3 Equity in Education

Equal Opportunities for What?

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In transnational policy strategies, organisations such as the European Union (EU) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) are well aware of every nation's need for both well-educated citizens and a sense of cohesion in society. The OECD (2018a, p. 3), for example, stated thus: 'we are committed to helping every learner develop as a whole person, fulfil his or her potential and help shape a shared future built on the well-being of individuals, communities and the planet' as a response to the identified environmental, economic and social challenges which are in front of us. Both broad visions and high goals are expressed in political visions and frameworks for education as a policy field. However, what would actually be required to make visions a reality is a completely different matter. In this chapter, I take the term *every learner* as a starting point for an analysis of how the research field of curriculum theory can include the concept of equity as a substantial perspective for the understanding of education at different levels of a national school system, from both institutional and individual perspectives. In the introductory section, the multifaceted meaning of the concept of equity is exemplified. In the two following sections, the two frameworks of justice – the capability approach and the principle of parity of participation – are introduced. In the fourth section, a perspective of equity for compulsory education is elaborated. In the fifth and final section, the combination of two concepts of equity is discussed for the covering of different perspectives of equity in a national school system.

The Contingent Meaning of Equity

There is a clear distinction between the concepts of equality and equity in education. *Equality* refers to offering the same resources and opportunities for all individuals across a school system. Despite differences in gender, socioeconomic class or ethnicity, all students should have the same access to public resources and welfare services, such as schooling. The aim of equality is achieved when opportunities are equal for all groups of students. In contrast, *equity* represents a system for redistribution of common goods to compensate for inequalities and to enhance the chances for each individual to get the same opportunities as other individuals in society. An equitable system provides compensating resources for those who need further support so that each student can reach his or her social and intellectual potential. Since education should be adapted to students' individual needs, justice is

linked to quality of education (Jurado De Los Santos et al., 2020). From a neoliberal point of view, equity is about getting the opportunity to choose one's own path to enter the working life. From a social justice point of view, in contrast, equity is about receiving the resources needed for compensation for structural or other inequalities. While the neoliberal view of equity is centred on educating citizens as a workforce, the social justice view of equity is centred on educating citizens to get equal chances in life.

In a literature review on educational research on equity, the meaning of equity in different periods was categorised. In the years around 2010, educational research on equity was mainly linked to mathematics and gender. During the following four years (2012–2016), equity was related to gender, social justice and race in educational research. In the two years thereafter, research on equity focused on school improvement, access to education, student disabilities, race and teacher attitudes (Jurado De Los Santos et al., 2020). The research overview shows that the concept of equity is balancing between aspects of social justice on the one hand and aspects of outcomes-based governing of the school on the other hand.

When the OECD has compared different national school systems from an aspect of equity, the indicators are based on the relationship between students' knowledge outcomes and socioeconomic statuses. A school system exhibits a higher degree of equity when the differences between students' outcomes can be explained by other factors than socioeconomic positions – that is, when socioeconomic differences affect students' results only to a small extent. According to the OECD (2018b), the impact of socioeconomic factors varies between countries; however, no country has a totally equitable school system. The OECD has admitted that equity is a complex concept. Nevertheless, the OECD (2018c) claimed that its Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) measures equity in education through two related principles: inclusion and fairness. *Inclusion* means that all students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, have access to high-quality education and attain at least a basic level of approved skills. *Fairness* refers to the realising of every student's potential by removing obstacles to equal access to educational resources and school environments. Thus, in the OECD educational policy, there is a field of tension between the meaning of equity as reaching a minimum level of knowledge and as realising one's individual potential.

In Swedish educational policy, two policy concepts differ from the terms used internationally. Instead of the internationally most commonly used concept of *competence*, the concept of *ability* is used throughout the Swedish curricula. In addition, the concept of *equivalence* in Sweden replaces the international designation of *equity*. The concept of equivalence has a long-standing tradition in Swedish educational policy tradition. In the middle of the 20th century, the term *equivalence* denoted the fact that all Swedish schools had the same economic resources distributed by the state in a state-run school system. From 1991 onwards, after the decentralisation of the responsibility of the Swedish schools to municipalities and private school

providers, the meaning of the concept of equivalence shifted over time. Broadly speaking, equivalence means that all students work in accordance with the same curriculum goals and that all students have access to a quality of education leading to at least the basic level of approved knowledge. In the preparatory work for the current Education Act, the Swedish government has explained that '[a]ll school organisers must therefore offer education of such quality that children, young people and adults are given equivalent opportunities to achieve the goals of the education' (Government Proposal 2009/10:165, p. 203). This explanation indicates that schools should offer education of equivalent, but not necessarily identical, quality and value. When the government applies the concept of equivalence to the national grading system (Government Proposal 2009/10:165), the meaning instead designates uniformity.

