

# Education, Freedom, and the Greater Common Good

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## Abstract

This paper discusses the tension between the sociopolitical ideals of freedom and the greater common good within the discursive sphere of education. In prescribing ways to resolve this tension I expound on Amartya Sen's capability approach as theoretical framework. I first present an expository discussion of the tension between the ideals of freedom and the greater common good within the broader sociopolitical context, as exemplified in the conflict between utilitarianism and liberalism. I then present a theoretical sketch of the idea of education as capability, which applies Sen's capability approach as framework to resolve the conflict between the ideals of freedom and the greater common good in education. The philosophy of education as capability is geared towards the development and enhancement of individual and collective capabilities that give students reason to value their individual and collective lives. Freedom as universal and basic to human beings is one of the foundational principles underlying the notion of education as capability. It encompasses the idea that individual freedom, as well as the associated ideals of justice and fairness which enable individual liberties, are essential constitutive elements of human capability and crucial in the development and enhancement of life. I conclude with an examination of the feasibility of actual educational practice based on Sen's capability approach.

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Keywords: Amartya Sen, capability approach, common good, education, freedom

## Introduction

Must education advance the greater common good or promote instead the individual liberties of students?

This paper discusses the tension between two important sociopolitical ideals – freedom on one hand, and the greater common good, on the other – within the discursive sphere of education. I show this by expounding on the specific tension between the utilitarian and liberal conceptions of justice. I argue that Amartya Sen’s capability approach can be used as theoretical framework to resolve this tension within the sphere of education. In characterizing Sen’s capability approach, this paper draws from works such as *Development as Freedom* (Sen, 1999), *Rationality and Freedom* (Sen, 2002), *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* (Sen, 2006), and *The Idea of Justice* (Sen, 2009).

The debate on which between the pursuit of individual good and that of the greater good of society is not new. Shernoff (2013), however, demonstrates that the seemingly contradictory pursuits of individual and social potentialities can be balanced.

Why should we be concerned about the tension between the sociopolitical ideals of freedom and the greater common good in the context of education?

Education has three dimensions, all of which are inextricably linked conceptually and practically to the ideals of freedom and the greater common good. First, education may be regarded as institutionalized educational practice involving schools, curricula, students, and of course, the practice of academic teaching. As a sociopolitical institution, therefore, education already has an inevitable affinity with broader sociopolitical concerns, of which the tension between the ideals of freedom and the greater common good is among the most prominent. Second, education can be conceived broadly in the context of human affairs and practices related to the development, enrichment, and empowerment of human capacities, not just intellectual. The development of capacities, in other words, is the ultimate aim of education (Kohlberg and Mayer, 1972). In this broad conception, education can be construed as the development, enrichment, and empowerment of human beings—a notion akin to what Aristotle considers as the primary guiding principle in defining what society and politics should pursue (human flourishing) (Suppes, 1996). Third, education may be conceived as a right, more particularly a universal right or entitlement common to all human beings. As such, society has the obligation to provide and protect it. The notion of education as right, as will be discussed subsequently, has strong conceptual roots based on broader notions of freedom and the greater common good.

But why is Amartya Sen's capability approach a plausible theoretical framework towards the resolution of the tension between freedom and the greater common good in education? Sen's capability approach is based on an integrative sociopolitical philosophy that expands the informational bases of both utilitarianism and liberalism, and takes into account deontological freedom and its consequences. Put simply, Sen's focus on human capabilities already invokes an affinity with the discursive sphere of education in a manner attuned to the three conceptions of education previously discussed. Sen's capability approach has been applied in a number of studies addressing various problems in the philosophy of education. Theoretical and empirical studies, for example, show that the capability approach can be a modality to reinforce the relationship between social justice and education (Walker and Unterhalter, 2007; Saito, 2003; Nera, 2015). This paper digresses from earlier works by explicitly employing Sen's capability approach as the main theoretical framework to address the tension between two broad sociopolitical ideals in the context of education.

The paper proceeds by first discussing the tension between freedom and the greater common good, using the conflict between utilitarian and liberal goals in education as takeoff. Afterwards, I discuss Sen's capability approach as a theoretical framework to resolve this tension. Finally, I expound and recommend ways by which an actual system of education practice based on Sen's capability approach may be realized.

