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Abstract   This paper outlines and explores a key obstacle to evaluating education policy using the capability approach. According to the capability approach, education policy should be targeted towards expanding people's capabilities. Values are central to an individual's capability set, because they determine the functionings important to them, and therefore the capabilities which are valuable to that individual. However, it is argued here that education has a more complex function than other areas of social policy, as education is able to influence and transfer values much more directly. How do we examine the relationship between education and the expansion of an individual's capabilities, if at the same time the process of education may directly determine the very nature of the capability set itself? As a solution, a form of education is proposed that would enable students to become aware of the values they hold, and develop them further through fostering critical thinking, practical reason, and access to knowledge, rather than directly imparting values to students. We illustrate this drawing on a recent project on higher education and transformation in South Africa.

Key words: Capabilities, Education policy, Values formation, Pedagogy

Introduction

Recent theorizing on capabilities in relation to education has led to the clarification of a number of points, including: the role of education in human flourishing; how formal education can diminish capabilities; and the distinction between capability to participate in education and capabilities gained through education (Walker and Unterhalter, 2007; Vaughan, 2007; Terzi, 2008). This paper turns to an issue that has not yet been adequately addressed in the literature: the problem of reconciling the pivotal role of values in an individual's capability set, with the fact that all education is inherently value-laden and values forming. In doing so, it engages with recent work by some scholars who have called for a greater attention to how values are formed, and for further analysis of the dynamics of value formation behind the 'capabilities people have

reason to value' (Deneulin, 2011; Burchardt, 2009). In this article, we problematize the relationship between education and capability ('what we have reason to *value*') expansion, and argue that this is a particularly pertinent problem for capability theorists working in the domain of education policy.

This paper is particularly concerned with public education policy and a formal education system's cultural structures; that is, arrangements such as resourcing, teacher education, curriculum (what and whose knowledge counts), pedagogy, and ethical ideas about what it means to become and be human, informing what counts as worthwhile education and educational practices. Such structures are fundamentally influenced by government policy and public culture. The process of education policy formation is one involving values, histories and contexts (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010). Values, public policy formation, policy choices, and policy implementation are inextricably interwoven. Education, moreover is, we point out, inescapably normative in that it seeks to change people for the better, developing powers of reasoning, criticality, imagination and reflection to form judgements about activities and lives that are worthwhile, among alternatives (Peters, 1966; Katz, 2010; Nussbaum, 2006a). As R. S. Peters (1966) explains, it would not be logical to say something like 'my child has been educated but is in no way changed for the better'. Education takes a view on what is worthwhile and sets out *deliberately* to influence lives, not only now but also towards possible futures.

Thus, this paper proposes that there is a key obstacle to evaluating the contribution of education to capability expansion—the central role of values in determining and shaping an individual's capability set in the first place. As we argue in this paper, this is a significant issue for educationalists as this is a policy area that potentially directly shapes agency goals more than other areas of public policy such as welfare and health; it therefore merits investigation. 'Values', argues Deneulin (2011, p. 130), 'are what allow people to prioritise capabilities'. Furthermore it is in the policy arena that we define and represent what the 'problem' is taken to be (Bacchi, 2009). For us as authors, part of the problem of education is way in which values ('what we have reason to value') shapes the capability set (reflecting which functionings are valuable, particularly those relating to agency) rather than only operating at the point of reasoned choosing or the exercise of judgment about how to use a capability, as Saito (2003) suggests. We propose a possible solution by conceptualizing education as an active space that may enable an individual to learn and to develop their values and agency goals, rather than something that only transmits or reproduces particular values (i.e. as if values are not understood to have any relationship to the nature or shape of a capability set). If values were only a matter of transmission in education it would be possible to inculcate identical values and produce identical capability sets, but we know that this is not the case and that education is rather more complex.

Moreover we address the further crucial question of defining what might be considered 'worthwhile' values and the potential of education to advance human development. This is illustrated with an example from higher

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education, although equally an example from gender and education or early childhood education, and so on, could have been chosen; we happen to have both worked on this project together and feel it captures our point well. We therefore refer to this research project on higher education in South Africa, which investigated the potential of various degree courses to produce professionals with 'pro-poor' values who might, after university, go on to work for social justice and transformation in wider society. We understand values in education to be significant in shaping and influencing behaviour and actions; that values can be promoted through meaningful educational activities; and that the educational opportunities provided in schools and colleges ought to foster behaviours and values which advance human development and well-being, both for individuals and society.

