

Social Sciences in India: Premises and Promises of Capability Approach

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Abstract

Social sciences in India are known for systemic lacunae. As this is in sharp contrast with the mainstream debates in knowledge society, the present article takes a retrospective look to analyze the premises and promises of capability approach in higher education. The central argument deconstructs the developmental complexities of social science scholarship in the neoliberal democracy.

Keywords

Social sciences, capability approach, human capital, neoliberalism, social stratification, structure, agency

Introduction

Higher education in India is marked by problems of capability as well as human capital formations.¹ This results in predicaments of employment in the system. A brief survey of literature on social sciences by this article reveals that developmental discourses are inadequately considered by research trends in the country (cf. Alvares, 2011; Bagchi, 1996; Balakrishnan, 2008; Pandian, 2002 among others). In this backdrop, the article highlights the marginal presence of capability approach (henceforth CA) in social sciences. Although very few CA-specific analyses have been undertaken, they generally fall under the domain of Economics. The absence of other perspectives including sociology is increasingly visible. Consequently, social sciences insufficiently address the issue of well-being. Thus, the central argument of the article highlights the need for CA-specific research works in India.

Though, theories of development beginning from the human capital approach (henceforth HCA) (Becker, 1964), the basic needs approach (henceforth BNA) (Streeten, 1971), human development (henceforth HD) (Fukuda-Parr & Shiva Kumar, 2003), and the CA (Sen, 1999) have consistently established the importance of education for growth, the policy elites in India have generally not showed scholastic interest on CA so far. Theoretical negligence goes hand in hand with national rhetoric in official documents. Though most of these documents beginning with Constitution affirm ideals of inclusive growth and socialism, the political economy is hegemonized by the neoliberal democracy today.

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Caste-based stratification along the social class dynamics furthermore re/produces this hegemony. The structural re/production is often 'ensured' in the rhetoric of distributive justice and inclusive growth. As the Indian state is merely a *crisis manager* (Mendelsohn & Vicziany, 1998, p. 147), the poorest socio-economic groups are often the sufferers of this reproduction. In this backdrop, CA as a normative framework could be a precious evaluative tool for the hierarchical social arrangements. Absence of research studies on this framework necessitates the possibilities for future works where they could theoretically suggest how agential functioning of education can successfully expand the individual capabilities for human development in the country. The increasing research trends on these lines can create a newer set of discourse in social sciences.

Social Sciences in India

Social sciences as a body of knowledge about society and the individual came into existence as a separate subject during the seventeenth century in Europe (Chalam, 2002a, p. 921). Although, historically, social sciences were developed at the country level and the focus of research was national (UNESCO & Elsevier, 1999, p. 11), the European influence is predominant across the world. In India, it started with the Western education mainly through the colonial British rule. The nature of social sciences in the pre-Independence era was almost entirely confined to the universities (Vaidyanathan, 2001, p. 112); it is consequently unable to occupy the central place in school education today. This produces a weak institutional base for its progress and growth in the country. The training of social scientists, for this reason, is still very much the task of universities (UNESCO & Elsevier, 1999, p. 147) where the underdevelopment has failed to attract the academically meritorious so far.

In India, although universities have remained as examination bodies for a long time (Chalam, 2002a, 922), social science research is increasingly dependent on project funding (N. Ghosh, 2008, p. 77). This, with few exceptions, has failed to create scholastic interactions between teaching and research. Thus, the disjunction between teaching and research institutionalizes a peculiar academic arrangement with 'disorderly growth (Beteille, 2005, p. 3377). The chaotic arrangement often circulates academics within their respective ivory towers. As a result, 'the worlds of research and action are far apart and the gulf shows no sign of narrowing' (Dreze, 2002, p. 817). Some scholars attribute this to the Eurocentric nature of social sciences (Alvares, 2011) which alienates 'the Indian intellectuals from the mass movements (Bhambhri, 1998, p. 18). For a similar reason, Guru complains that social science discourse 'is being closely disciplined by self-appointed juries who sit in the apex court and decide what is the correct practices according to the canons (Guru, 2002, p. 5004). Thus, the status of social sciences within the broader context of higher education is generally dismal.

