality of these goods may in fact lead to serious inequalities in the actual freedoms individuals possess (Sen, 1990, p. 115). One person may have the same capability as another, yet choose a different set of functionings aligned with their own specific goals. Alternatively, even if two people have the same real capabilities and goals, they may achieve different outcomes due to the different

strategies they employ in exercising their freedoms. Capability reflects a person's freedom to choose among alternative lives (Sen, 1990, p. 118).

In summary, Sen considers the material resources, income, and primary goods people possess as fundamental to human life, but he mainly focuses on the contribution these resources and goods make to human life—that is, on what they enable people to do and to be. In this regard, it can be said that Sen's approach contributes to mainstream welfare theories and conceptualizes "human development." From this perspective, CA has a humanistic outlook (Gasper, 2002, p. 435). It values individuals' real freedoms to do things and the levels of well-being they reach when choosing among the options available to them. From this perspective, it deserves to be evaluated as a rich and multidimensional approach (Robeyns, 2017, p. 8).

3. The Capabilities Approach and Education

Education is one of the fundamental building blocks of global development (Hart, 2012, p. 275). Development is often initially conceived in its technical sense, primarily associated with economic growth and technological advancement. However, despite its less frequent usage, the broader conception of development is more inclusive, encompassing not only material progress and empowerment but also the social and cultural advancement of society. In the current era, the prominence of economics, technology, and material wealth has made the technical meaning of "development" more widely used (Çelikkaya, 2013, p. 27). However, within the framework of CA, the concept of development is far removed from a purely economic understanding. Sen, who views development in CA as individuals possessing capabilities through an expanded sphere of freedom, considers people's incomes or GNP merely as tools for expanding freedoms. Essentially, freedom develops in conjunction with many other factors. Key among these are social and economic arrangements in education and health, and the granting of political and civil rights (Sen, 2000, p. 3). Therefore, development is more than just an economic term; it signifies a more holistic advancement and education is considered one of crucial elements of development.

Today, neoliberalism, which contradicts the idea of genuine development, tends to view education as a tool for economic productivity. Presenting a contrasting stance on CA and neoliberalism, particularly in the context of education, Çelik (2019, p. 190) states that neoliberalism primarily produces individuals who are profit-making-minded through education. In this context, Sen's framework offers a compelling alternative. By shifting the focus from economic returns to the expansion of human capabilities, Sen provides a normative basis for reimagining education not as a commodity but as a tool for enhancing real freedoms. This alternative framework challenges the narrow criteria of neoliberalism and highlights the transformative potential of education to promote human development through capabilities.

CA, with its Aristotelian roots, draws attention to a good life for all people. Unlike Aristotle's distinction, it demands this for all people, and education is crucial in meeting this demand. Nussbaum (2011, p. 33), supports this by explicitly including education in her "Central Capabilities" list, and Sen (2000, p. 144) emphasizes the importance of social opportunities for a good life. In particular, Nussbaum's examination of the good life that every human being deserves in relation to their inherent human dignity is worthy of admiration. As Nussbaum (2011, pp. 19-20) states, although Sen does not use the concept of human dignity as centrally as he does in his theoretical approach, he certainly recognizes the importance of this concept. Consequently, CA, in general, values human dignity and emphasizes that every person deserves to live a good life to preserve that dignity. Accordingly, education stands out as a crucial element in providing people with such a life.

Although CA does not offer explicit prescriptions for education, it provides a valuable theoretical framework through which important educational insights can be drawn. It also underscores both the significance of education and the ethical responsibility it entails. One of the most significant contributions of this approach to the field of education is the Human Development Index (HDI). Developed by Sen, whose work focuses on poverty and equality, CA has been incorporated into the Human Development Index published by the United Nations. Through the annual Human Development Reports issued by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), this approach has significantly contributed to the growth of the human development paradigm (Robeyns, 2017, p. 16). The Human Development Index (HDI) has attracted significant international attention to the importance of education. As a composite measure encompassing adult literacy, school enrollment, life expectancy, and real gross national product per capita, the HDI emphasizes the necessity of ensuring broad and equitable access to education for the promotion of human well-being (Saito, 2003, p. 22).