## **Education and the Tension Between the Ideals of Freedom and the Greater Common Good**

The tension between freedom and the greater common good transcends rhetorical dualism. The conflict is deeply ingrained, even within the realms of philosophical discourse. To begin with, there is a logical conflict between individual freedom and social efficiency (Sen, 1970; see also Sen, 2002). Social choice cannot be logically derived from the preferences of individuals (Sen, 1999).

Another philosophical conflict can be found in the notion of education as right. Here, there are two polarizing notions—the deontological on one hand, and the teleological on the other. The deontological view asserts rights are valuable by themselves and should be protected regardless of consequences. The deontological view prescribes duty-based moral imperatives, such as Kant's (1993) deontology. The teleological concept of rights, on the other hand, insists rights are bound only by their consequences. The teleological view, in other words, looks at rights as purpose driven.

But there are digressions even among those who purport to espouse the same view. John Rawls (1993) and Robert Nozick (1974) are some of the main proponents of the deontological view. Proponents do not necessarily regard rights as absolute but they all agree that individuals must always be entitled to their rights, except in very few cases. For Rawls, an exception is when another person's right is violated in the exercise of one's right. For Nozick, an exception is when the exercise of a right results in catastrophic consequences. Similarly, Dworkin (1984) asserts a notion of rights as trumps against utilitarian criteria. Mackie (1984), for his part, conceives an account of morality based on the primacy of rights. This echoes Gewirth's (1984) view that there are exceptional rights that may be deemed absolute based on a standard of absolute morality. Nevertheless, there is consensus that rights are intrinsically valuable and holds primacy above other human concerns. A deontological conception of the right to education, therefore, asserts not only education's intrinsic value but the students' freedom to define their educational goals. The kind of educational practice based on this deontological view would emphasize the advancement of individual liberties.

The teleological concept of rights, on the other hand, links its exercise to utilitarian concerns. An important articulation is Jeremy Bentham's insistence that rights are nonsense and can only have meaning if codified in positive law and whose protection is based on utilitarian considerations (Waldron, 1984). A teleological notion of the right to education would assert that education is only valuable and must be guaranteed only if it brings the greater common good society needs. An educational practice grounded on this teleological conception would advance education towards a common good, regardless of whether or not individual liberties are undermined in the process.

The philosophical conflict between these two views have important implications on educational practice. Because their goals cannot be reconciled, education as practice becomes a switching game, shifting between the advancement of the greater common good and the promotion of the individual liberties of students. This opens up a number of philosophical questions. For instance, what should be the authoritative principle behind the mechanics of this switching game? Must educational philosophy strictly be a choice between these two goals?

## Pluralistic Theories of Rights

Some theorists find the deontological and teleological notions of rights too restrictive and propose pluralistic alternatives. Scanlon's (1984) two-tier view, for instance, takes rights seriously but emphasizes

their consequences as limits. This view is primarily a reaction to the utilitarian doctrine which, for Scanlon, imposes an absolute requirement (the maximization of utility) that undermines individual agency and provides minimal or no protection from interference to agents. This is problematic from a perspective that regards rights as important because utilitarianism takes away control from individuals over things that matter. On the other hand, a view of rights that places exclusive and absolute priority on normative moral rights is also problematic because the impact of consequential concerns on things that matter is undermined. Scanlon's two-tier view is more concerned with the promotion and maintenance of an acceptable distribution of control over important factors (Scanlon, 1984). Here, an acceptable conception of rights should not only insist on the absolute value and inviolability of moral rights, but should give due consideration to what an individual considers valuable in life—the very reason why consequences are considered in the conception of rights in the first place.

Raz (1984) also criticizes rights-based moral theories as narrow and individualistic accounts of morality in the sense that they do not give due regard to the significance of ordinary actions (apart from the duties that protect individual rights) and ignore the moral weight of extraordinary actions such as heroism, virtue, and excellence. Raz distinguishes between moral individualism, a characteristic of narrow rights-based moral theories, and personal autonomy, which empowers a person to live a life consistent with values and ideals.

These theories point to the limitation or the narrowness of both deontological theories of rights, such as rights-based moral theories, as well as teleological theories of rights, such as those anchored in utilitarianism. They also shift focus towards the lives of individual persons and what they value.

### **Amartya Sen's Capability Approach**

In *Development as Freedom*, Amartya Sen came up with an alternative conception of social development that emphasized not only the importance of education but also highlighted education's role in the broader notion of collective development. Interestingly, Article 26 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* stipulates that "education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality."