In this background, the public demand for higher education, unlike other stages, is mostly in favour of state institutions in India. This is crucial when private players are entering the sector either through the public-private partnership (PPP) model or any other possible route.² However, the public demand in higher education in the country is in support of the state mainly because of the quality factors. This is interesting, whereas in elementary education, the 'collective will' of the public generally favours the private education providers. However, the essential caveat is that though the private sector has given market-centric curriculum and the advertisements of campus placements, it has generally failed to attract students so far. Except few institutions, most of the private colleges and 'deemed' to be universities are not yet the favourable destinations for students in higher education. Thus, the growing public apathy on school education which is followed by reduction in public expenditures at all levels of education indicates the absence of a clear coherent long-term policy perspective (Tilak, 2004, p. 2164) in the country.

The political economy in the name of diversity is liberalizing the higher education sector at present. In this context, socially marginalized will be the worst affected even if they get free basic education (Tilak, 1996). Hence, the systemic role in agency is merely re/producing unemployable educated individuals where the 'meritocratic' competitive capitalism 'practically' ostracizes them. In this systemic reality, the opening up of the higher education sector by gradually decreasing state responsibilities and reduced financial allocations (see Tilak, 1992, 1993, 1997), indicates that the state's commitment and political will is moving mainly towards corporate capitalism. The potential role for the emerging developmental paradigms seems to be not in favour of ensuring capabilities for the poor and marginalized as they cannot afford the exorbitant fee structure of these elite institutions. Hence, their social marginality will be furthered by opportunity deprivations. This, in a way, plays a functional role for the erstwhile higher castes and classes to maintain the 'structural' supremacy. The role and status in this process of social formation will be reproducing the status quo in a different form where the neoliberal education responds (cf. Tooley, 2004; Watkins, 2004) to the newer realities.

In this complex arrangement, the sectoral opening is seemingly commercialized to match the market requirements where the employment-centric model of education becomes important. The political economy undoubtedly is conscious of this where it facilitates this through various official Committees and the Commission.³ The emerging educative model structurally pushes the 'misfits' to the margin. The role of education with its differential outcome across diverse social groups reinforces a deprivation trap. However, this vicious cycle has been predominantly analyzed in the literature merely as the process of discrimination so far. In contrast, it is important to understand the subtleties of exclusion in education. The CA-led development studies could be a potential analytic lens, which can capture these subtler social processes.

Furthermore, the status and role of social sciences in the structural framework reproduces identical prides. The changing phases of caste system perpetuate the backwardness where its implications have mostly been overlooked. This is exceptionally crucial as 'fostering capabilities in higher education is a way to create change, to make futures and to strengthen agency' (Walker 2007, p. 145). In this background, the national reality is bleak where the social sciences are "still surviving mainly because of the university departments and undergraduate teaching in the affiliated colleges as they are the major employees of social science "outputs"" (Chalam, 2002b, p. 4080). Due to this, research works are a luxury (Ghosh, 2001, p. 528) where the mainstream researchers are generally pursuing a positivist model to establish the causalities of the variables. This could be due to the failure of the idiographic tradition in the neoliberal economic reality. This must also be seen in light of the unavailability of statistics in higher education. Though the statistical representation is merely an indication of social reality, it often misdirects the educational planners and policy makers in the country.

Human Capital Approach in India

In India, caste-based social stratification is an adequate illustration of enabling as well as disabling factor for capability formation. Despite being culturally similar, caste groups are socio-economically dissimilar even in the same area. This complexity provides a mixed reality where the differential social capital generally reproduces an identical social structure. In this status quoist reproduction, the ascriptive allocation of division of labour places people above or below according to their socio-economic positions. The lack of choice in opportunity-sets creates a structural inequality where the opportunity deficit increases the capability deprivation.⁴ Thus, an individual's status-positions are determined by his or her social capital. This, in general, is decided by their habitus in the stratification system. The denial of choice

and the opportunity deficits along the structural inequality, therefore, establish a vicious circle of capability deprivation. However, the mainstream social science research on these aspects analyzes mostly in terms of discrimination in India.