Sen (2000, p. 144) emphasizes that significant results can be achieved in societies where adequate opportunities are provided in education and health. The creation of social opportunities directly contributes to the expansion of human capabilities, quality of life, and eventually human development. Sen highlights the importance of development in areas such as healthcare services, education, and social security within these social opportunities. He stresses that there is evidence that a country providing healthcare and education to everyone, even with low incomes, can achieve truly remarkable results in terms of the life expectancy and quality of life for its entire population.

In *India: Economic Development and Social Opportunity*, Drèze and Sen (1995, pp. 30-31) consider education and health opportunities in their intrinsic and instrumental aspects. First, these have intrinsic importance: being educated and healthy is valuable in itself, and individuals who possess these attributes also enjoy effective freedom. Second, they hold instrumental importance: a healthy and educated person can do many things with

these valuable opportunities—for example, they can pursue a profession or make use of various economic opportunities. With the economic means they gain, they can expand their freedoms and realize the functionings they value. From a social perspective, advanced education, or even basic education, enables individuals to articulate social needs, make conscious collective demands, and thus increase opportunities that will ease people's lives. Furthermore, schooling can prevent child labor, students can broaden each other's horizons by being together. With advanced education and acquired educational opportunities, individuals in disadvantaged groups can be freed from various pressures they might face, becoming more aware. Better education can also eliminate gender-based inequalities. In this regard, as Saito (2003, p. 24) states, CA demonstrates that education encompasses both intrinsic and instrumental values. In this way, it offers a new direction in positioning education, considering both its intrinsic value and its instrumental role in societal development at the macro level (Hart, 2012, p. 276).

CA places education in a crucial position for developing human capabilities to lead a good life. From this perspective, it's essential to understand education as a key (Unterhalter, 2003, p. 669) and a central capability that enables individuals to achieve most other capabilities and functionings (Çelik, 2019, p. 192). Since CA prioritizes the centrality of the individual and their ability to achieve the functionings they value in life, this understanding encompasses not just an individual's survival, but also their capacity to lead a meaningful life. Through education, individuals can increase their well-being in later life, lead a life where they can achieve the functionings they value, live freely, and realize their full potential. As CA claims that everyone should possess at least a threshold of basic capabilities (Brighouse, 2016 p. 88), education is invaluable in providing this. According to Sen (2000, pp. 293-294), education enables an individual to contribute to commodity production and simultaneously enhance their own well-being. However, the benefits of education extend beyond its role in providing human capital for commodity production. The human-capability-focused perspective prioritizes enriching an individual's life, with their contribution to production being secondary. Being educated can be considered a capability in itself, and simultaneously, education opens the door to many other capabilities. People's capabilities have the opportunity to develop through education. With an expanding sphere of freedom, an increasingly higher level of capabilities is attained. In this respect, capabilities refer to an individual's power to make valuable achievements possible when conditions are met, because the development of capabilities opens up a range of possibilities (Hinchliffe, 2007, p. 224).

Education plays an important role in creating and maintaining a sense of the good life by helping students develop their talents and expand their opportunities. Acquiring basic numerical skills, for example, makes it possible to develop more complex mathematical aptitudes, and excelling in mathematics can open up many career possibilities. Moreover, learning to be fair while working or playing with other students

at school fosters more complex capabilities like developing respect and empathy. All these experiences can broaden an individual's opportunities to choose a life they have reasons to value (Saito, 2003, p. 27). Therefore, as Çelik (2017, p. 21) states, being deprived of the right to education means being deprived of the opportunities and freedom to realize many functionings—in other words, many capabilities. Education is important in helping students develop their abilities, gain new skills, and open up numerous future opportunities. Educational institutions are places that greatly contribute to the formation of people's functionings so the ideal thing to do is to equip students through education with the capabilities to pursue the opportunities they value (Walker, 2005, p. 109).