Sen introduces the idea of informational bases. Sen argues that every evaluative judgment, say, whether education should advance the greater common good or promote the individual liberties of students, must be in consideration of a specific information base.

Thus, in examining the reasonability or acceptability of a particular evaluative judgement, it is important to consider not only the information that were included but also those excluded in making the evaluative judgement (Sen, 1999). Sen believes utilitarianism and libertarianism are based on limited or narrow informational bases. Utilitarianism is based on utility while libertarianism is based on the absolute primacy of rights. Each makes evaluative judgments of justice that excludes important valuations of human affairs (e.g., the normative force of moral rights in the case of utilitarianism, and consequentialist considerations in the case of libertarianism). Thus, Sen espouses the expansion of informational bases to resolve the logical incompatibilities between the primacy of society and the individual, between the deontological and the teleological, and between concerns of efficiency versus individual freedom.

Education provides a common ground for such expansion but there is need to shift its focus to the humanity of its subjects. Sen believes development must be about enhancing the lives we lead and the freedom we enjoy (Sen, 1999) and in the expansion of the capabilities of persons to lead the kind of lives they value (Sen, 1999). These assertions are not even new. For instance, Aristotle long preached about the ideas of 'flourishing' and 'capacity.' These ideas, in turn, inspired Adam Smith to contemplate about the conditions of living and its necessities a couple of centuries later.

Sen (1999) believes human beings place intrinsic value on freedom. This notion of freedom as inherent is not even a product of Western ideals but universal, as evidenced by efforts to advance freedom in ancient Asian historical accounts (Sen, 1999; Sen, 2006). Similarly, justice and fairness are genuine human ideals and not artificial conventions (Sen, 1999). Human beings and human societies have strong reasons to condemn gross injustices which are essentially consequentialist concerns. This is consistent with Sen's comparative approach to justice which argues that what the theory of justice demands is the reduction of clearly identifiable injustices, instead of the transcendental characterization of perfectly just institutions that citizens in a state can adapt in a social contract (Sen, 2009). Thus, the general overarching concern of developing and enhancing the capability of people to live actual lives and value those that matter, are not limited to universal human ideals such as freedom and justice but includes reasonable consequentialist considerations consistent with these human ideals.

In *Development as Freedom*, Sen believes freedom is a primary concern in the process of development because it measures whether or not there is progress in development (*evaluative reason*). Freedom

is also a requisite to the holistic agenda of development (*effectiveness reason*) (Sen, 1999). Freedom, in other words, is both constitutive of, and instrument to development (Sen, 1999). Because consequentialist concerns are also important, there is need to reconfigure the notion of development into a combination of foundational analysis and pragmatic use which in essence is what Sen's capability approach is all about. Sen (1999) also conceives a goal-rights system which incorporates the fulfilment of rights among other goals. This may be actualized by enhancing participatory freedom through public discussions and debates on matters of public concerns (Sen, 1999; Habermas, 1996).

### **Education as Capability**

The notion of education as capability is essentially a challenge to conventional conceptions that regard education simply as a right or as a means toward the achievement of a particular consequentialist aim. This is a critique of an educational philosophy whose objective or aim is detached from human subjects, whether the objective is the advancement of absolute rights that have primacy over everything else that matters to the individual, or the achievement of certain consequentialist goals regardless of the freedom of that individual.

Students who cultivate themselves through education are living individuals with their own unique set of values. The philosophy of education as capability is geared towards the development and enhancement of individual and collective capabilities that give students reason to value their individual and collective lives. Freedom as universal and basic to human beings is one of the foundational principles underlying the notion of education as capability. It encompasses the idea that individual freedom, as well as the associated ideals of justice and fairness which enable individual liberties, are essential constitutive elements of human capability and crucial in the development and enhancement of actual individual and collective lives. Since the primary concern is in enhancing the capabilities of human beings as the subject of education, freedom does not only pertain to formal freedom or to the process aspect of freedom such as the establishment of normative moral rights that are generally recognized and protected by positive law and allow human beings to enjoy freedom and rights. Freedom should also pertain to the opportunity aspect of freedom or access to real available opportunities for human beings to enjoy freedom and rights relevant to their personal or social circumstances (Sen, 1999).