The conventional social science discourses are primarily led by economists in India. In this, the predominant arguments in education are on the investment-driven approach. These arguments often come under the utilitarian notions of HCA, which beholds employment as the central focus of education. This is seen, in light of the underdeveloped state of capability research, as facilitating the market role in education. Though conventional literature establishes the predominance of neoliberal realities in light of human capital ideals, the broader policy motives of the state given its primacy in decision-making could have understood the capability formations. This is crucial as the aim of policy '...is not to push people into achieving things or reaching states that valued by others but to give them the opportunities to achieve what they "have reason to" value' (Deneulin & McGregor, 2010, p. 507). In contrast, education policy is influenced by the corporate capitalism in India.⁵ The capitalist rationality redefines the capabilities as skill. The reform packages in education under this are mostly aimed at the access without even problematizing quality issues (cf. Govinda, 2011, p. 480). Even the notions of quality have been defined by the employment-centric aspects of education. The nature of knowledge in this backdrop becomes a capital due to the economic process of globalization today. The emerging conception of knowledge economy structurally convinces the national policy makers to address the access issues. However, the human capital theoretical orientations of these access-driven arguments are facilitating the process of learning to match the market even at the cost of conscientization. Thus, the critical pedagogy is no longer the focus where the status of social sciences is at the margin in India.⁶

In addition, the status of higher education is also not capabilities-centric in India. The policy trajectory so far has been on the human capital approach. The quality under this approach is being planned to improve only by 'competition'. The statist as well as agentic justification is gradually moving towards the increased role of the private players (cf. Tooley, 2004). To liberalize education is the development slogan. In this backdrop, any policy prescription which disproves the neoliberal notions of development becomes 'impractical'. For this 'pragmatic' model of development, everything comes under advertisement where education becomes a commodity and its relevance is decided by market research. In this newer arrangement, one can observe the restructuring of employment opportunities. The emergence of software capital in the South and finance capital in Central India are the symbolic leads. The productivity side of this newer social organization generally reproduces same set of graduates. For instance, the increasing enrolment rates in engineering and computer science subjects indicate the mindless production of uncritical identical workforce to the competitive capitalism.⁷ Any rationality which is outside this framework is eschewed as unfeasible.

In this backdrop, the scholastic opposition to the ill effects of education-commercialization, however, stops merely at the writing and seminar presentations in India. One can at times observe very few social movements mobilized in opposition. This raises the concern: is it because of the magnanimous size of the state? It seems that the recent Pay Commission (6th) recommendations could be one of the cooptation strategies of the state where the criticality of the academia on these lines has been reducing over the years. In this cooptation, it is also pertinent to know how the structure is pressuring the agency for compulsory right to education without addressing and even problematizing the role of hidden curriculum.⁸ The erstwhile lower castes although educated under this compulsory right are often left with mediocre life-chances handed over generally by their generational deprivation.

Thus, the definition of capabilities out of the same educative process is diverse for the different social groups in the country. This social reproduction has to be seen in light of the neoliberal definition of well-being, which is mostly on the principles of utility maximization. Though CA had sets out its limitations

(Sen, 1999), the broader economic opportunities of the country are shaped solely by the invisible hands of the market today. The fundamentals of market are naturally regulated by the principles of profit. This is in natural alliance with the global framework where the system of meritocracy is promoted by the policies where only the skilled migration is welcomed.⁹

In addition, the failure to provide the infrastructural facilities by the state in India creates the contours of opportunity deprivation where the migrations to the nearby towns are the only developmental route for the poor. Hence, the sporadic process of urbanization becomes a newer form of modernity. This is mostly in tune with market fundamentalism where the collective will for the human capital notions of education strengthens the neoliberal policies of the state. This should also be understood in light of the economic globalization facilitating the trajectory of expansion of higher education for the global knowledge society.¹⁰