We further recognize that the aims of education which policy seeks to articulate may be universally indeterminate (Peters, 1966), requiring public reasoning about 'the common good' (Deneulin and Townsend, 2007), including the device of Smith's 'impartial spectator' (see Sen, 2009) so that policy aims are debated both from the perspective of 'distant strangers' and our own subject positions, as well as by all those involved in making the policy. In this way, agreed educational values ought to emerge as those that promote flourishing and well-being for all, not just some. Here we make the further point that communities might choose educational values that are not to the benefit of all (e.g. girls), so either there needs to be some core of universal values arising from the goal of 'human development', and/or a process that subjects a particular community's or society reasoning about education to impartial scrutiny as noted above. In our case study, the valuation process is thus not open-ended; we do not take education as a space for the formation of any old values, but rather values consistent with the capability approach's concern with well-being freedoms and achievements, and the values implicit in Sen's (2009) emphasis on processes of public reasoning. We believe that shared aims (and hence values) might include social justice, equality of opportunity, and respect for each other (Katz, 2010). In this paper we do not go into detail on which are worthwhile values for education, nor do we detail the debates about communities and value formation, and the limits and possibilities of reasoning and structures of inequality.

This paper now proceeds by discussing the significance of different areas of public policy for an individual's capability set, with particular reference to the formation of individual values. In the following section, we discuss the close relationship between education and values. Next, we move on to problematize the role of education within the capability approach, specifically in terms of its propensity for forming values and thereby determining the very nature of individual capability sets. Last, we propose a solution to this conundrum through the conceptualization of an educational process that facilitates rather than dictates the development of individual values, drawing on the example of a research project on the development of 'pro-poor professionals' in South Africa.

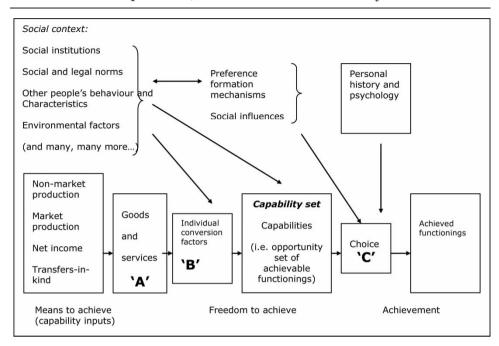## The role of public policy in expanding capabilities

According to the capability approach, the informational space for measuring equality should be an individual's capability set, rather than levels of resources or levels of happiness. Sen defines capability as 'a person's ability to do valuable acts or reach valuable states of being; [it] represents the alternative combinations of things a person is able to do or be' (1993, p. 30). The concept of capabilities thus encapsulates the *freedoms* people have to do and be what they value being and doing; for example, taking part in discussions, thinking critically about society, being knowledgeable, having good friendships, being treated with respect, and so on. Having capability enables people to choose functionings that they value for a good life. From this perspective, therefore, public policies should aim to expand individual capability sets.

Thinking about public policy in general, if we consider the personal and social context of an individual's capability set as laid out by Robeyns (2005), government interventions can have implications for different sections of this set, chiefly:

1. goods and services available to individuals (e.g. hospitals, schools, childcare, transport, mental health support); and
2. the social context in which individuals operate (e.g. media images about working mothers, the acceptability of working mothers given legitimacy by supportive government schemes, legal rights for working mothers, women as scientists and engineers).

Policies may indirectly and more or less deliberately influence social contexts and public ethos. Examples of government initiatives that might directly aim to influence the social context could include an Equalities Commission to monitor and report on fairness, a health intervention to discourage smoking, or laws on women's rights. Measures such as taxation may also indirectly be effective in changing public values by first changing behaviours. For example, with regard to the environment, price mechanisms and other incentive systems (such as the presence of recycling facilities) may have an effect. Although it is also important to remember that social policy by definition emerges from and is shaped by the social context.

For most public policy sectors, however, we argue that the most direct influence is on the amount of goods and services available to individuals ('A' in Figure 1), through varying levels of direct investment by government. Examples might be the provision of affordable and regular public transport; modern, well-equipped hospitals and free healthcare; and free, good quality schooling. Because the area public policy most affects is goods and services, public policy can serve to widen or narrow the range of functionings that an individual can choose between. However, as a general rule, it does not determine which functionings are *valuable* to the individual (i.e. the agency goals, and therefore the overall 'shape' or 'scope' of the capability set itself). For example, free bus passes for pensioners is a goods and services provision

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FIGURE 1.   Different roles of education in Robeyns' stylized non-dynamic representation of a person's capability set and her social and personal context.
Source: Robeyns (2005, p. 98).

that would expand their mobility capability and functioning, without necessarily being concerned with how much mobility, mobility for what, or the valuing of mobility. A second example might be the NHS in the UK, which offers goods and services but does not set out *directly* to form agency goals (and hence values).