Another important underlying principle in the concept of education as capability is the recognition that there are other important concerns and ideals apart from individual freedom which are important

in developing and enhancing the capabilities of students. Some of these concerns and ideals are consequentialist in character, such as the avoidance of gross injustice or any significant form of injustice, which is a concern that can be linked to both aggregative and distributive concerns of efficiency.

The philosophy of education as capability is ultimately concerned with the development and enhancement of the capabilities of students to live lives they value, both in the individual and collective senses. Education as capability regards the advancement of the individual liberties of students as vital to capability development and enhancement, and instrumental to the process of personal development. Education has failed if the individual liberties of students are not enhanced and promoted. Similarly, education cannot enhance the capability of students without the augmenting role of individual liberties. This is true even in the broader context of collective development, such as social development, which is Sen's primary preoccupation in *Development as Freedom*.

Certain individual liberties of students are regarded as having a foundational and normative forces independent of their consequentialist concerns. However, given that certain consequentialist concerns and ideals are also essential to the ultimate aim of developing and enhancing the capabilities of students, foundational individual freedom is aligned with the consequentialist goals that are reasonably important based on a synthesis of collective choices.

Under the philosophy of education as capability, a basic freedom that must be protected is the freedom of students, teachers, and other members of the educational community to communicate and participate in collective discourse. This is important because collective discussions not only help define the foundational normative forces of freedom but synthesize the important consequentialist considerations which are aligned with foundational freedom. Similarly, the process of internal reasoned discourse within the individual is an essential element in the overarching process of individual personal development and in the enhancement of individual capabilities. Educational practice based on education as capability, therefore, must ensure communicative and participatory freedom and develop in students the capability to use this freedom responsibly, both in terms of the process and the opportunity aspects.

### **Education as Capability vis-à-vis Major Educational Theories**

I now proceed to present a brief comparison of the philosophy of education as capability with some major educational theories

(Guttek, 1997). The traditional view of education is mostly represented by essentialist and perennialist theories. What this view shares with the philosophy of education as capability is its consequentialist and teleological character. From the perspective of capability, the main purpose of education is the enhancement of the capabilities of students to lead lives they value, the primacy of the humanity of the students, and the advancement of freedom, particularly the freedom to participate and engage in reasoned discourses.

Essentialist educational theories assert that the main purpose of education is to develop basic or essential skills and competencies which would equip students to become civilized and productive members of society. Perennialist educational theories, on the other hand, assert that the primary aim of education is the development of the universal human capacity for rationality, which would make students lead productive individual and social lives. All three educational philosophies assert that education has a main teleological or consequential reason but it is immediately apparent that the sort of teleological basis or consequential purpose that the philosophy of education as capability asserts is different from the essentialist or perennialist theories. Essentialism and perennialism are based on a foundational notion that is unchanging and universal. In essentialism, the foundational notion is the cultivation of essential or basic skills. In perennialism, it is the notion that human nature is based on the human capacity for rationality. Essentialism and perennialism as foundational notions, however, are based on narrow informational bases. As such, educational theories also tend to have narrow and rigid prescriptions to educational practice.

Critics of traditional educational philosophies have pointed out the authoritarianism of the teacher in the classroom, as well as the use of standardized rigid curricula and evaluation metrics. The narrow and rigid pedagogical guidelines and the imposing character of educational practice are some of the manifestations of these traditional educational philosophies. Although the view of education as capability also regards freedom as a universal human ideal that is both constitutive of and instrumental to education's aim to develop personal capability, the focus on participatory and communicative freedom and to reasoned discourse grounded on broad and comprehensive informational bases is geared towards ensuring that educational practice is not reduced to a narrow and rigid set of prescriptions. Since the foundational notions of traditional theories of education have limited informational bases, the associated consequential concerns (for instance, social progress and economic growth in some versions of essentialism, and the development of human capacity for reasonable problem solving in some articulations of perennialism) also tend to be limited and narrow.

The philosophy of education as capability promotes a reasonable dynamism in the individual and collective choices made with regards to educational practice. The ultimate consequential concern of the philosophy of education as capability—the development and advancement of human capabilities for people to lead meaningful lives—provides a more comprehensive context for evaluating the purpose of education (Piaget, 1998).