The Structure and Agency in Neoliberalism

Mainstream social science literature is generally in opposition to the neoliberal paradigm in India. The ideological position from the Keynesian standpoints often uncritically overlooks the corrupt nature of the state and its inefficiencies. Though, neoliberalism is not theoretically acceptable, there is an urgent need for the conventional research works to be aware of its scholastic false-consciousness (Venkataraman, 2011). The status of social science in this self-imposed limitation struggles to form the evaluative spaces in the hierarchy of knowledge today. As India is a microcosm of world capitalism, the increasing role of market along the laissez-faireism of the state confirms this in education today. This is specifically visible where its 'active role' is only on the expansion of higher education. This is in expectation to supply the 'quality' workforce for the global market demands as knowledge economy is predominantly shaped by the human capital ideals. Education under this neoliberal arrangement universalizes low-quality government schools to the poor. Almost all educational institutions which ensure 'quality' are, thus, out of reach for the poor. This is mainly due to the economic factors of access. In this universalization without quality, the over-representations of the erstwhile lower castes and other marginalized social groups can be seen in the country.

In contrast to this, the mainstream social science analyses on education planning and policy predominantly hold the HCA ideals.¹¹ This is seemingly due to the neoliberal political economy where the rate of returns along the cost-benefit analyses of education has been an influential force to commit the political decision-makers. However, this neither increases the funding even under the human capital logics nor beneficial for the sustainable human development in the notions of CA so far. The main point is that though the trickle down model of development has seemingly been rejected at theoretical level, it continues to dominate in policy making (Nussbaum, 2010, p. 15). Educational planning and policy, for instance, are generally decided by the Ministry of Human Resource Development. This resource-oriented understanding of the education ministry most often has the neoliberal leanings. Its official approaches beginning from the manpower planning, cost-benefit approach and also the social demand approach are generally holding an employment-centric notion of education. The definition of access and even the quality, in this context, theoretically holds the human capital ideals. Thus, the bureaucratized worldview under the political economy narratives of the state is actively aligning with the market ideals of knowledge. This is unfortunate in a country where the alternative developmental thinkers like Rabindranath Tagore philosophized the principles of education.

In this backdrop, individuals' livelihood is generally shaped by broader macro-economic forces which are beyond the agential controls. The state withdrawal due to market-centric knowledge economy often

pushes them to the margin. Consequently, any efforts for economic and social mobility by the human agency are mostly approached through education today. The result is the employment-centric instrumentalism where 'the job market rather the skills in the labour market are determining the funding for the teaching and learning of social sciences' (Chalam, 2002a, p. 921) at present. The weak institutional structures often formally re/produce the unequal social structure in allowing the avenues of nepotism in the universities. Though the Reservation Policy allows the erstwhile lower castes at systemic levels, it seems, only the creamy layer benefits out of it. As the present day 'neo-liberal men' are in constant conflict with systems and structures, their survival depends on their agential fitness. This in turn is being shaped by the broader macro-economic forces, which are often operating beyond the human control. The invisible hands of the market regulate the approaches of education according to the corporate demands. To put it bluntly, for any career entry, one has to be over-qualified than the advertised requirements. This is due to the extreme competition from the demand as well as the shrinking supply side in India today.

Quality Concerns

In light of this structure-agency dualism, it is essential to reflect on education quality. The definition of quality has generally been decided by political economy of the state to further the neoliberal economic frameworks at present.¹² The discourse of National Knowledge Commission can be seen in this light where certain courses are preferred for their *economic* rates of returns. This educational reality altogether alters the definitions of quality, mainly to match the market requirements. Any notions of capability in this context have been understood merely as 'skill generation'. This employability-oriented definition of quality both by agency as well as the structure substantiates human capital ideals in India. The market rationality in this social reality disproves the notions of capability from the sense of freedom and welfare. In this narrative, the skill to enhance the life-chances are seemingly important than the broader notions of developmental functioning. Thus, the agentic as well as structural approaches in education substantiate this in the country.

