

Master's thesis



Should children take subjects at the level that suits them after the third year, in addition to the *Later Selection, Better Differentiation* advice of the education council?

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Should children take subjects at the level that suits them after the third year, in addition to the  
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Applied Ethics

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## Summary.

Every child has the right to adequate education, but in the current education system in the Netherlands inequality of opportunity exists. When the advice of the Education Council is followed, inequality of opportunity up to the third grade will be combated. But with the old system is reinstated after the third grade, inequality of opportunity will arise again. It is therefore important to introduce a system after the third grade in which children receive appropriate education. To establish this, I argue that it is necessary to provide personal education, whereby children can follow subjects at the level that suits them. The capability of choice, the factor of participation, and the inequality of opportunity which can be understood as structural injustice, must therefore be properly explained. These three factors are closely related. Allowing this to play a big role in policy-making regarding education, will contribute to combating inequality of opportunity and better education for every child. Shadow education also shows the added value of personal education on results. Through this line of inquiry, I found that personal education is important because it contributes to the proper development of each child's capabilities. This allows me to conclude that personal education, in the shape of taking courses at the level that fits the child, should also take place after the third grade.

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## 1. Introduction.

In the advisory report *Latere selectie, betere differentiatie* (later selection, better differentiation), the Education Council, an advisory body of the Dutch government in the field of education, argues that a structural change must be made for secondary education in order to combat the increasing inequalities of opportunities. An important, recurring theme in the Dutch public and political debate is equal educational opportunities for every student.

There are various reasons for the increasing inequality of opportunities through education. Inequality of opportunities has increased even more due to the corona crisis, and vulnerable pupils and students appear to be having extra difficulty in passing their subjects in times of this crisis.<sup>1</sup> In education, children who are the victims of inequality of opportunity are not given the freedom to develop independently of this. Because the current system is not designed personally enough, it ensures that inequality of opportunity is given every opportunity to continue to exist. Furthermore, the early selection for secondary school and strong external differentiation put a lot of pressure on equal educational opportunities. Children are selected around the early age of 12, while in other countries this only happens around the age of 15. The Education Council indicates that this early selection is unfavorable for educational achievement, non-cognitive functioning, and the careers of students. Furthermore, it is highly detrimental to equal educational opportunities, because the early selection especially impacts so-called late bloomers, often students with a less favorable socio-economic background, as well as students with a birthday early in the school year. There is a greater chance that the type of education for which these children are selected does not match their capabilities. In addition, the strong external differentiation creates a strong division between students. Because of these reasons, the Education Council advises for the selection to take place later, namely in the third year. In addition, they advise to base the selection on several test moments and discussions between teacher teams instead of based on the cito-score and the advice of only one teacher.

Inequality of opportunity also comes to the fore when you look at the way different children study, in which they differ a lot. You have gifted, precocious, and fast-learning children, and children who learn less well and who study less quickly. On top of this, as indicated by the

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<sup>1</sup> “SER: kwaliteit onderwijs onvoldoende, corona vergroot kansenongelijkheid,” NOS, Accessed June 13, 2022, <https://nos.nl/artikel/2385562-ser-kwaliteit-onderwijs-onvoldoende-corona-vergroot-kansenongelijkheid>.

Education Council, inequality of opportunity has the potential to increase under the current educational policy. What is strongly related to this is the degree of *shadow education* that children receive from parents with a high socio-economic background. Shadow education is the occurrence of private educational activities that take place outside formal school hours with the aim to enhance students' educational results.<sup>2</sup> It takes multiple forms, such as tutoring, homework support, and examination preparatory courses for examinations.<sup>3</sup> For this reason, this group of children gets a head start in their education and careers.<sup>4</sup>

When we look at the optimal development of children's capabilities, the advice for the Education Council seems insufficient. When this advice is followed, children are still placed at a certain level after the third year. As such, the subjects that children follow are all on the same level and therefore not in line with their specific capabilities. In this thesis, I argue that there should be the possibility to take individual subjects at the level that suits the child. The goal of this thesis is to show personal education should be offered in which students can follow subjects at the level they possess. In this case, it would be possible for children to take, for example, history at the HAVO-level (the second tier in the Dutch educational system), mathematics at the VMBO-level (the first tier), and perhaps biology at the VWO-level (the highest tier).<sup>5</sup> Continuing education can then be determined based on the level of the subject required to be admitted.