During the past decade, the Swedish policy has focused strongly on equivalence of grading. The assumption is that if teachers differ in their assessments of the same national tests, there is a lack of adequate equivalence in the national grading system. A possible solution to the problem of discrepancies between different teachers' assessment, as discussed by the Swedish National Agency for Education (NAE, 2020), was that teachers should not be allowed to assess their own students in national tests and that the outcomes of national tests should have a regulatory effect on the grades the teacher may give the students. The trend to interpret the concept of equivalence in terms of *uniformity* risks constraining teachers' professional agency and the public trust in the teacher profession. Taken together, the concept of equivalence tends to move along a scale of interpretation, from corresponding value in the one pole of a continuum to uniform value at the other pole.

A conclusion to be drawn from this brief overview is that policy concepts chosen at the international and national policy levels are neither neutral in their interpretation nor interchangeable. The selected concepts imply underlying assumptions concerning the meaning of a fair education system. A search on the combination of *education* and *equity* on the Web of Science resulted in 9,498 hits (in April 2021), while the combination of *education* and *equivalence* resulted in only 992 hits. These results imply that choosing 'national' concepts of equity both permits 'own' interpretations and makes it possible for Sweden to stand to the side in the international public mainstream debate.

A Problematisation of the Meaning of Equity in Education

In an overview of the historical meaning of equity in England, Unterhalter (2009) distinguished between *equity from below*, *equity from above* and *equity from the middle*. By tracing the meaning of equity back to the 14th century, Unterhalter noted that the term *equity* signifies a virtue people do or perform. Equity from below is about everyday relations of respecting each other across our differences. 'Equity from below thus takes seriously aspects of

personal heterogeneity both in circumstances and in conceptions of a good life' (Unterhalter, 2009, p. 418). In the 16th century, an additional meaning of equity emerged in terms of law regulations of natural rights handled in specific courts. Equity from above represents a legal regulation of ideas of rights and fairness. From the 18th century, finally, a third meaning of equity was added to the former two through the emergence of capitalism. At that time, economic resources became linked to social arrangements, where equity was not an expression of individual virtues but rather the flow of money in society.

The three meanings of equity can be applied to education at three different levels: first, equity from below concerns treating all individuals respectfully and on equal terms in a school's daily activities. Equity from above is manifested in the regulations that govern a school's education, while equity from the middle is associated with resources and the efficiency of education (Unterhalter, 2009). These three interrelated levels can contribute to analyses of equity in national school systems by highlighting aspects of equity significant at different levels. In the following, two different approaches of equity are introduced. The capability approach understands equity mainly from the perspective of the individual, while the principle of participation interprets equity from a societal perspective.

Education and the Capability Approach

With some modification, you can, with Martha Nussbaum (2011, p. 59), pose the questions 'What are students actually able to do and to be?' and 'What real opportunities for activity and choice has society given them?' According to Nussbaum, the capability approach developed by Amartya Sen (1999) and herself is closely allied with the international human rights movement. The capability approach grounds its justifications of rights on the fact of being born, and it articulates a clear relationship between human rights and human dignity as well as between human rights and duties. Nussbaum (2007, 2011) differed to some extent from Sen in her view of the connection between human rights and the capability approach; Nussbaum linked the capability approach more closely to human rights than Sen (2005) did. The controversy between Nussbaum and Sen revolved around the issue of formulating a list with ten points regarding central capabilities that each government must assure its residents reach. Nussbaum (2007) argued that capabilities should be understood as ways of realising a life with human dignity and that the list of the ten central human capabilities includes the different areas of life in which people typically engage. In Nussbaum's (2011) suggested list, education was included under the item *Senses, imagination, and thought*, based on the argument that the capacity to think and reason needs to be informed and cultivated by an adequate education. Sen's (2005) objection to a list of key capabilities was based mainly on his emphasis on the importance of public reasoning. The framework of capabilities, Sen argued, helps evaluate opportunities for different

groups and individuals through continued public reasoning. Thus, it is a question for public debate if there is a need for a list of rights or not and, if so, what items a list should include. Another objection from Sen (2005) was that even if human rights and human capabilities in a sense have common motivations, they also differ in some distinct ways. Many aspects of human rights can be adequately discussed from a capability perspective. While the opportunity aspect of freedom belongs to the area of individual capabilities, this approach has less to say about processes of fairness and equity at a social level.

