



Livelihood Skills To Life Skills: The Capabilities Approach and Education

KEYWORDS

Capability Approach, Life skill Education, Sustainable development

Dr. V. Mohanasundaram

Associate Professor & Head

C.Chandrasekar

Ph.D Research Scholar, Department of Economics
PSG College of Arts and Science, Coimbatore-14

ABSTRACT *In the realm of capabilities approach the role of education is multiple and complex. Being educated has been described by Sen as basic a capability to well being (Sen 1992). Education is referred to as opening to other capabilities through providing access to education and promoting a concrete set of basic learning outcomes, such as abilities to read and write. However, from the point of view of the Capabilities Approach, one can also argue that learning that stops at the level of providing only basic reading and writing skill would be insufficient to sustainable development and fighting poverty. The objective of this paper is to theorize on how the quality education can build individual capabilities and thus cause individual freedom and development. By relating Sen's Capability Approach with Central Human Capabilities as proposed by Martha Nussbaum along with the four pillars of education design by Dakar i.e. i) Recognition of the challenge; ii) The invisibility of human dignity; iii) Collective responsibility and constructive partnership; and iv) Acting with determination, achieving sustainable human development as enunciated at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 can be made possible.*

Introduction

In the realm of capabilities approach the role of education is multiple and complex. Being educated has been described by Sen as basic capability to well being (Sen 1992). Education is referred to as opening to other capabilities through providing access to education and promoting a concrete set of basic learning outcomes, such as abilities to read and write. However, from the point of view of the Capabilities Approach, one can also argued that learning that stops at the level of providing only basic reading and writing skill would be insufficient to sustainable development and fighting poverty. According to Sen "It is best to see human rights as a set of ethical claims which must not be identified with legislated legal rights" (Sen 1999). In order to claim their rights, individuals and communities need to be equipped to know these rights, the way to demand that their rights be respected and the means to enforce their claims, requiring psychological proficiencies such as critical thinking and responsibility as the central element along with agency and empowerment. This is related to quality education contents, processes, and contexts that lead to building capability of the individual. In this regard the capabilities approach as concern education is thus larger in the scope than human capital approach which narrows down the contribution of education to a limited range of indirect livelihood skills mainly related to production and income generation. The objective of this paper is to focus on how the quality education can build individual capabilities and thus cause individual freedom and development.

Education and Capabilities

The earlier thrust of economists and development programmes has been a utilitarian vision to comprehend poverty, living conditions and well-being. The negative effects of these development policies, which tended to confuse well-being and living conditions fuelled the debate regarding well-being and development. Since the 1990s, reports of international organisations have given a new vision to the concept of development, rejecting the limited view based on economic growth and putting forward a sustainable human development model. As a consequence, well

being has now defined separately from living standard. Sen views well being in terms of capabilities is related to the possibilities and the choices that a person has "to achieve valuable human functionings". Within this theory Sen presents a multifaceted view of well being by considering the individual as a person having the ability to act (agency), to think and to communicate with others. A concept that is central in the capabilities approach is that of "agency". In order for a person to take action he/she has to be the principal agent responsible for the present and future events of his/her life, to be "someone who acts and brings about change, and whose achievements can be judged in terms of her/his own values and objectives, whether or not we assess them in terms of some external criteria as well" (Sen 2000). A person's well-being is, thus, dependant on his/her agency to pursue goals which he/she value. Sen identifies different sources of variation that explain the relation between income and well-being: personal heterogeneities, environmental diversities, variations in social climate, differences in social perspectives, and distribution within the family. The objective of education for all must be geared towards enhancing capabilities and enlarging choices and developing agency by building different dimensions of well-being, self-image and self worth, which in turn help individuals to be less vulnerable to the variations within a given context. Educational content must, therefore, be reviewed to remove the stereotypes and old age norms that persist. Every aspect of education must then work towards fighting all types of poverty, including reducing vulnerability by building potential and increasing agency and well being of individuals and societies.

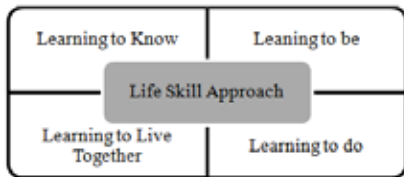
Transition from Livelihood Skills to Life Skills

For a fully enhanced freedom and development, as expressed in the Capabilities Approach, education must move from rote learning towards specifically addressing the development needs and aspirations of the individuals, their ability to think and reason, build up self respect, as well as respect for others, think ahead and plan for future. The importance of such mental power, i.e cognitive, emotional and social abilities, is making its way into education policies and plans, often under the name of life skills. Life

skills are seen as the abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demand and challenges of everyday life.