Education policy is another example: an education system provides goods and services that an individual can ideally convert, expanding their capability to be formally educated. However, in contrast to other areas of public policy, education also has the potential to directly influence the formation of an individual's agency goals. In the following section, we argue that education policy needs to be considered differently to other areas of public policy, and presents a particular conundrum to capability theorists, because of its distinctive role in value formation.

Education and values[1]

As summarized at the start of the previous section, values are central to an individual's capability set because they influence and determine agency goals: they establish which functionings are important to people, and therefore the capabilities which are valuable to that individual. In this way, values logically determine the shape and scope of the capability set and are included in the space of choosing.

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So far, research has explored how education is central to the development of capabilities, because it provides people with skills and capacities: reading and writing, numeracy, self-confidence and empowerment. Because education is crucial for well-being, education should be directed towards expanding people's capabilities. This can be understood both in terms of capabilities to access education (e.g. is there safe public transport to the nearest school; is schooling affordable for all; can anyone aspire to go to university), and also in the capabilities that persons gain through education (e.g. literacy, self-confidence, imagination, economic skills; see Vaughan, 2007).

Studies have also shown how, in practice, formal education structures can have both positive and negative effects on capabilities; for example, gender violence in schools (Unterhalter, 2003; Walker, 2006). However, the kind of education that forms capabilities is, for Sen (see Drèze and Sen, 1995), rich and 'thick'; it has multi-dimensional instrumental and intrinsic value, and transformative potential. Having education is a valuable achievement for a young person in itself for effective non-economic freedoms; access to education broadens one's horizons, brings one into touch with diverse others; and education helps instrumentally to do many other things that are also valuable, such as getting a job. Education is also valuable for its social contributions; it facilitates public discussion and informed collective demands; it has interpersonal effects in opening up opportunities for others, and it contributes to public and democratic life. From a social perspective, education can have empowerment and distributive effects; disadvantaged groups can increase their ability to resist inequalities and get a fairer deal in and through education. Crucially, having education affects the development and expansion of other capabilities so that an education capability expands other human freedoms. We use the notion of 'education' in this expansive way in the paper (and see Peters, 1966).

The significance of education for capabilities has therefore principally been conceptualized in terms of enhancing individual conversion factors ('B' in Figure 1)—a basic example being how literacy enables an individual to convert the resource of a newspaper into information and knowledge (and reasoning would enable an individual to read it critically); or how understanding legal rights would enable a woman suffering from domestic violence to obtain a divorce. Through developing reasoning skills, education also influences how individuals make good or better choices towards particular functionings ('C' in Figure 1).

Another integral characteristic of educational systems and processes, however, is that they may also explicitly or implicitly embody values, determined by government policy. It is not difficult to think of examples of states using their education system to explicitly transfer particular values: national allegiance, racial prejudice, religion.[2] States have frequently produced history curricula in schools to support certain agendas; for example, the Indian government promoting a nationalist agenda (Sen, 2005, pp. 62–69).

Education has also been harnessed by more liberal and left-wing agendas; for example, several initiatives have promoted particular forms of education

for peace, education for human rights, and education for citizenship. 'Development Education' in the UK aims to promote values of global social justice (Bourn, 2008); another example is 'Teaching Democratic Values', a recent initiative of the Australian government, which focuses on democratic values and principals such as freedom, responsibility, justice, honesty, respect for the land, leadership qualities, personal values and qualities, and tolerance, inclusion and diversity.[3]

In these examples, we find a pro-active stance on imbuing formal education with producing particular values; in most cases, backed up by powerful political groups with particular agendas. In other instances, values may be less consciously embedded in curricula, but be present nonetheless. McLaughlin (2003) argues that it is impossible for education to be value-free:

> The value-laden character of the activities of teaching and schooling (and more broadly of education) is not merely a matter of practical inescapability. It is also one of logic. A value-free education is not merely a practical impossibility but also a contradiction in terms. The very idea of education involves value. (McLaughlin, 2003, p. 138)