In school education, almost all the economically well-off households seemingly prefer the private education providers as a predominant social choice. In fact, most teachers working in the government are sending their own children to the private schools. The overarching reason is seemingly for quality. In this backdrop, the socio-economically deprived understands the importance of education but have not been able to send their children to the same private institutions. They have to compromise with available options in the government due to their economic poverty. Hence, there is no elite pressure on the system where the parental demands on quality are generally meek as the power dynamics between the economically poor parents and non-poor teachers in government schools.¹³ Thus, these schools are predominantly accommodating the poor who are overwhelmingly represented by erstwhile lower castes in the country. The inferior infrastructure facilities in these schools provide questionable quality in classroom. This is shocking in contrast to the rhetoric of the increased funding in Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA).¹⁴ The unprofessional teachers along these inferior facilities are demotivating the students to eagerly wait for the school-hours to end every day. Their involuntary presence in the classroom can be picturized by the popular image of a happy Indian child outside the school. Hence, any well-being social science analyses should take note of these complexities.

In contrast to these subtler actualities, the mainstream literature generally treats education as a capability without problematizing its hidden curricular agendas. Thus, the mismatch between the students' need and the demotivating educational system (along the illiterate home environment specifically for the

Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) is not making the process of learning a pleasant experience. The systemic failure where no child feels good inside the classroom has, however, been generally overlooked by the literature so far. The compulsory nature of the right to education, however, intrinsically accuses the agential failure with its instrumentalist notions. In this framework, education can never be a joyful experience for the children. The *learning without burden* (cf. GoI, 1993) becomes an additional literature to cite where the inferior quality services of educative process accommodates the poor and disprivileged children in the name of free schooling. This does not ensure any valuable *beings* and *doings* (Sen, 1999). The capability deprivation, out of this systemic failure, creates a trap. The agential participation in the classroom in light of this vicious trap is mostly determined by the structural discretion where the teachers' arbitrariness often places the 'privileged' students ahead of others. This is seemingly decided by the factors of socio-economic capital in strengthening the status quo in the classroom.

In contrast, the competitive pressure to perform in education makes the parents to regularly supervise their children in private schools. The government system is 'fortunately' away from this market-race with its inferior quality at the elementary level. Any policy paradigm including the CA has to take note of these complexities into account. However, this has often been overlooked by merely complaining about the equity issues or the market fundamentalism of the private. These polarized debates in social sciences have so far been providing stereotypical explanations to the educational complexities.

Capability Approach: The Premises and Promises

CA as an open-ended normative framework deconstructs the preferences of individual well-beings and capabilities. The central positions of CA with its theoretical foundation on developmental discourses like that of the HD could categorically position the research trends in addressing the systemic issues. The approach will adequately provide newer analytical frameworks and methods in social sciences. For instance, conducting purely qualitative ethnographic studies in capability analyses is not well developed even in countries where the approach is a predominant research paradigm. India, given its complex social structure with the dubious system of stratification, can make use of this research paradigm.¹⁵ For instance, the educational dropouts can be seen in light of the *distinctions* of cultural capital. The Bania community, who are traditionally known as the traders of Bihar, drops out of the system mostly after the elementary stage of education. However, in contrast, the Mushars of the same region drop out for various socio-historical reasons. Their socio-economic positions are often known for the extreme forms of exclusion and economic deprivation where any analytical attempts from the perspective of CA could normatively allow us to take note of the cultural specificities. As these aspects are mostly contextual of the social realities, CA has the radical possibilities to deconstruct the social complexities of under-development.¹⁶

In this backdrop, it must be noted that the definition and dimensions of capabilities and functioning of the agency are structurally decided by education system.¹⁷ In contrast to European individualism, the collectivist social framework legitimizes this in India. The structural false-consciousness in fact treats the notions of capabilities merely as skills. This is often facilitated by neoliberal market fundamentalism.¹⁸ As this falsity is convinced by the human capital approach, the perpetuation of backwardness continues in social science scholarship. The pertinent question in this backdrop could be: whether the current system of education prepares the youths for making them a good citizen or for merely addressing to the global market requirements?