I've listed several factors that are causing questions about the current educational policy, such as, the coronavirus, learning styles, shadow education, early selection, and strict levels. For this thesis, I focus on inequality of opportunity among children within education, and the levels of subjects that children should receive for the best development of their capabilities. It is important that every child benefits from the new system of education I am arguing for in this

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<sup>2</sup> I. Mori and D. P. Baker, "The origin of universal shadow education: What the supplemental education phenomenon tells us about the postmodern institution of education," *Asia Pacific Education Review*, no. 11 (2010), 36-48. D. L. Stevenson and D. Baker, "Shadow Education and Allocation in Formal Schooling: Transition to University in Japan," *American Journal of Sociology*, no. 97 (1992): 1639-1657.

<sup>3</sup> Mark Bray & Iveta Silova, "The Private Tutoring Phenomenon: International Patterns and Perspectives," in *Education in a Hidden Marketplace: Monitoring of Private Tutoring*, ed. I. Silova, B. Virginija, & M. Bray (New York: Open Society Institute, 2006), 27-40. I Mori and D. P. Baker, "The origin of universal shadow education: What the supplemental education phenomenon tells us about the postmodern institution of education," *Asia Pacific Education Review*, no. 11 (2010), 36-48.

<sup>4</sup> "Later selecteren, beter differentiëren," Onderwijsraad, Accessed June 13, 2022, <https://www.onderwijsraad.nl/publicaties/adviezen/2021/04/15/later-selecteren-beter-differentieren>.

<sup>5</sup> The drawing I made for the front page is inspired by this.

thesis. It is not the intention that the new system will result in children with parents with a higher socio-economic background becoming worse off. Therefore, diversity will also be mentioned, to establish a good educational system for every child. I will argue that there should be an appropriate educational fit and the opportunity to learn for every child, personally developed and shaped from their own capabilities. These two factors are the most important because personal education contributes not only to combating inequality of opportunity, but to the right development of capabilities of each child.

This leads me to the research question of this thesis: Should children take subjects at the level that suits them after the third year, in addition to the *Later Selection, Better Differentiation* advice of the education council? First I first look at the Capability Approach where I put a strong focus on the basic capabilities of choice and participation described by Sabina Alkire.<sup>6</sup> I will also discuss *structural injustice*, described by Iris Marion Young and Robin Zheng<sup>7</sup>, to indicate that inequality of opportunity is increased by the current school system. I apply this entire argument to Lorella Terzi's list of basic capabilities focused on educational functionings.<sup>8</sup> This makes it clear that more personal education will lead to better basic capabilities for educational functioning levels. Secondly, I look at the accessibility of shadow education, to clarify what the problem of shadow education entails. I argue that the blame does not lie with shadow education, but is part of a larger problem, namely that of the flawed educational system. In addition, I argue that shadow education is a good indication of well-formed education, because it shows good results. From here it becomes clear what the importance of personal education entails. Third, I look at what policy change at this level would entail. Both the economic perspective and the complexity are good reasons against my argument for personal education. But this does not hold up when we look at the right development for each child. For these reasons, I will conclude that personal education is necessary, as it counteracts inequality of opportunity as structural injustice and contributes to the development of children from all backgrounds.

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<sup>6</sup> Sabina Alkire, *Valuing freedoms: Sen's capability approach and poverty reduction*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 157.

<sup>7</sup> Iris Marion Young, "Equality of Whom? Social Groups and Judgments of Injustice," *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, 9, no. 1 (2001): 1-18. Robin Zheng, "What is my role in changing the system? A new model of responsibility for structural injustice," *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, 21 no.4 (2018): 869-885.

<sup>8</sup> Lorella Terzi, "The Capability to Be Educated," in *Amartya Sen's Capability Approach and Social Justice in Education*, ed. Melanie Walker and Elaine Unterhalter (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2007), 25-42.