Saito (2003, p. 29) argues that within the framework of CA, individuals' judgment powers and abilities can be appropriately developed through education. In this regard, he states that the type of education that best expresses Sen's approach seems to be one that makes people autonomous and simultaneously develops their judgments about capabilities and their use since an individual's capability in the capabilities approach is determined by their freedom to choose the functionings they value (Sen, 1995, p. 40). CA offers an alternative paradigm for evaluating the potential of individual freedoms, both within the educational process and through education itself (Hart, 2012, p. 276). According to Walker (2005, p. 108), humans are beings in action, possessing the capacity to make conscious and reflective choices. Their agency and autonomy are fundamental educational capabilities. Building on this, Walker emphasizes that if schools fail to develop these qualities in children, it provides reasons to question whether an educational process is functioning effectively.

CA reminds us that education isn't just about acquiring knowledge, but about a learning process that adds value to a person's own life (Hinchliffe, 2007, p. 225). Therefore, within this approach, education can be considered as a way to enhance individuals' capacity to realize their functionings meaningfully, enabling them to lead a fulfilling life of their own choosing (Toson et al., 2013, p. 493). From this perspective, education should help individuals develop capabilities that foster critical and creative thinking, problem-solving, informed decision-making, coping with new situations, and effective communication (Hoffmann, 2006). A truly liberating form of education can only be realized when individuals can get genuine opportunities for their development and flourishing as human beings.

In CA, instead of forcing people to choose a specific "good life," there are various possible ways of life that each person can choose from (Robeyns, 2017, p. 107). In Sen's work, the freedom of choice has intrinsic value, and this approach emphasizes the functionings that an individual achieves. For example, individuals can transform their educational resources into different forms of doing and being that they value. Two individuals might achieve the same level of proficiency as a result of their education, but they might have

different opportunities to convert this resource into functionings as mentioned in the previous section. Their choices can be limited by a combination of personal characteristics, cultural values, and norms. Therefore, this approach acknowledges that not all individuals will participate in education in the same way, benefit from it identically, or use the resources provided by education to gain the same or similar advantages in life. Sen is tolerant of the differences in how various individuals transform their resources into forms of doing and being that they have reason to value (Hart, 2012, p. 276).

Providing individuals with the freedom to pursue a life they value makes them autonomous. This is because individuals who can think, question, and possess a critical perspective are able to form a life understanding that they value. These individuals are aware of which functionings are valuable to them and make conscious choices. Their ability to make these choices freely demonstrates that they possess capabilities. As Solava (2006, p. 399) states, freedoms and capabilities mutually reinforce each other. As people's sphere of freedom expands, it develops their capabilities, and developed capabilities, in turn, pave the way for people to become increasingly free. Education is critically important in achieving this.

In summary, education holds the potential to offer individuals a life they have reason to value (Walker, 2005, pp. 107–108). Through education, individuals gain the ability to make informed choices and to recognize and evaluate opportunities. As Saito (2003, p. 27) states, education is both a tool for developing skills and a means of expanding opportunities. People develop their capabilities through education, and as their capabilities grow, they gain access to more opportunities. In this way, individuals can discover a way of life they consider meaningful and realize the functionings aligned with that life. This is precisely what is expected from education today. Rather than focusing solely on the human capital it may produce, the primary goal of education should be each individual's development and the attainment of a good life. In societies where this is achieved, individuals will undoubtedly contribute to working life more productively and successfully. Therefore, the most fundamental aim is that through education, people become increasingly free, more autonomous, develop their capabilities, and are able to sustain a life they value.