The issue is that education is never a value-free or neutral project and cannot be conceptualized as such because to do so would be 'vapid and pointless' (Brighouse and Swift, 2003, p. 367). Education is unavoidably normative because it always takes a position on what ought to be worthwhile behaviours, attitudes, activities, and so on, in guiding our individual conduct and choices. The point is that the content and knowledge base of education is important, rather than the mere functioning of attending school. Pedagogy, too, also transmits values through the forms, ethics and practices of teaching.[4]

This is important from a human development perspective, because we can identify certain values as likely to enhance the capabilities of society overall: such pro-poor values would involve education for human development, democratic cooperation, and respect. Thomas Pogge (2010), amongst others, has recently argued that those living in higher-income countries have a duty and a responsibility to act in the interests of those in developing economies; it would then follow that education would have a part to play in teaching about and learning such commitments.

Education is therefore a complex area of public policy because, as well as imparting skills and specific capacities, it also has the potential to have a significant impact on what is valuable to an individual and therefore what goals (particularly agency goals) and other-regarding commitments they might form.

Education policy and the capability set: expansion, contraction or definition?

Now we turn to look at the implications of the relationship between education policy and values from a capability perspective. If we relate this to the model of an individual's capability set, education has a more complex

function than other areas of social policy: in addition to the provision of goods and services, education is able to influence, transfer and transform values much more explicitly and directly than other areas of government policy. If we are concerned with the *expansion* of individual capability sets, education policy therefore occupies a rather unique position compared with other areas of public policy.

As stated above, values are central to an individual's capability set, because they determine the functionings important to them (the focus should be, as Sen reminds us, on the outcomes and processes which people have reason to value). Yet as Deneulin (2011) notes, little has so far been written in the field of human development about the formation and social construction of values. But the question of *how* individuals come to value various ways of being and doing is a very important one. As explored by Burchardt (2009), simply evaluating inequality or disadvantage through already-formed agency goal achievement is problematic, because agency goals can be shaped in restricted circumstances—for example, in a situation of deprivation, conditioned expectations are a problem and adaptive preference can determine values and restrict agency goals. Burchardt suggests one option is that we focus our efforts not on agency freedom but agency *goal* freedom—the freedom to form agency goals, 'a kind of meta-freedom not captured by the concept of agency freedom itself' (2009, p. 8). In her view, both the agency goals and the capability set within which such goals are pursued should be evaluated. What we have reason to value may be severely constrained when genuine options are literally unthinkable (e.g. women leading an autonomous life in some societies) or, even if thinkable, seem unattainable (e.g. going against a family expectation of choosing marriage over a career). To bring agency goals forward into the frame of our evaluation means, in turn, to attend to the values that influence and form agency goals (e.g. schooling that educates citizens for the common good rather than educating them to be consumers of a private good, to earn more in the marketplace), and hence influence and form a capability set (e.g. a capability set that would enable a young person to choose a career as an inner-city doctor).

Adopting the same line, we argue here that education policy therefore provides a rather unique conundrum from a capability perspective. According to the normative aspect of the capability approach, policy reform should be guided by a concern to expand individual capability sets. The preferences that then influence an individual's choice of functioning will have been influenced and formed by social context, personal psychology and history, all of which will have been indirectly influenced by government reforms or actions of the state. Formal education, however, is likely to have *directly* influenced the formation of individual preference and values (or had considerably more direct influence on those values than other areas of public policy).

The problem from a capability perspective, therefore, is how do we examine the relationship between education and the expansion of an individual's capabilities, if at the same time the process of education may directly determine the very nature (the values base) of the capability set itself? For

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example, formal education may give someone advanced literacy, numeracy and logical skills so that they can perform the valuable function of becoming a lawyer, but the desire to become a lawyer, and indeed what kind of lawyer (e.g. corporate or human rights), may have been highly influenced by the curricula, pedagogy and ethos at school.[5]