## 2. The capability of choice and participation relates to the inequality of opportunity as structural injustice.

When discussing the educational system and inequality of opportunities, the Capability Approach offers an excellent perspective for two main reasons. First, it focuses on “the capability of human beings to lead lives they have reason to value and to enhance the substantive choices they have” (Sen, 1997). Second, both Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen, the principal proponents of the Capability Approach, argue that the social role of education is important for children's flourishing because of its intrinsic and instrumental value.<sup>9</sup> For example, it can contribute to the dialogue and public debate on political and social agreements.<sup>10</sup> It also contributes to an instrumental process role, enabling individuals to participate in decision-making processes. This can be done at the levels of domestic, community, and national processes. Furthermore, it has a distributive and an empowering role. For example, this makes it possible for marginalized groups to gain access to centers of power. In addition, education also has a great interpersonal impact because through education people learn to help themselves and others. As a result, people contribute to the well-being of society and to democratic freedoms.<sup>11</sup> Using the Capability Approach, I will argue for more personalized education, because it provides good development of the capability of choice and participation, and combats inequality of opportunity. This will lead to more freedom in the development of personal capabilities in meaningful areas for every child.

First, I will discuss the importance of the development of the capability of choice. Here it is important to learn to, partly, accept children as capable actors who can share their opinion. I will argue that this can certainly be applied to children in the third grade, because their development of important capabilities is already well advanced. For this, I look at Sen's argumentation of poverty in which he talks about basic capabilities. I connect this with Sabina

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<sup>9</sup> Amartya Kumar Sen, “The Standard of Living”, in *The Standard of Living*, ed. G. Hawthorn, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987), 1-142. Amartya Kumar Sen, *Inequality re-examined*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 1-207. Amartya Kumar Sen, *Development as freedom*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 1-366. Martha Nussbaum, *Frontiers of justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership*, (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), 1-512. Martha Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach*, (Harvard University Press, Harvard, MA, 2011), 1-237.

<sup>10</sup> Sen, “Inequality re-examined,” 18.

<sup>11</sup> Mario Biggeri and Marina Santi, “The Missing Dimensions of Children's Well-being and Well-becoming in Education Systems: Capabilities and Philosophy for Children,” *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*, 13, no. 3 (2012): 374-375.

Alkire's views on basic capabilities, to clarify the importance of making one's own choices regarding personal education, which also applies to children.

## 2.1 The factor of the capability of choice.

In his analysis of poverty, Sen states that there are basic capabilities for every person. Poverty could best be seen in terms of “basic capability failure,” rather than in terms of different social positions compared to others in society and income inadequacy. In this way, the absolute inability of persons to choose between valuable beings and doings, that can be seen as basic to human life, is mapped.<sup>12</sup> They are therefore a subset of all capabilities, which refers to the important functionings that should meet a minimum adequate level.<sup>13</sup> Although Sen does not define a list including all the basic capabilities, nor states how to identify them, he does name several elementary capabilities. These include the capability to be nourished, sheltered, clothed, and educated.<sup>14</sup> He further indicates that, given the “ambiguity of the concept of basicness” (Sen 1992), the notion of basic capabilities can be understood in several ways. For this reason, there are various conceptions surrounding the idea of basic capabilities, not only within the Capability Approach but also in its empirical application. Subsequently, I first look at an important specification of the idea of basic capabilities, to clarify the implications of the capability of choice when considering more personalized education.

Rather than defining basic needs with references to wants, needs, desires, or preferences, Alkire refers to absolute harm.<sup>15</sup> When a basic need is not met, the material functioning is damaged. Here you can think of the case of not being well fed, which implies an unsatisfied function. In addition, basic needs are expressed in terms of what is needed on a general level. When you think of being nourished at a general level, it's not about a specific description of what food is needed, but about dietary requirements. Both criteria indicate essential parts to prevent damage at a level of generality, which ensures that the application of basic capabilities can take place in different situations.<sup>16</sup> Further specification is then only required at the level of their operationalization in different cultures, contexts, and societies. Using these criteria, Alkire

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<sup>12</sup> Sen, “Inequality re-examined,” 109.

<sup>13</sup> Amartya Kumar Sen, “Equality of what?” in *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*, ed. S. McMurrin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 41. Sen, “Inequality re-examined,” 45. Ingrid Robeyns, “Will a basic income do justice to women?” *Analyse & Kritik*, 23, no. 1 (2001): 11.

<sup>14</sup> Sen, “Development as Freedom,” 69.

<sup>15</sup> Alkire, “Valuing freedoms,” 157.