The basic idea of the capability approach is to highlight the individual's opportunity to actually achieve the combination of functionings he or she has reason to value. Here, *functionings* means what a person is able to do or to be. A central aspect of the capability approach as an analytic framework is its sensibility for individual differences of opportunities. Such differences emerge, for example, as a consequence of physical or mental heterogeneities, variations in social resources, environmental differences and positions related to social contexts. The meaning of *freedom* is linked to the freedom to choose among desirable functionings and the freedom to combine these functionings in a set of capabilities that the individual values. Thus, a *capability* reflects the alternative combinations of possible functionings, and without these alternative opportunities, there is no freedom (Sen 1999, 2005). Freedom includes an 'ethical individualism' in the sense of a normative consideration of the effects for each individual affected, since individuals are the primary moral concern. Accordingly, evaluating capabilities, rather than outcomes or resources, shifts the attention of analysis from average values to the evaluation of 'real' individuals' opportunities to choose what they have reason to value. The difference between capability and functioning can be described as a difference between potential and outcome. Two students can reach the same knowledge outcomes (functionings), but the process to get there or the opportunity to use the outcomes for the future may differ a lot between the two students, which means that their potentials (capabilities) differ. The reason to evaluate capabilities instead of functionings is that a focus on capabilities reveals differences related to social justice. According to Walker and Unterhalter (2007), the opportunities for individuals to reach functionings and form capabilities can be amplified by social resources and social arrangements. Sen termed these combinations of social resources and individual potentials *conversion factors*, while Nussbaum used the term *combined capabilities*.

To examine aspects of education from a capability approach, Unterhalter and Brighouse (2007) developed a model based on three different values embedded in education. First, education has an instrumental value that concerns what individual students have the chance to learn at school and the implications of achieving certain levels of knowledge. A second, overlapping field is the intrinsic value that emphasises the potential for self-development and self-realisation through education. The intrinsic values highlight desirable

functionings in terms of personal development that cannot be directly linked to improved material or meritocratic prospects. Positional values, finally, are about an individual's success relative to others.' Achieved grades is a typical example of a positional value because it can enable a student to continue to study in a programme he or she values. Positional values also comprise 'cultural' values such as gender and ethnicity, revealing otherwise often invisible forms of discrimination.

The capability approach does not offer detailed indicators for measuring. The evaluation rather includes students' personal experiences and stories of freedom to achieve the functionings they are striving for and to form the set of capabilities they have reason to value. The central interest is evaluation of effects of social structures for each individual or group of individuals. The policy from above is not only about offering access to education. It should also provide resources that make it possible for each individual to actually come to school – for example, by the arrangements of school transport or resources for material equipment. What it means to experience equity from below is clarified when listening to individual stories about opportunities to gain access to and be able to succeed within the education that the individual appreciates.

In Table 3.1, the three different values of education developed by Unterhalter and Brighouse (2007) are combined with functionings of education – that is, the actual outcomes that can be achieved through schooling – alongside the capabilities to which the combination of different functionings can lead.

Table 3.1 A framework for analysis from the perspective of capability approach based on Unterhalter (2009) and Unterhalter and Brighouse (2007)

**Analysis of equity from an individual perspective:
the capability approach on education**

	Functionings	Capabilities
Instrumental values	- real access to adequate education	- education leading to expanded opportunities in life
Intrinsic values	- access to education involving elements of engagement, critical reflections and deliberations	- education as an expansion of personal growth
Positional values	- access to formal competence and positions - cultural recognition	- cultural recognition - freedom to participate in community - freedom to combine different aspects of life

The capability approach is relevant when exploring what aspects of reality primarily influence students' individual experiences of school and how individual students consider their actual chances of success in their education. While the capability approach creates a 'thick' account of matters of concern for reaching equity from an individual perspective, it has less to say about the policies, processes and structures that improve equity and remove obstacles in the education system as a whole. In contrast, Nancy Fraser (2008) has developed a multidimensional social theory of justice focused on an institutional level, which includes the allocation of resources, recognition across social and cultural differences and participation on equal terms in community.