Life Skill Approach

The Dakar Framework for action states that all young people and adults have "the human right to benefit from an education that will meet their basic learning needs in the best and fullest sense of the term, an education that includes learning to know, to do, to live together and to be". This vision is based on the Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century (UNESCO, 1996). This report stresses the importance of enhancing "inner capabilities" in order to meet the challenges of education. It offers conceptual basis for life skill approach to education.



The life skill education influences Sen's Capability Approach. The four pillars of education can be used as framework for the list of Central Human Capabilities proposed by Martha Nussbaum (Life; Bodily Health; Bodily Integrity; Senses, Imagination and Thought; Emotions; Practical Reasons; Affiliation; Other Species; Play; Control over One's Environment)

✓ **Learning to know:** developing reasons. This pillar refers to the Central Functional Capabilities of "Practical Reasons" according to Nussbaum. It linked to the understanding and use of knowledge. It related to life skills such as critical thinking, problem solving and decision making life skill which are fundamental to informed action.

✓ **Learning to be:** enhancing agency. This pillar refers to the Central Functional Capabilities of "Senses, Imaginations, Thought and play". Its related abilities include life skills for coping, self awareness, self esteem and self confidence, aiming at building identity and setting goals.

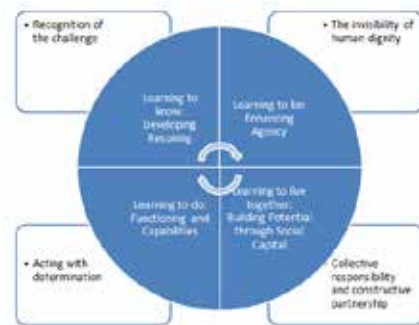
✓ **Learning to live together:** building potential through social capital. Central Functional Capabilities of "affiliation, emotions and other Species" according to Nussbaum. It is related to interpersonal abilities and social life skills come under this pillar including communication, negotiations and refusal life skills.

✓ **Learning to do:** functioning and capabilities. The Central Functional Capabilities of "Life, Bodily Health, Bodily Integrity and Control over one's environment" form this pillar which is related to the mastering of cultural tools, i.e. things or patterns of behavior, in order to act and it is closely linked to the practical applications of what is learned, and need to be associated with life skills in a teaching learning situation.

Development of Human Capabilities and Sustainability

Education for sustainable human development must be

an education that aims to help people of all ages to get a better understanding about the world in which they live, and act better on this understanding. It needs to understand the complexity of the problems such as poverty, consumption, environmental degradation, health and population become easier. It needs to addresses of these topics not only by providing mere information, but also the abilities need to understand and use this information, to establish agency and attitudes supporting behavior that leads to sustainable development (UN, 2005). In this respect, the four pillars of education offer a conceptual basis for sustainable human development. The four pillars directly reflect the four principles for achieving sustainable human development enunciated at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002. i.e. Recognition of the challenge; The invisibility of human dignity; Collective responsibility and constructive partnership; and Acting with determination.



Need for Change in the Approach

An Education which addresses the needs of the present generation while building the skills of the future generations can be considered sustainable in its approach and in line with the concept of sustainable development. However, it needs to be driven and coordinated by a national policy. Dreze and Sen (2002), challenge two common myths that are still strong among policy makers: i) parents have little interest in education and ii) the dependency of poor families on child labour. According to the authors these facts are the consequence of the "discouragement effect" At the same time Dakar Framework for Action, points out that successful education programmes require not only healthy and well-nourished students but also motivated students in order to ensure basic education of quality for all. Quality education must respond to the fact that number of young people do not, or no longer, think that their future lies in attending schools, and enable young people to be the principal agent responsible for the present and future events of his/her life. Child centered pedagogy does not mean underestimation the importance of giving the knowledge and following a set of programmes in order to meet the objectives that are framed. Quality education requires valorisation and recognition of the importance of all the components of the educational process, and in particular concerns a learner and learning friendly environment, relevant curriculum and teaching learning materials, and participatory learning techniques. A new policy, with the content covering life skill orientation, is the need of the hour.

REFERENCE

1. Flaviocomim, Mozaffarqizilbash and Sabinaalkire (Eds.), The Capability Approach: Concepts, Measures and Applications, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2008.
2. Martha C. Nussbaum, "Capabilities as Fundamental Entitlements: Sen and Social Justice", *Feminist Economics* 9 (2-3), 2003, pp33-59.
3. Sen A K, *Inequality Re-Examined*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1992.
4. Sen A K, *Development as Freedom*, OUP, Oxford, 1999.
5. Séverine Deneulin and Lila Shahani (Eds.), *An Introduction to the Human Development and Capability Approach: Freedom and Agency*, Earthscan, UK, 2009.
6. Séverine Deneulin, *The Capability Approach and the Praxis of Development*, Palgrave MacMillan, New York, 2006.
7. UNESCO, *The Dakar Framework for Action*, UNESCO, Paris, 2000.
8. United Nations, *UNESCO Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development*, UN, New York, 2005.