As outlined in the section above, schools may explicitly aim to encourage certain values and goals (educational and otherwise) in their students. But schools also have the ability to raise awareness by exposing students to a wider variety of inputs. As Burchardt (2009, p. 7) observes: 'if I have never seen or heard a piano, I am unlikely to form the goal of becoming a concert pianist'. This has implications from a human development perspective: if I have never had the opportunity to act ethically, I may not learn this way of being (Sandel, 2010). One particularly significant area of awareness-raising is exposing students to the realities of society. For example, if young people are vaguely aware of the existence of poverty, but are unaware of the true proportions, reasons for its existence, or means through which it can be addressed, they are unlikely to either realize their inner values if they relate to this, or develop agency goals relating to poverty reduction. We might argue that those who have advantages need to learn what it means to be part of a just society and what the implications are for treating people with respect and dignity as full human beings whose presence matters, and to learn through their education to be capable of treating others with respect. For example, Yates and McLeod (2000), based on their research in Australia, argue that schools can make a difference as to how the advantaged perceive the disadvantaged. They point out that when middle-class students come to see themselves as capable and responsible agents it feeds into how these young people see others who may be less capable, so that there is a lack of sympathy for those who are disadvantaged. On the other hand they found schools where students had been sensitized more effectively to social justice. The assumption is that education does not necessarily legitimize the interests of the powerful in society and can instil altruistic values and outcomes.

So far, receiving education has usually been positioned as beneficial to an individual's capabilities (for example, Sen and Dreze, 2002), or detrimental (mis-educative) if attending school has a negative impact on other capabilities (e.g. increasing the risk of HIV/AIDS infection for schoolgirls in South Africa; see Unterhalter, 2003). However, an individual's capability set itself and its effect for their agency goal formation may also be *determined* by the education they receive. If education affects what you value, it affects your agency goals and therefore the nature or 'shape' of your capability set.

Education to realize valuable goals: are South African universities producing 'pro-poor' professionals?

There is an important implication of this for capability research. If education is likely to determine the very *nature* of the capability set in the first place, it

therefore may be deeply problematic to think about education reform simply with the goal of expanding individual capabilities. If a school, for example, imbues students with a strong sense of national identity and loyalty, then students may be more likely to be guided by nationalist sentiments when forming their agency goals in life. If a school exposes students to the idea that women can be political leaders, then more girls may form the agency goal of being politically active. Beyond the fact that formal education can expand core or basic capabilities, such as well-being and agency that comes from reading and writing, legal literacy (Nussbaum, 2000; Walker *et al.*, 2009), and so on, how do we negotiate evaluating capabilities that stem from formal education, given the complexity of agency goal formation?

As discussed above, whether it is possible or even desirable in practice to impart such a 'value-free' education is highly questionable. As Burchardt (2009, p. 15) observes, all individuals are subjected to influences and it would be problematic to define them as incompatible with real freedom; the question is, what types of influence or conditioning *are* compatible with real freedoms?[6] In this final section, it is argued that it is possible (and necessary for genuinely autonomous capability expansion) to have an education that aims to enable young people to realize and develop their own significant values, while also opening up knowledge and dialogue about which values are worthwhile and deserve priority.

This argument is illustrated using data from a recent Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) project on higher education in South Africa, which explored the role of professional education in the development of social justice values among students (Walker *et al.*, 2009; Walker, in press). The project in South Africa was a study of professional education sites in the fields of Law, Social Work, Public Health, Engineering and Theology, and the extent to which these courses enabled university students to develop the skills and capacities to reduce poverty in their future working lives; to what extent the courses enabled them to become 'pro-poor professionals'.[7] Despite the end of apartheid over 15 years ago, levels of poverty and inequality in South Africa have regrettably increased, and the work of professionals is crucial to South Africa's future—for example, whether engineers work solely on private projects, or work to improve conditions in the townships; or whether lawyers work for private or corporate law, or help to increase the legal capabilities of those in low-income communities. Although the study was conducted at the level of professional education, the implications apply to all levels of formal education. Drawing on interviews with diverse individuals and groups, a 'public-good professional capabilities index' was developed as a tool to evaluate the extent to which courses helped to develop valued capabilities amongst the students (Walker *et al.*, 2019; Walker, in press).

First of all, the findings provided examples of how education can either bypass entirely the issue of poverty awareness and engagement, or actively enable students to value and choose pro-poor professional work. Second, the project involved an exploration of *how* such pro-poor ambitions might be fostered. Given that individuals differ in their biographies, we can envision

that some students would inherently value the reduction of poverty in their country.[8] Rather than explicitly instructing or overtly influencing students to adopt pro-poor values, we can see that some elements of courses facilitated students in clarifying their existing feelings and values about poverty; and, where these resonated with the goal of poverty reduction, crucially equipped them to realize this in their professional lives.