Education and the Principle of Parity of Participation

The conceptualisation of redistribution, recognition and participation within political philosophy offers a complementary framework for analyses of equity, taking the institutional dimension into consideration (Fraser, 2004). The terms *justice* and *equity* are here understood as synonymous, although Fraser primarily used the term *justice*.

Fraser (2004, 2008) suggested the principle of *parity of participation* for the understanding of justice. In this principle, Fraser brought together two dimensions included in the meaning of justice: redistribution and recognition. Redistribution concerns distributive justice in terms of economic resources where inequality results in poverty, class differences and large differences in financial resources for different groups in society. Recognition concerns the cultural status order of society where inequality results in disrespect, cultural imperialism and status hierarchy. According to Fraser (2004, 2008), the two dimensions of redistribution and recognition are intertwined in reality but analytically separated. A critical approach to recognition includes an understanding of recognition that can be defended only because it can be combined with a social policy of equality, Fraser (2003) argued. Hence, the dimensions of redistribution and recognition should be understood as interrelated and with a need for balance between the two. The third dimension, representation, denotes a political dimension of justice alongside the economic and cultural ones (Fraser, 2008). Representation includes both the first-order level in terms of political voice and democratic accountability and a meta level on how boundaries and frames are drawn in society. Taken together, the three dimensions of redistribution, recognition and representation aim at viewing justice as a principle of parity of participation (Fraser, 2008). A principle of parity of participation requires social arrangements that enable people to interact with one another as peers in social life. Two conditions are required to meet the principle. First, the distribution of material resources needs to ensure participants' mutual independence and opportunities to have a 'voice.' Second,

institutionalised values need to encompass equal respect for all and ensure equal opportunities for participants to achieve social appreciation. Fraser (2004) understood *recognition* as a question of social status that invites each individual to act as partners on equal terms in social interactions. Thus, *misrecognition* means social subordination by preventing individuals from participating as peers in social interactions. Fraser termed this meaning of recognition a *status model of recognition*, in which equity of recognition is understood as reciprocal recognition and status equality. Misrecognition, however, is understood as subordination conveyed by institutionalised patterns of cultural value that impede parity of participation. The principle of parity of participation aims at offering an analytic vocabulary leading, in turn, to removing obstacles in social arrangements. However, how individual social situations should be judged in terms of justice is a question for continuous public debates and deliberations.

Understanding equity from a perspective of redistribution, recognition and participation means moving the focus beyond individual capabilities to institutionalised conditions. Redistribution in the context of education is about access to qualified teachers and material equipment such as schoolbooks and computers with internet connection. As Lingard and Keddie (2013) emphasised, distributive principles are also included in the dimension of intellectual quality of education. An emphasis on intellectual demandingness and rigour in education, as critical reflections and deep understanding in the study of a subject, creates environments that support distributive justice in the sense that less privileged students can achieve intellectual qualities and grades to eventually gain greater access to the material benefits in society. The dimension of recognition is embedded in the creation of a learning environment which supports relevant and meaningful learning for all students, including those who experience themselves or are perceived by others as marginalised. Social values in relation to social class, ethnicity, gender, disability, sexuality and their intersectionality are subjects of critical reflections in terms of both teaching content and frames of reference that students bring to class. The recognitive perspective seeks to destabilise inequitable status hierarchies of cultural value. The dimension of participation was transferred by Lingard and Keddie (2013) to the area of education by emphasising the need to create democratic and inclusive spaces in learning environments where respectful relations are encouraged. These spaces reflect representative justice insofar as all students have the right to have a voice and get the opportunity to develop their sense of autonomy.