Another key difference between the view of education as capability and traditional educational theories is the focus on the individual freedom of students, which is not a priority or foundational concern for either essentialism or perennialism. Given its thrust to assimilate and accommodate a comprehensive range of valuational concerns, the view of education as capability cannot be exclusively categorized as teleological or consequentialist although evidently it has teleological or consequentialist features which it shares with essentialism and perennialism.

The philosophy of education as capability also shares similarities with the progressivist view of education in that it recognizes the primacy of students' individual liberties in the process of developing their capabilities. Likewise, progressivism promotes a holistic view of the human person, focusing not only on intellectual development but on physical and emotional well-being. In addition, William Kilpatrick's project method organizes the progressive education curriculum around four main types of activities which reflect diverse concerns in human affairs—the creative project, the appreciation project, the problem project, and the specific learning project (Gutek, 1997).

Moreover, Kilpatrick's model promotes democratic processes including academic discourse (Gutek, 1997). This emphasis on the diversity of human valuational concerns, as well as on reasoned discursive exercise in democracy, is consistent with the view of education as capability. However, since the progressivist movement in education is essentially a reaction against the traditional view, its philosophy also tends to be founded on a narrow and limited informational base that is inconsistent with the view of education as capability. For instance, the student-centered learning philosophy of progressivism tends to assign too much priority to the individual liberties of the learner to a point where other important valuations are undermined. These valuations include consequentialist and collective concerns that matter to the student as an individual. Thus, the progressivist educational movement is susceptible to the same criticisms thrown against liberalism, to which progressivism shares a great deal of theoretical affinity. Despite his criticism of the reactionary tendencies of some progressive educators, John Dewey's pragmatism places disproportionate favor on the value

of experience and the scientific method as the hallmark of educated rationality, undermining other possible aspects of human rationality. This perspective became one of the philosophical inspirations behind the progressivist philosophy of education.

Although the progressivist view of education has some component philosophies consistent with the view of education as capability, it is still a theory that is based on a limited informational base. This is in contrast to the idea of education as capability whose end is to expand the foundational informational bases, and to assimilate and accommodate a broad range of human valuational concerns as comprehensively as possible. Moreover, given progressivism's ideological affinity with liberalism, progressivist education tends to focus on the processes of progressive student-centered learning, rather than on actual opportunities that enhance students' capabilities to live the lives they desire – the underlying principle behind the idea of education as capability.

The view of education as capability also finds common ground in social reconstructionist theories of education, particularly in its concern with social and cultural crises linked to social justice. This is an important concern with respect to the educational objective of enhancing students' capabilities and freedom. However, social reconstructionism is likewise preoccupied with a narrow and limited set of concerns, particularly, the lag between technological development and social moral consciousness, the need for social reform, and the processes leading toward social change and reform. For sure, these are all important concerns and are essential in enhancing capabilities to lead lives which we consider to be worth living. Nonetheless, an exclusive preoccupation with a set of concerns with narrow and limited informational bases would still be inconsistent with the philosophy of education as capability.

Existentialist theories of education may also have some overlap with the philosophy of education as capability, particularly because of the primacy that existentialism puts on actual people and their actual lives, as well as on the fundamental emphasis on freedom and responsibility. Existentialism assigns very strong priority on individual self-definition so much that it undermines the importance of collective and social concerns which may be essential in the development of human capabilities. In construing a notion of what it means to be human based almost exclusively on the individual freedom to choose, other aspects of humanity such as human rationality, for instance, are undermined. Alas, despite the apparent humanizing and liberating thrust of existentialism in education, this too is based on a narrow and limiting informational base and is, therefore, not entirely consistent with the view of education as capability.

From the brief comparative study above, it can be said that the view of education as capability agrees with most major educational theories in their integration of important concerns associated with the development of human capability into educational philosophy and educational practice. Education as capability, however, deviates from these theories' narrow and limited informational bases which tend to assign utmost priority to certain important concerns at the expense of equally important issues. This is probably the reason why the educational theories discussed previously are thought to be in conflict with one another.

The philosophy of education as capability can be construed as an attempt to reconcile the conflicts among these educational theories. This should not come as a surprise because the whole motivation to explicate a theory of education as capability comes from an attempt to resolve a conflict between the two objectives or aims of education. It is driven practically by the need to weigh between advancing the greater common good and promoting the individual freedom of students.