The research findings showed that professional courses could enable some students to develop into 'pro-poor professionals' through the following:

1. Awareness-raising through exposure to the realities of poverty in South Africa. Many students spoke of how their course had raised their awareness of poverty by exposing them to things they otherwise would never have seen. Rather than the courses explicitly instructing the students that they had a duty to work for poorer communities, critical knowledge, dialogue and experiential learning opportunities exposed them to the stark realities of poverty in South Africa. The end result was that some of the students realized that it was important to them to incorporate this in their work—which could suggest that it resonated with existing feelings, helping students to recognize and develop a significant internal value; and at the same time developing the student's capability to work towards that value (reducing poverty).
2. The development of critical reasoning, giving students the ability and opportunity to explore their own underlying values, in this example in the context of an awareness of levels of poverty in South Africa. Rather than an emphasis on education imparting or requiring particular values uncritically, this throws emphasis on the ability of education to foster rational thought and critical thinking and discussion, and allows for reasoned pluralism consistent with the capability approach. Deneulin (2011, pp. 131–132) explains that, while the capability approach emphasizes the importance of values, what it actually places stress on is not values *per se* but the *act of valuing*, which is closely associated with reasoning. Individuals can use reasoning to identify and clarify what is valuable to them; values, however, also determine to some extent the reasoning process.[9]
3. Imparting certain skills and capacities (resilience, relevant professional knowledge, understanding of collective effort and struggle), so that those who chose a 'pro-poor' professional path would be better equipped with the tools to do so.

A foundational part of this paper's argument is that, underlying various external influences, individuals will all have different tendencies, interests and values; the capability approach is designed to recognize and take into account diversity in goals between individuals. Some students inherently cared more about social justice than others, and these students gained the most from the pro-poor elements of courses. Others who were exposed to poverty through their courses may have expressed some passing interest or

excitement, and then continued along a professional path not specifically concerned with poverty reduction. Some others were shocked into an awareness of their own privilege and wanted to contribute to meaningful change in their future professional careers. At best, all students were exposed to knowledge and debate about South African society and its inequalities, in some way permeating a kind of 'membrane' that works to insulate the privileged in the society from knowledge of the lives of those living in conditions of poverty.

It is particularly important to note that the education being considered here is one *without* an explicit aim of imparting particular values but instead of exposure to the realities of poverty and offering the chance to acquire skills to work towards reducing poverty, as well as such a disposition being embodied or modelled by the lecturers' commitments. It did require enquiry and the collective scrutiny of evidence rather than transmission approaches to pedagogy and a climate of open discussion between students holding diverse points of view, as well as skilful teaching. In this way students might potentially arrive at kind of Rawlsian 'overlapping consensus' about worthwhile values, while not agreeing on everything. This is different to a more explicitly value-laden curriculum that might actively seek to transmit particular agency goals (e.g. which explicitly *told* students they had a duty to work to reduce poverty; or, that there was only one career choice that of public service employment; or, using a completely different example, that their race was superior to others). The latter approach veers dangerously close to 'unreasoning' professional functionaries who 'obey orders', and away from the capability approach's deep concern with collective public reasoning and individual practical reasoning in making good choices for communities and individuals.

Ultimately this involves conceptualizing, if at all possible, an individual with unrestrained (but realistic) values and agency goals, and that educational arrangements can foster individual development along these lines. This sort of education can be seen less as determining (and hence reducing autonomy) the nature of an individual's capability set (by transmitting values) and more as enhancing the ability of the individual autonomously to realize, understand, recognize, articulate and act towards or follow their own formed (through education), informed and reasoned values through deep discussion, sustained engagement and critical scrutiny of a range of perspectives among fellow students, client groups and knowledge resources.

Where other areas of public policy might not direct citizens towards a particular choice regarding the good life, education has the potential to be more or less directive; for example, not only in teaching good citizenship or democratic values, but enabling people to practise various forms of social engagement and processes that would enable individuals to explore new ideas about social relations and their own values relating to wider society. That is, in education we have the opportunity to practise what it means to become and be democratic citizens; to practise the necessary behaviour in order to acquire a democratic (or respectful, or compassionate, or critical, etc.) disposition (Dewey, 2007; Sandel, 2010). We acquire practical wisdom

about worthwhile ways to be and to act; we encounter different ways of being and living so that we can autonomously choose what is good for us. But we can also learn guides to action by learning about ways of living and being that respect and enhance the capabilities of others; for example, that compassion is more worthwhile than cruelty; that respect is more worthwhile than hate; that imagination is more worthwhile than obtuseness; that honesty is more worthwhile than cheating and plagiarism and getting higher marks; or that bodily health is more worthwhile than bodily abuse.