In Fraser's three-dimensional model of parity of participation through equitable distribution of resources and social status in terms of recognition, equity in education can be analysed from an institutional level (the policy, regulation and organisation of schooling), the programmatic level (the structure and content of curriculum and guidelines) or at a classroom level (the actual classroom activities). See Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 A framework for analysis of equity in education, based on Fraser's (2004) principle of parity of participation

Analysis of equality: the principle of parity of participation					
		<i>Distribution of resources (the what of justice)</i>		<i>Recognition of cultural and social status (the who of justice)</i>	<i>Participation as peers (the how in justice as action)</i>
Societal level	-	material and organisational resources	-	the status in society	- a sense of autonomy within community
Programmatic	-	access to norms and knowledge representing cultural capital	-	the status of different cultures in curricula and regulations	- recognition of everyone's entitlement to have a voice
Classroom level	-	access to knowledge that counts as valuable	-	the individual status	- commitment of showing mutual respect

Evaluation of Equity – The Need for ‘Thick’ Investigation

Knowledge goals have increasingly been replaced by formulated standards and knowledge requirements in curricula because the concept of *goal* is assumed to be less powerful regarding the control of school. The logic of a performance-based curriculum is easy to understand: the curriculum includes standards for what knowledge the students should reach, and then you measure whether the requirements have been achieved. It speaks to common sense that it should be possible to guarantee certain knowledge to the students and to hold the school accountable for how well the requirements have been achieved. Evaluations in accordance with this approach look at the students' performances at a specific time, the same for all students, which makes it possible to compare students' performances synchronically across schools and diachronically over time. National and international knowledge tests are based on this performance-based logic. The input of the evaluation is in the school activities throughout a country, while the output is the students' knowledge achievements at a certain point of time. Even if criticism of the simplified logic of the model has been known for a long time (Entwisle & Conviser, 1969), it is still commonly used, with the PISA survey as one of the most prominent examples.

Classroom studies from high- and low-performing schools, which form the basis of the chapters in this book, tell an entirely different story. The ‘input’ in terms of the schools' social and economic resources, quality of education and proficiency in using the language vary a lot between schools and classrooms. The similarity in terms of uniformity is represented only when it comes to

the measurement of knowledge in national tests; in that phase all are evaluated according to the same measuring instrument. While the parameters differ largely at the input phase, they are identical on the evaluation at the output phase of the model. These knowledge tests give an indicator on something, but it is unclear on what. Is it the need for clearer standards, for more resources, for better-qualified teachers, for less migration? The politicians who are supposed to respond with policy actions to the test results can cherry-pick among different desirable causes and actions in line with their party ideologies. However, if we really want to learn more about the input phase – that is, conditions influencing the daily work of the school before the tests – we need to complement a simple input-output model with other means for evaluation. Based on the assumption that fair inputs lead to fair results, it seems reasonable that such methods include the dimension of equity.

The concept of equity in education is currently not sufficiently addressed and developed in the European research field of curriculum theory. During the 1960s and 1970s, Bernstein (2000) developed a rigorous framework of the pedagogic device, which is useful for detailed studies on discourses of knowledge and access to different forms of knowledge for different social groups from a structural perspective (e.g. Wahlström et al., 2020; Loughland & Sriprakash, 2016). However, the concept of equity is not explicitly emphasised. In contrast, curriculum research in North America has shown a longstanding interest for questions of equity, specifically with a focus on lived curriculum from a personal perspective within a phenomenological research tradition. According to this perspective, it is in the lived experience of curricula, rather than the planned, that a curriculum is felt, enacted and reconstructed (e.g. Pinar, 2011; Craig, 2020). Australian researchers have discussed equity in relation to the structure of curriculum content (Luke et al., 2013). They argue that education systems should hold on to their meritocratic ideals – that students should have the opportunity to reach their learning potential, regardless of socioeconomic or other contextual or individual differences. The relation between a school system and its students and their families and communities ‘should be based on the democratic right to achieve at least a threshold level of knowledge, skills and dispositions that will enable effective and useful citizenship’ (Luke et al., 2013, p. 14). To enhance equity, the technical form of curricula must support teacher professionalism at all levels, which means that curricula should provide a map rather than a standardised and prescriptive template, since the latter risks constraining a teacher’s informed professionalism.