4. Conclusion

Sen places the concept of freedom at the core of human and national development. He emphasizes that true development can only occur when people are free, and that their quality of life can improve as they freely pursue the functionings aligned with the way of life they value. In this regard, Sen advocates a view contrary to prevalent income-focused welfare theories. These theories claim that one can ascertain people's wellbeing by looking at their income or a nation's GNP. However, these figures do not provide sufficient information about people's actual well-being levels. Instead, how people

utilize their resources, what they can freely do and become with those resources, are better indicators of their quality of life and well-being. Building on this idea, Sen believes it's more accurate to focus not on the quantity of material resources people possess, but on what they achieve through those resources. At this point, the focus shifts to people's freedom to choose a life they value and to realize the functionings that align with that life. To achieve a good life, people need to possess capabilities. Having capabilities means being able to freely engage in functionings—the doings and beings that are valued.

Sen doesn't address education as a separate topic within his CA. Instead, he discusses it alongside healthcare, emphasizing the crucial importance of both areas in human life. This way of evaluating education implicitly suggests it's as vital as health. Just as being healthy is invaluable for a person, so is being educated, as both are fundamental for a good life. Furthermore, Sen highlights education as a basic capability, deeming it essential for all people to access this capability. Education holds a significant place in developing human capabilities and opening up various opportunities. Education bears a great responsibility in fostering individuals who can develop their capabilities and utilize opportunities for a good life. It holds the potential to transform every individual's life for the better through the freedom and opportunities it can create.

Focusing not on people's material resources but on their capabilities to benefit from those resources, Sen places education at the center of enhancing individuals' capabilities. It is crucial that education enables individuals to develop the necessary capabilities to achieve a life they aspire to and value. Education can provide both material and non-material resources to individuals in this regard. On the material side, it enables individuals to gain a profession and achieve economic freedom; on the non-material side, it equips them with the freedoms and capabilities needed to live a life they consider worthwhile. For Sen, the non-material aspect is more significant. This is why he emphasizes that the benefits of education go beyond the material. The most important benefit of education is that it provides a conception of a good life. Within the framework of the capabilities approach, this is the core function of education. The economic contribution it provides is secondary. A person, above all, must acquire a good understanding of life and be able to pursue it freely and consciously. In this context, education should allow individuals to construct a life not based on external expectations but according to their own internal values. Therefore, education should support this internal process of reflection and transform individuals from passive consumers into thinking, decision-making agents.

Sen's approach highlights the importance of education through its potential to cultivate a conception of a good life, and even points toward the necessary transformations in education. The fundamental ideas of this approach include expanding the space of freedom within education, equipping individuals with essential skills, and enabling

them to acquire a meaningful understanding of life through the capabilities gained via education. This raises crucial questions such as “Can education truly foster such an understanding?” and “What kinds of transformations are needed in education to realize this goal?” – thereby underlining the need for continuous work in this direction within the field of education.

Education is a process that enables individuals to realize themselves socially, ethically, and intellectually. In this regard, a good life can only be achieved in an environment where individuals can make free choices, access their rights, and get opportunities for self-actualization. Education plays a foundational role in constructing such an environment. Given the limitations of current educational systems in terms of developing capabilities, this approach necessitates a reconsideration of both the theoretical underpinnings and practical implementations of education. Standardized assessment systems, competitive models, and market-oriented educational policies serve not to help individuals build the lives they value, but rather to adapt them to the demands of the system. This undermines the liberating potential of education and contributes to the passive positioning of individuals within the learning process. On the contrary, education can play a crucial role as an integral part of the individual’s process of assigning meaning to their life. For individuals to discern what they value, shape their ethical and intellectual orientations, and direct their lives accordingly, a high-quality and liberating form of education is essential.

In conclusion, the capabilities approach offers a strong theoretical framework for a more just, equitable, and freedom-based understanding of education. For individuals to be able to construct lives they value, education policies must undergo a transformation that centers on human development—not only in terms of accessibility, but also in the content and methods of education.

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