<sup>16</sup> Alkire, “Valuing freedoms,” 160.

explains the meaning of the concept of basic capabilities as follows: “A basic capability is a capability to enjoy a functioning that is defined at a general level and refers to a basic need, in other words, a capability to meet a basic need (a capability to avoid malnourishment; a capability to be educated, and so on). The set of basic capabilities might be thought of as capabilities to meet basic human needs” (Alkire 2002). By defining it this way, it is possible for individuals to not fulfill certain basic needs in order to pursue other goals, as long as the relevant capabilities are preserved. As an example, Alkire mentions a hunger strike in which an individual attaches personal value to the exercise of justice. The functioning of being well nourished is affected in this case, but the life of the person in question can still be radiant.<sup>17</sup> This shows that the element of choice is an important factor in the concept of capabilities. I argue that the capability of choice should be well developed during education. This is only possible if children are actually given the opportunity to make choices, meaning that they should be included in the level choosing process. The process of choosing the level that suits the child is extremely important, and children should therefore have a say in this. The reason for this is that assigning levels to children coexists with a bigger issue, which I will now explain.

Teachers in general recommend a lower level of education for children with lower socio-economic backgrounds. In addition, parents with lower socio-economic backgrounds are less able to stand up for their children in a discussion. This also applies to discussions with teachers about the level a child will follow in high school.<sup>18</sup> The recommendation of teachers is often decisive in the current school system. As a result, inequality among children increases as an outcome of the current school system. This fact is important to recognize, as the educational policy should therefore be amended accordingly. To break this pattern, it is important that children themselves also have a say in the level that suits them. It is therefore crucial to understand to what extent the development of the capability of making choices should take place during the school period.

To answer the question to what extent children should have choices in the process, I will now look at the extent to which children can be perceived as capable agents who can make their own choices. When we talk about children who should have the freedom to make their own choices, we enter a debate about the “tension” between protecting well-being and freedom rights during

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<sup>17</sup> Alkire, “Valuing freedoms,” 171.

<sup>18</sup> “Later selecteren, beter differentieren,” Onderwijsraad, Accessed June 13, 2022, <https://www.onderwijsraad.nl/publicaties/adviezen/2021/04/15/later-selecteren-beter-differentieren>.

childhood” (Hart and Brando 2018, 296). At the heart of the discussion about children's rights is the tension that arises between protecting children's freedoms and achievements.<sup>19</sup> Hart and Brando's goal is to move beyond this problem and see children as capable social actors of certain fundamental factors in their lives. They agree that children are often skillful enough to form and express their opinions when taking their values, concepts of a thriving life, and aspirations into consideration. They clearly state that in the process of maturing, their communication skills develop, enabling them to “...express their own desires for what they feel will lead to their own well-being achievement and agency achievement.” (Hart and Brando 2018, 295-296). Furthermore, when the Capability Approach is applied to children, a position is taken regarding their capacity for self-determination. This is also confirmed by Bellet, Biggeri and Comim.<sup>20</sup> It also contributes to the better development of capabilities that children will need later in life when they become adults.<sup>21</sup> This idea is inspired by Biggeri and Karkara, who argue that developing and exercising certain competences, such as communication or making decisions, are of great importance for the development of children into adult social and political actors.<sup>22</sup> This indicates that children in high school can be considered as capable agents when choosing the level of subjects they want to follow. Furthermore, allowing children to have a voice in making this choice themselves, also contributes to the development of capabilities in general and combats inequality of opportunity.

Mortlock also indicates that children do not receive enough credit for their degree of capability, and that “there is a marked tendency in modern society for adults to consistently under-rate and undervalue the general capabilities of the young generation” (Mortlock 1987). Here he mentions examples of, among others, a 12-year-old English Channel swimmer and a 16-year-old glider pilot, arguing for children’s ability to achieve extraordinary goals and exceed expectations by adults. But these examples do not yet indicate that children can be regarded as fully responsible agents who can function independently in society. Stoecklin and Bonvin, warn

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<sup>19</sup> Gerison Lansdown, “The Evolving Capacities of the Child,” UNICEF, Accessed June 13, 2022, <https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/384-the-evolving-capacities-of-the-child.html>.