With reference to Luke et al. (2013, p. 35), in order to promote justice, syllabus documents should preferably include the following components: (i) core knowledge, skills and competences as aspirational targets; (ii) a professional vocabulary for standards; (iii) a delimited and well-defined testing-and-examination system; (iv) development of teacher professional competence for the enhancement of local school- and classroom-based curriculum-planning-and-assessment practice; and (v) a strong equity focus on the learning needs and challenges for students from socioeconomically marginalised communities. From a curriculum theory perspective, a basic

assumption concerning equity is that a curriculum needs to support, but not take over, the role of the teacher as the ultimate representative of equitable education at the school and classroom level. This means that equity cannot be understood as identical resources for all students but rather as an adaptation to the needs of individual students to achieve basically the same knowledge. Crucial formulations of guidelines for equitable curriculum in this respect are as follows:

- ‘aspirational targets’ instead of standardisation and knowledge requirements
- an emphasis on common professional vocabularies and standards for teaching and assessment practices rather than standardised tests
- a clearly expressed responsibility for teachers to conduct classroom activities characterised by mutual respect and to take the needs of the students as their starting point for teaching

Equity on Different Levels in a National School System

Within curriculum theory, the basic levels of analyses of school policies and their implications are the societal level, the programmatic level and the local classroom level (Deng & Luke, 2008; Wahlström, 2020). The societal level denotes the general opinion in society concerning the purpose and benefits of school, education and knowledge, which ultimately sets the limits of what kind of educational policy reforms become possible to implement in a society. The societal level is permeated by social, historical and cultural traditions that define the direction towards the future; that is why it is complicated to transfer an educational policy from one country to another. National politicians and policy-makers operate at the societal level. When national policies are decided at the societal level, they are implemented on the programmatic level in terms of, for example, the Education Act, curricula, guidelines and distribution of resources. At the local school and classroom levels, finally, the policy is recontextualised into actual teaching and learning activities. The levels of analysis in curriculum theory correspond well with Unterhalter’s (2009) framework for analyses of equity from above, from the middle and from below. Depending on the focus of evaluation, the aspect of equity can be analysed at different levels in a national school system.

The principle of parity of participation developed by Fraser (2004, 2008) and the capability approach developed by Sen (1999, 2005) and Nussbaum (2007, 2011) have different analytic perspectives on justice. While Fraser’s conceptualisation of equity in terms of redistribution, recognition and participation explores the institutional dimensions and their implications at different levels of a school system, the capability approach examines the consequences of educational policy for individuals at each level from a bottom-up perspective. Due to their different points of departure in the institutionalised rules and patterns and in the individuals’ experiences of the system, respectively, the two approaches of evaluation of equity complement each other. In Table 3.3, the different levels of equity (Unterhalter, 2009) and different

Table 3.3 A framework of curriculum theory and equity based on an institutional perspective in the principle of parity of participation (Fraser, 2004) and on an individual perspective in the capability approach (Sen, 2005; Nussbaum, 2011)

Curriculum theory and equity:	Instrumental values (<i>what the student gets the opportunity to learn from education</i>)		Intrinsic values (<i>who the person gets the opportunity to become</i>)		Positional values (<i>how and where the student has the opportunity to participate</i>)	
	<i>The principle of parity of participation</i>	<i>The capability approach</i>	<i>The principle of parity of participation</i>	<i>The capability approach</i>	<i>The principle of parity of participation</i>	<i>The capability approach</i>
Societal level 'From above'	Equitable distribution of material, cultural and knowledge resources	Real access to high-quality education for each student	A policy for a broad view of knowledge, including democratic and aesthetic aspects	Access to a broad view of knowledge for each student, including democratic and aesthetic aspects	An education system based on meritocracy and social equality	Actual access to formal competence based on meritocracy and social equality
Programmatic level 'From the middle'	A rigorous view of academic knowledge 'for all' in curricula	Actual access to academic knowledge	Curriculum as a framework for professional planning and assessment of academic and aesthetic subjects	Adaptation of teaching in academic and aesthetic subjects to each student	Recognition of equal social status for different groups: in relation to curricula, guidelines and regulations	Positional and cultural recognition for each individual in relation to curricula, guidelines and regulations
Classroom level and beyond 'From below'	High-quality teaching for all students	Individual experience of high quality in the received education	Education that encourages personal commitment and critical reflections –matters of facts as matters of concern	Actual individual experiences of education encouraging commitment and critical reflections	Recognition of the entitlement of cultural recognition, freedom to participate in community and access to future formal positions	Individual experience of cultural recognition, actual freedom to participate in community and access to future formal positions

values of education (Unterhalter & Brighouse, 2007) are combined with an analytic framework developed within curriculum theory (Deng & Luke, 2008). Both frameworks of equity are represented at each level, because it is not the level of analysis in itself but rather whether the analysis concerns institutional or individual aspects that determines which approach is most suitable for the analysis. Each approach delivers different kinds of answers at each level.