### **Education as Capability – Summary of Foundational Principles**

Admittedly, the theoretical sketch of education as capability presented earlier is still rough. Nevertheless, I argue it is possible to apply an educational philosophy that advances both individual freedom and the greater common good in actual educational practice. The simple characterization of the philosophy of education as capability is intended simply as an initial foray into a mechanism of reconciliation and how education can advance individual freedom without sacrificing the good of the larger community.

To reiterate, the following are the foundational principles behind the philosophy of education as capability:

1) Focus is shifted back to the actual human person, and away from ideals that are detached from the actual life of the human person.

2) The primary objective or aim of education is to develop and enhance the capabilities of students to enrich the actual lives they lead and value.

3) Freedom is regarded as a universal human ideal that is both constitutive of, and instrumental to individual and collective capability development.

4) Education as capability entails an expansive informational base, as comprehensive as possible to include the full range of important

concerns across all important human contexts of valuation, and reflect not only the diversity of individual human beings and the importance of collective and social values, but also the normative force of freedom and the associated ideals of justice and fairness. The undeniable significance of consequentialist concerns serves as the foundation of individual and collective choices within its educational practice.

5) These individual and collective choices in educational practice are made through the exercise of participatory and communicative freedom by all members of the educational community, by engaging in reasoned discourses synthesizing these choices.

### **Realizing Education as Capability in Actual Educational Practice**

What is the feasibility of actualizing education as capability in educational practice? This is a basic problem that must be addressed if the view has to have any real meaning. Can the philosophy of education as capability be integrated into educational practice in concrete terms?

The practice of education as capability can be integrated into the structure of institutional educational practice. Actual schools that espouse the philosophy of education as capability, with real students as well as real teachers and administrators, may be established. The mission and vision philosophies of these schools at the minimum should be founded on the fundamental principles of education as capability. Under this framework, administrators and teachers act primarily as developers and enhancers of the capabilities of the students. Nevertheless, it is possible that in the performance of their roles and in the process of engagements and interactions with their students, their own capabilities are also developed and enhanced. Schools that adopt this system will select administrators and teachers who themselves regard their practice of education as leading real lives that matter to them.

A school that operates based on the view of education as capability would have a 'hybrid curriculum' which combines standardized areas of study with elements of open and free education. The standardized areas of study would be directed towards the development and enhancement of certain basic capabilities and liberties, especially those that promote students' awareness of the process aspects of these capabilities and freedom. The elements of open and free education, on the other hand, would be geared towards empowering the students and providing them with actual opportunities to further enrich their capabilities towards leading lives that have meaning or value.

However, in order to ensure that the ‘hybrid curriculum’ of the school continues to be grounded on a comprehensive informational base, the school must have several external governing bodies comprised of members that reflect a diversity of human experiences and contexts of valuation. A substantial number of members in these external governing bodies must be students of the school. Likewise, the appointment procedure for membership to these governing bodies must be reasonable, just and fair, and must avoid any form of authoritarianism.

Since the school regards freedom as a universal human ideal, it must protect the basic human freedom to which the fundamental principles of the view of education as capability is anchored—the students’ freedom to live the lives they value. Thus, the school must strive to foster an environment free of all forms of unjust behavior such as the bullying and discrimination of members of religious and cultural minorities, gender-variant students, and differently-abled students. The school must foster an atmosphere of confidence in individuality on one hand, and a culture of tolerance and positive collaboration on the other. This kind of atmosphere and culture would emphasize not only the commitment to individual personal development but also the greater collective good. The commitment to justice and fairness must be fostered within the school and must also apply to standards of admission in order to accommodate students from an expansive diversity of backgrounds and experiences.

Because it is important to secure and develop the participatory and communicative freedoms of students, training on the development and enhancement of these freedoms must be started at an early age and must be included among the standardized areas of study in schools whose guiding principles are based on education as capability. Critical reasoning, as well as mastery of linguistic discourse, shall be promoted. Students who are not strongly inclined towards linguistic discourse, on the other hand, must be provided with ample alternative opportunities to participate and communicate in the synthesis of collective choices.

Another important inclusion into the standardized areas of study in the school is the study of freedom, which consists of the study of the theories essential towards the formation of an empowering normative notion of freedom, as well as the study of the pragmatic dimensions of how freedom can be cultivated toward enriching individual and collective lives. The various aspects and areas within the study of freedom, such as normative human rights, legal freedom, philosophy of freedom, and the likes, must be taught in a progressive manner starting at the early levels of education.