To operationalize CA in actual lives, we also need to assess education according to its effects on issues people value and have reason to value. The restricted educational access to the SCs and STs, for instance, reduces their opportunities towards freedom and agential rights. While the definition of development under the CA is to expand the *real* freedoms, any social science analysis has to take note of the structural restrictions. These restrictions along the dropout rates are grave injustice in education. In this backdrop, it is pertinent to probe how the Indian state can claim to be a democracy if it is not *even* facilitating their presence in the system of knowledge and learning? As this is crucial in a highly stratified society, one possible way out could be to analyze quality in terms of the capability notions in education. This will probably provide the scholastic breakthrough. This is crucial at a time when the mainstream social sciences focus mostly on access, outcome and other domains in education.¹⁹ The capability-laden quality analyses will perhaps deconstruct the social justice frameworks in relation to primordial hierarchies in education. This will consequently provide a fresh perspective to the social complexities.

The Way Ahead

Thus, in light of the complexities of neoliberal democracy, it is essential to highlight few other concerns. First, the functional relation between education and capabilities is not automatic. It requires a diverse set of (conversion) factors, which need to be contextually theorized. For instance, mere education may not ensure employment where the notions of capability-formation could intersectionally be influenced in India. These intersections, for instance can be seen in terms of the primordial identities like caste, religion and social class positions. The intersectional traps out of this dysfunctional structure have unfortunately been overlooked by the mainstream literature (Venkataraman, 2014). Thus, the future social science can consider filling the research vacuum in India.

In development studies, starting from the BNA to the current CA, almost all research endeavours hold a common thread of critiquing the GDP fundamentalism. Though this is a crucial scholastic departure, at times one gets identical arguments in the literature. If CA aspires to enhance agency-freedom and choice, it has to go beyond this repetition. One probable way out could be the interdisciplinary research in replacing the mainstream determinism in the social science scholarship. Furthermore, in developmental parlance, there is an indispensable linkage between the state, community, and the market where the precedence of the latter can be seen over the former today. The invisible hands of the market, therefore, restructure the social reality according to their own notions and definitions. This is changing the phases of social as well as economic reality where the competitive capitalism decides the nature of livelihood as well the status of institutions and practices. Though the creation of uncritical individuals to the global market workforce is not beneficial for the substantive development, education today is predominantly becoming a process of human capital formation. As education under the heightened market fundamentalism is not nurturing human agency, the interplay between school and family re/production of capabilities is the need of the hour to research. The CA in this backdrop 'is more than simply a proposal to focus on people's capabilities, but also entails a critical engagement with all social, cultural and other factors that shape people's preferences, expectations and perceptions, and that thus influence which choices are made from the freedoms that we have' (Unterhalter, 2003a, p. 4).

Although the role of social structure in the agential livelihood strategies is crucial, it is not explicitly visible. The nature of social norms and values shapes the developmental perspective. However, its presence is never felt by the pedestrian notions where the academic deconstruction paves the way. The structural decision to place the SCs at the ritual subordination and the invisible forms of exclusion traces to the role of social structure. Its control over the agential formation of both capabilities and functioning has

to be theoretically founded. There the centrality of support structures is important. The national policy-debates which are highly contextual have to be deconstructed in this light. In this, the CA can provide a theoretical critique to the HCA in education studies. While the HCA offers the importance of skill generation in education, the CA as a modern developmental paradigm enlarges the notions of freedom and social justice. These contrasting standpoints present the inevitability of analyzing the role of structure and agency in India's ailing social sciences.