<sup>20</sup> Mario Biggeri, Jérôme Ballet and Flavio Comim. *Children and the capability approach*, (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 25.

<sup>21</sup> Caroline Sarojini Hart and Nicolás Brando, “A capability approach to children’s well-being, agency and participatory rights in education,” *European Journal of Education, Research, Development and Policy*, 53, no. 3 (2018): 296.

<sup>22</sup> Mario Biggeri and Ravi Karkara, “Transforming children’s rights into real freedom: A dialogue between children’s rights and the capability approach from a life cycle perspective,” in *Children’s rights and the capability approach*, ed. Daniel Stoecklin and Jean-Michel Bonvin, (Dordrecht: Springer, 2014), 19-41.

that children cannot be mistaken for competent agents.<sup>23</sup> Hart and Brando agree, stating that the possibility must be taken into account that children cannot fully estimate consequences and that they “may unwittingly compromise their well-being” (Hart and Brando 2018, 296). For this reason, Sen makes it clear that the capacity for understanding the consequences through making choices should be present.<sup>24</sup>

Furthermore, it seems intuitively unwise to equate children with adults and give them complete freedom of choice. Children are not good at estimating consequences. For example, a child who receives some pocket money would not quickly think of keeping it and saving it for later, for instance to save some money to buy a house. The child would be more likely to spend it on some candy, extra rides at the fair, a fun game, etc. And even without the idea of a house in someone's mind, a child would not be able to estimate what saving means and what the benefits could be. But a child must have the opportunity to learn to make choices. It is therefore important to understand to what extent the capability of choice plays a role when it comes to personal education.

I argue that giving children complete freedom of choice is clearly not the solution, but cooperation is important. When children reach the third grade, they have developed a certain amount of skills to be understood as capable individuals who can share their well-considered opinions and needs. The capabilities of the child and the appropriate level of a subject should therefore be examined in close consultation with the school, the parents, and the child itself. The children do not receive full responsibility to choose but must be consciously included in the decision-making process. This not only teaches children to make choices, but also gives teachers a clear picture of what children need. The level-tracking conversation should not only take place between parents and teachers, with the conversation often working to the detriment of parents from lower socio-economic backgrounds as indicated. By giving children a say in their choices, inequality of opportunity can be counteracted.

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<sup>23</sup> Daniel Stoecklin and Jean-Michel Bonvin, “The capability approach and children’s rights,” in *Agency and participation in childhood and youth: International applications of the capability approach in schools and beyond*, ed. Caroline Sarojini Hart, Mario Biggeri and Bernhard Babic, (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 65.

<sup>24</sup> Sen, “Inequality re-examined,” 59.

When we talk about learning to make choices, the process prior to making choices is more important than the choices themselves, according to Ballet, Biggeri and Comim.<sup>25</sup> It is important for children to have a voice in their learning process, "in terms of choice-guiding rules."<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, "these rules must be the subject of an argued discussion with children, who will thus come to participate in the elaboration of decision rules concerning themselves. The improvement of the learning process is the most challenging educational response that children and youths need, to acquire the instruments that are essential to make the choices they value. Moreover, through this process children and youths learn how to take responsibility for the choice process. This process also affords a potentially valuable opportunity to make a difference in society, which may be a fundamental component of a flourishing life" (Biggeri and Santi, 379). This reasoning illustrates that children do not only have the potential to be part of a social contract but entails that they should also be recognized as social actors with freedom of choice.<sup>27</sup> Understanding children as human beings capable of expressing different points of view and priorities, facilitates cooperation in developing more personalized education. Being able to make choices, and especially the process that precedes them, is fundamental to the development of individual capabilities. It is therefore extremely important to give children a voice in making a choice about the level of the subjects they want to follow. This is not about estimating just one level which should be the same for each subject, but the freedom of choice to determine which level suits each subject (I will come back to the importance of this system in chapter 3). The process of learning to make a choice not only contributes to the specific choice itself but helps a child to get to know who they are. Skills, such as communicating and arguing, are developed as a result. Because children learn at an early stage to communicate their intentions, teachers can better respond to the needs of a child. This promotes the development of each child. Furthermore, the Education Council mentions the importance of diversity in the classroom. This allows children from different backgrounds to experience different social classes, and children have the space to learn how society works. The Education Council therefore indicates that having children stay in the same class up to the third grade creates diversity that benefits every child. In addition, children not only get to experience other social

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<sup>25</sup> Jérôme Ballet, Mario Biggeri and Flavio Comim, "Children's agency and the capability approach: A conceptual framework," in *Children and the capability approach*, ed. Jérôme Ballet, Mario Biggeri and Flavio Comim, (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 35-37.