A further example of how this might work—that is, the kind of curriculum and pedagogical arrangements that create the spaces in which worthwhile reasoned values can be formed though activities and experiences as well as exposure to knowledge—is to go back to the Humanities Curriculum Project in the UK in the late 1960s. This set out to explore enquiry-based teaching—that is, pupils involved in discussion and using evidence under the guidance of the teacher—of highly controversial issues with 14-year-old to 16-year-old pupils; for example, US involvement (at that time) in the Vietnam war or the Arab-Israeli conflict. Such controversies were seen to sit at the nexus of principles and values and complex considerations of traditions and values (Stenhouse, 1971). More recently we might have students discussing controversial public issues such as stem cell research or same-sex marriages. The pedagogical intent is not consensus but rather robust yet respectful discussion about disagreements, what Sandel (2010) calls a politics of moral engagement. Such pedagogies foster respect for evidence and deliberation, and nurture mutual respect and tolerance so that students come to understand themselves and each other better, to be able to explain their views coherently and even change them where they do not stand up to scrutiny. We argue that this kind of pedagogy must surely enable 'wise' and critical values formation.

An important contrast with other areas of public policy, therefore, is that education can explicitly enable students to critically reflect on the values they hold and the reasons for which they make certain decisions. However, it also remains a reality that, particularly in the current economic climate, students themselves may expect to be primarily taught skills to improve their individual position in the job market, and in a more traditional pedagogical style.

Burchardt (2009, pp. 16–17) argues that to use capabilities effectively to evaluate equality, we need explicitly to take into account also the conditions in which agency goals ('capability as autonomy') are formed, ideally using longitudinal data. If this type of education is provided, it would be more likely to facilitate 'capability as autonomy'. Thus a significant part of the conditions for capability as autonomy, we would argue, would be educational arrangements that foster human development values and public values so that autonomous choice is also about what it is worthwhile to choose (from a human development perspective, this would mean respect rather than bullying; tolerance rather than racism) even though educational arrangements can never (and never should) entirely control the choices that people will make. Indeed we have many examples of apparently well-educated people

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who hold anti-public values. Nonetheless, education ought to work to foster public values, we think, but not under conditions of 'banking' and transmission or an insistence that only certain values count,[10] or that such values can only be acted on in one way, respecting both the pluralism of the capability approach and the concern for well-being and agency.

Concluding comments

Education is a cultural and social process that brings people together in collectives of schools, subject choices, friendship groups, and so on. While education is not entirely unique in doing this, from a perspective of public policy, it is a primary site for collective activity and therefore potentially the collective transmission of values. People are educated collectively, even while there may be some individual provision for special circumstances like severe disability; and in schools and colleges we have the unique opportunity to reason together about a good society and the common good. (Setting aside that some subjects like the arts and humanities do this especially well, see Nussbaum [2010]; or that not all education in schools and colleges is public provision, although it is as much part of the social fabric). Sandel captures the issues when he writes:

> If a just society requires a strong sense of community, it must find a way to cultivate in citizens . . . a dedication to the common good. It can't be indifferent to the attitudes and dispositions . . . that citizens bring to public life. It must find a way to lean against purely privatised notions of the good life, and cultivate civic virtue (2010, pp. 263–264)

It therefore follows that we might require that private education provision, when it includes some element of public or state support as is the case in the UK and Australia, ought also to be committed to public values and the public good.[11]

The relationship between education, values and capabilities is complex. The approach proposed in this paper is that rather than seeing education as imposing or transferring a set of external values (which it may certainly do in some contexts of indoctrination), it is possible to envisage that an education can enable an individual to learn, realize and clarify what is valuable to them; to form their own significant values. From a human development and capabilities perspective, the ideal aim of education is to enable students to become aware of and develop such values through exposure to the realities of wider society alongside the development of critical thinking, practical reason, and access to knowledge, rather than to directly impart values by telling students, or to insist on one version of the 'good' professional, to take the project discussed above. If this occurs, then in theory we can argue that the capability set would be expanded, rather than merely influenced or 'shaped', by education policy.

It remains questionable whether we can talk about individuals having 'core' values (which can nonetheless evolve and develop through education), inherent to them and independent of external influences. In our case study, by the age at which students enter professional training, some had already had some exposure to the realities of poverty in South Africa. Overall, how and to what extent values are formed is an area requiring further analysis.