At the appropriate level, a significant portion of the important individual and collective choices in the school must be subjected to reasoned discourses and dialogue. For instance, matters such as the courses to be established, subjects to be taken, learning schedule and arrangements, reading materials to be included in class, learning methodology, evaluation metrics and methodologies in class, and other similar individual and collective choices may be subjected to consultation and debate which involves all members of the educational community—students, teachers, administrators, the external governing bodies, and even elements from the broader human society—minimizing, if not eliminating, any semblance of authoritarianism.

The actual opportunities for learning and capability enhancement founded on comprehensive informational bases must be available. The school should not be inclined only towards promoting a certain process of thought (e.g., the scientific method) but should provide ample opportunities for students to evaluate other processes and ways of thinking. Discussions should cultivate a healthy skepticism of established norms of thought and scholarship in order to train students to engage in critical thinking.

The actual lives of students extend beyond the school and it is most likely that aspects and factors outside the school influence very strongly the development and enhancement of capabilities that enable them to lead meaningful lives. This could well be the guiding principle behind the elements of open and free education within the ‘hybrid curriculum.’ The school must have strong linkages with other social institutions and entities that can provide it with extensive learning resources for the development of the capabilities of students. It would be essential to bring external elements of learning into the school, as well as to conduct a significant portion of learning in the larger society outside the school. Conceivably, the “from outside coming in” component can be conducted through fairs, expositions, and conferences. On the other hand, the “from inside going out” component can be conducted through immersion and outreach activities, as well as through internships. This would give students actual opportunities to employ their enhanced personal capabilities and freedom in order to advance greater collective capabilities. This in turn, would loop back and further enhance their individual capabilities.

I recognize that the speculative recommendations presented above in response to the question of realizability only trigger an even more expansive set of questions and potential recommendations with their own corresponding associated questions. I also recognize that drafting a sort of manifesto with the objective of concretely realizing the philosophy of education as capability would require a more

comprehensive discussion beyond the scope of this paper. Nonetheless, a discussion of some speculative recommendations suggests the drafting of such a manifesto is possible through a constructive process of reasoned discourse which ideally should involve a substantial group of reasonable individuals who bring with them a comprehensive set of diverse experiences, ideas, and perspectives. Such manifesto can provide the groundwork for a basic realization of an educational practice based on the philosophy of education as capability. In keeping with the fundamental principles of education as capability, the manifesto must allow reasonable review and appropriate revisions through the constructive process of reasoned discourse (Rawls, 1993; Habermas, 1996).

## Conclusion

This paper began with a question weighing the choice between two seemingly conflicting objectives of education—the advancement of the greater common good on one hand, and the promotion of the individual liberties of students on the other. Earlier, the paper argued that there is wisdom in reconciling these two seemingly opposing perspectives. To expound on the rationale, the paper discussed the roots of this conflict at two main levels of philosophical discourse. Afterwards, an argument in favor of the feasibility of reconciling the two sides was developed by challenging the assumptions arising from the philosophical conflict, drawing from Amartya Sen's capability approach and his concept of development as freedom as primary theoretical underpinnings. After asserting that a reconciliation of the two sides is feasible, this paper then presented a rough theoretical sketch of the view of education as capability as a response to the question of how education can advance both individual freedom and the greater common good. This exercise borrowed heavily from the major ideas presented by Sen in *Development as Freedom* and applied them in the context of educational philosophy and educational practice. Finally, in order to concretize the view of philosophy as capability and to answer the question of feasibility, some speculative recommendations were presented on how the philosophy of education as capability can be realized into actual educational practice. The drafting of a manifesto for concretizing the view of education as capability in actual educational practice, I argue, should be carried out through constructive reasonable discourse.

Concerns about how to reconcile individual liberties with the greater common good are important not only in the more general context of philosophical study in the humanities and social sciences, but also in the examination of many focal problems in the philosophy of education. The seeming conflict between individual liberties and the

greater common good is not an artefact of abstract philosophizing, but one that governs everyday choices we make as human beings.

There is strong validity in asserting the value of employing reasonable discourse grounded on broad and comprehensive informational bases in any philosophical undertaking pertaining to these concerns. Both individual liberties and the greater common good are valuable aspirations for every human person. Instead of being compelled to make a choice in the context of educational practice and broader social affairs, efforts must be directed towards reconciling these two ideals, both in concept and in reality.

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