In addition, the institutional domination in shaping the definition of agential capabilities has to be carefully discouraged. The human agency has to decide her preferences according to personal deliberations and life plans. The labour market failure for instance, can be treated as capability deprivation. Any failure of the agential space can be approached where the difficulty in transition from education to employment in India is mostly caste-centric where the role of social capital is crucial for the success as well as failures of its members. The relative notions of valuing education differently by diverse social groups, however, have so far been overlooked in the country. For instance, if the SCs and STs do not value education, the research effort has to understand the reasons and rationalities from their perspectives. Instead, most of the literature treats education as a solution provider for all the social ills. To fully understand the subjectivities of the social groups, the CA could engage intensively in dialogue with disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, history, and gender and cultural studies (Robeyns, 2005, p. 109).²⁰

Notes

1. The notion of capability in this article means the competence or the life skill one learns out of education. This is primarily to understand whether the broader notions of *freedom* or the ability to take independent decisions. Consequently, the importance of capabilities has been conceptualized in light of its effects on the ability to negotiate the economic deprivation and social exclusion.
2. For instance, Kapur and Mehta (2007, p. 2) viewed the emergence of the privatization as a result of the breakdown of the state system in India.
3. On this line, the government, for instance, has recently constituted the National Knowledge Commission (NKC).
4. The basis of this argument has been developed from an ethnographic fieldwork in South India. As the fieldwork intends to understand how the different social groups (in terms of caste and class dynamics) view education, the author has found the complexities of structure and agency in capability formations.
5. For instance the Ambani-Birla Report appointed by the Government of India in 2000 rests purely on these principles.
6. Also in a system of uncritical rote-learning where education is just to memorize the text even in the higher levels cannot ensure the foundations for CA. The status of social science, except in a few colleges and universities, is beyond imagination in India.
7. In this, the unrealizable targets on each and every employee by the corporate houses are attempting to maximize the 'human' resources. This exploitative system survives on the surplus-driven profit maximization. The hire-and-fire policy due to the productivity reasons of the corporate justifies the 'rat-race'.
8. Recently, the central government legalized the Right to Education under the Constitution of India.
9. UK closed to unskilled Indians, says Immigration Minister Damian Green, *The Times of India* (ToI), 22 August 2010 (p. 26).
10. In corporate capitalism, however, meritocracy is not always preferred. The annual confidential reports and the appraisal system at times justify the status-quoists where blind followers (of the Boss) will be graded high over the others.
11. Cf. the writings of mainstream educational planners at the National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA), New Delhi.
12. The policy significance of the CA, for Deneulin and McGregor (2010, p. 501), '...can be further strengthened by paying greater consideration to the political economy of policy decision-making processes...'

13. For a related analysis, cf. Vasavi (2009).
14. SSA is a flagship programme by the Government of India for the Universalisation of Elementary Education in the country.
15. For instance Robeyns (2005) argues that the CA takes account of human diversity in two ways: by its focus on plurality of functioning and capabilities as the evaluative space, and by the explicit focus on personal and socio-environmental conversion factors of commodities into functioning, and on the whole social and institutional context that affects the conversion factors and also the capability set directly (p. 99).
16. The CA not only advocates an evaluation of people's capability sets, but insists also that we need to scrutinize the context in which economic production and social interactions take place, and whether the circumstances in which people choose from their opportunity sets are enabling and just (Robeyns, 2005, p. 99).
17. Dreze and Sen (2002) argue that the CA is essentially a people-centred approach, which puts human agency (rather than organizations such as markets or governments) at the centre of the stage (p. 6).
18. Against this, the CA considers the rising incomes and expanding outputs as the means not the ends of development.
19. For instance, irrespective of the mode of transaction (formal or non-formal) in school education, whether the learning is actually taking place in the classrooms or not, it seems that the education system in the country is fully geared towards achieving only access.
20. Similar positions can also be seen in Deneulin and McGregor (2010, p. 502), Jackson (2005) and Unterhalter (2003b).

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