It may potentially be dangerous to argue that, on the one hand, education can be value-free or even less imbued with values, but can still enable individuals to realize their own significant values, particularly if sufficient attention is not paid to the rest of an individual's social context and the possibility of adaptive preference. For example, it could be used to argue that a good quality school education will enable girls to develop and enhance traditionally feminine capacities.[12] Perhaps a notion of 'value-critical' education might work better.

There are also limits to what education can do, when up against socio-economic status and past experience, either in terms of imparting values if that is the explicit aim, or in terms of 'education to realize core values'. Education is embedded in society and articulates with other public services. Indeed, Burchardt (2009) presents evidence of how young people's aspirations for future education and employment in the UK can, despite the efforts of schools, remain restricted according to social class. For the individuals in the 1970 British cohort study, she notes that 'the adaptation of agency goals is structural and systematic'; 'the ability to formulate agency goals at all is conditioned by pre-existing inequality' (Burchardt, 2009, pp. 9 and 11; see also Hart, 2012). Two particular contextual factors are important: a public culture that values the space schools and colleges offer in bringing together young people of diverse backgrounds and perspectives (universities may have an especially important role in this respect); and the quality of teaching is important in so far as teachers and lecturers have the potential to demonstrate in practice what education at is its best could be. Moreover, as stated earlier in the paper, other aspects of public policy may also have an influence on values in a less direct way; for example, if a state is strongly promoting the message that everyone has an equal right to healthcare by investing significant amounts in a national healthcare system.

The macro-relationship also remains to be explored, in terms of the influence of group and community values on individual goals (e.g. how societies values can be transmitted through formal education—see for example Deneulin, 2011, p. 137). There are many influences on value formation other than formal education, not least the media and popular culture and, at a macro level, the arguably corrupting effect of the market on education systems and the values and ways of being that are then foregrounded.

But as education is ostensibly able to expand capabilities, we need to scrutinize this in particular, and the ideas outlined in this paper are proposed as a way of addressing the issue of education policy from a capability perspective. The project described in this paper investigated the development of pro-poor values, but this would also be the case for any number of other examples.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1 The term 'values' in this paper is used to broadly refer to matters that are valuable to an individual and determine agency goals, rather than a specific set of ethical values or behaviour; although values to foster human development are used in the South African example in the final section of the paper.
2 To use a well-known example, the majority of American schools begin each morning with a pledge of allegiance to the flag and the republic.
3 'Teaching Democratic Values' is a unit of work for upper primary and lower secondary students; for further details see [http://www.civicsandcitizenship.edu.au/cce/default.asp?id=9221].
4 For example, see Dewey's (2007) work on pedagogy and democratic cooperation, and work on critical pedagogy (Freire, 2007), and Nussbaum (2006b) on Dewey and Tagore.
5 Other potential examples of goals being influenced by school curricula and ethos might be: joining the army, religious affiliation and missionary activities, voting for a particular political party, and choosing typically masculine, feminine or social class based subject choices. In the UK there has been considerable public debate over whether 'faith schools', which embody particular values, should be publically funded. McLaughlin, for example, argued that raising a child within a faith means that they are more likely to achieve autonomy on reaching adulthood, as such children are better enabled to make informed judgements. Others argue that such schools risk indoctrination or coercion (Haydon, 2009).
6 Burchardt concludes that 'influences that are systematically related to previous experience of socio-economic inequality must surely fall into the category of being incompatible with real freedom' (2009, p. 15).
7 The focus of the project was pro-poor values as these were seen as consistent with the expansion of the capabilities of the population as a whole.
8 For example, some students expressed frustration that their existing course content did not help them to contribute to poverty reduction, which might suggest the existence of already formed important values. This raises the question of whether individuals inherently have differing 'core' values.
9 On this point, see also Sen's (2006, p. 35) point that reasoning is central to leading a human life.
10 The concept of 'banking' education has been most clearly articulated—and attacked—by Freire (1970, 2007), whereby a student is viewed as an empty 'account' to be filled by the teacher.
11 With regard to the balance of private benefits and public good from education, we note that the recent changes to the UK university system are a particular cause for concern here. Subjects that are perceived to support economic growth (such as science and technology) continue to be promoted while budgets for humanities subjects are reduced. Moreover, the current reforms are based on a conception of university education as a private good. The system of tuition fees is encouraging students to choose degrees that will give market-oriented skills and thus provide higher earnings. In this way, the reforms represent a substantial move away from a conceptualization of a university education as a public good.
12 See the debate about whether girls genuinely 'choose' subjects traditionally seen as feminine and reject subjects traditionally dominated by boys, such as science and mathematics.

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