Equity – An Urgent Concept in Educational Policy and Curriculum Theory Research

To promote belief in each student and intrinsic learning for all, evaluation of equity at different levels of the school system is of profound significance. The aspect of equity in education can be examined and discussed from both institutional and individual perspectives. Three different values of education are emphasised. The *instrumental* value accentuates the worth of knowledge and of being knowledgeable in a subject for future possibilities. The *intrinsic* value considers education as an end in itself, emphasising personal experiences and engagement through the teaching and learning activities. The *positional* value of education, finally, includes both the cultural recognition of being equal as peers and students at school and equal opportunity of future education or employment for the students.

Drawing on the model of justice developed by Fraser (2004, 2008), the economic, cultural and political dimensions of justice together constitute a three-dimensional framework of a principle of parity of participation. In an educational context, redistribution is about fair distribution of material resources for schooling and about meeting the needs of disadvantaged students through appropriate and adapted resources. Redistribution of resources also comprises high-quality teaching across different schools in a national school system. The concept of recognition draws attention to fair access to schools regardless of socioeconomic or cultural status and addresses the problem of school segregation. Representation, which Fraser (2004) also termed *participation*, entails a fair and equal right for all students to participate on equal terms in schoolwork, classroom discussions and fora for student discussions on school issues. The principle of parity of participation addresses the educational arrangements, aiming at elucidating possibilities and obstacles in school as an institution.

In an evaluation on educational equity for each individual, the capability approach of freedom and justice developed by Sen (1999, 2005) and Nussbaum (2007, 2011) is more suited. The focus in the capability approach is what actual functionings students have the opportunity to achieve regarding the instrumental, intrinsic and positional values of education. Does each student have a real opportunity to learn the knowledge stipulated in the curriculum? Does each student get the opportunity to actually develop his or her personal potential through the meeting with different subject matters and different forms of teaching? Does each student get an equal right to cultural and

social recognition and access to further education? However, it is not the individual functionings – that is, what different knowledge and skills the individual has achieved – that are central in the capability approach. Rather, the central interest is captured in the question of whether the combination of functionings in education and social life leads to a set of capabilities which offers each individual the opportunity to live the kind of life he or she has reason to value.

There is an advantage in utilising both institutional and individual perspectives, either separately or in combination, to explore factors of equity in school systems beyond knowledge tests easy to measure. Due to the complementing perspectives of the two frameworks, a starting point in the individually based capability approach will probably lead over to issues of redistribution and recognition when it comes to measures. The opposite is also true. In order to take measures implemented at the organisational level seriously, they should also be evaluated at the individual level to give an idea of whether the measures have had the intended effect. From a curriculum theory perspective, the starting point for equity in education is the belief in the students and their ability to contribute with their experiences for the shaping of good learning environments. To really follow up the educational situation from an individual viewpoint, regarding what functionings a student has achieved and plan to achieve and to relate the outcome of these individual functionings with the student's desired capabilities, provide deep insights into what factors are important for developing equitable knowledge conditions from a student perspective. Based on an understanding of learning as an interactive – rather than as an intrinsic – development, improving qualities in the teaching and learning environment have great potentials to make a difference for the individual student.

Within a curriculum theory tradition, the aspect of equity can be explored and discussed from an institutional/societal level, from a programmatic level of regulations and guidelines, from a classroom level or from a combination of these levels. At each level, equity can be interpreted from the perspective of the individual or from the perspective of school as an institution. In international and national education policy introduced in the beginning of the chapter, the interest of equity is directed towards institutionalised arrangements in the school system. It is clear that the OECD (2018a) educational policy shows an interest in the aspect of redistribution of economic resources across the school system. This aspect is also possible to evaluate and compare within and across national school systems. There is also an international policy interest in education as an arena for self-actualisation, balancing the economic value of education for a nation with a personal dimension of individual benefits. Both aspects can be linked to the instrumental and positional values of education. In the case of Sweden, focusing on equivalence in education, the redistribution aspect of resources and the instrumental values of education are at the centre of the debate. However, what is consistently subordinated in the education policy debate is the intrinsic value of education. Neither is the social and cultural equality of students within and between schools sufficiently addressed.

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