<sup>26</sup> Biggeri and Santi, "The Missing Dimensions," 379.

<sup>27</sup> Alkire, "Valuing freedoms," 380.

groups, they will also motivate each other more during their classes.<sup>28</sup> When the advice of the Education Council is followed, children up to the third grade are together in the same class. As a result, children learn the contents of different social classes and not just their own. Furthermore, children inspire each other more in the field of education. Because children come into contact more with each other, and learn better how society works, they also learn to argue better because they learn to act better towards different opinions. This is also well expressed when children have to indicate which level suits them.

In short, not only making choices should be seen as the instrumental capability for children, but also the process surrounding freedom of choice. Children learn to express their opinions, listen to others, evaluate alternatives, resolve differences, face challenges, avoid errors of reasoning, suggest proposals, and learn from empirical mistakes. The development of the personal capabilities of each child will improve thanks to the advice already given by de Education Council. Because of this, a large part of the formation of choice is possible, which contributes to arguing for the correct levels of subjects. Therefore, I argue when choosing the right levels of subjects, not only the teacher or a team of teachers should determine what is correct. This should also not only be determined between teachers and parents. Children should be included in this process as well because they are capable enough.

## 2.2 The factor of participation.

Another crucial element of the Capability Approach, according to Alkire, is the fundamental dimension of participation. She explains this concept based on the comparison between two countries, country A and country B. Alkire illustrates the extent to which these countries are met in their basic needs, such as shelter, food, health, and education. When, in terms of these basic needs, country A shows better results than country B, it can be concluded that A is better than B. This conclusion would even be the outcome of the results if A has achieved better results because the government enforced coercion. For this reason, the original objectives must be formulated differently. The basic need mentioned should also include elements of choice, freedom, and participation. The focus of individual choice and participation regarding freedom is therefore crucial and determinant for the Capability Approach, and the pursuit of well-

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<sup>28</sup> “Later selecteren, beter differentieren,” Onderwijsraad, Accessed June 13, 2022, <https://www.onderwijsraad.nl/publicaties/adviezen/2021/04/15/later-selecteren-beter-differentieren>.

being.<sup>29</sup> Accordingly, I argue, it is also crucial and determinant for the Capability Approach applied to education.

In addition to the element of choice as a basic need within the educational system, I will now focus on the element of participation as a basic need. To participate in a democratic society, people must participate in public deliberation.<sup>30</sup> For this reason, a democratic society should aim to produce capable agents.<sup>31</sup> An individual should be able to develop critical, creative, and caring way of thinking to participate in a democratic society. In this way, autonomy is increased, and individuals can participate in confrontations with other individuals who have different points of view and perspectives.<sup>32</sup> The development of communication skills<sup>33</sup> and complicated thinking<sup>34</sup> are therefore central here. To ensure that children develop their participatory skills, it is important that they develop a sense of responsibility, acquire planning skills, and learn to manage and monitor social contexts.<sup>35</sup> It is therefore important to contribute to the development of children within the educational sphere, in which they learn to participate. Children should be viewed as conscious, active, and responsible builders of their knowledge and growth.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, I argue that the element of participation therefore actually consists of several components and can be understood as intertwined with the factor of the capability of choice.

It is now clear that children grow up to be participatory actors in a society, which makes the understanding of groups very important. Even though children should not be conceived as a group, they should learn how to participate as an individual within a group. A potential risk of personalized education could be that children get used to having the attention mainly focused

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<sup>29</sup> Alkire, "Valuing freedoms," 167-170.

<sup>30</sup> Sen, "Development as Freedom," 1-207. Amartya Kumar Sen, "What Do We Want From A Theory of Justice," *The Journal of Philosophy*, 103, no. 5 (2006): 215-238. David A. Crocker, "Deliberative participation in local development," *Journal of Human Development*, 8, no. 3 (2007): 431-455.

<sup>31</sup> J. M. Bonvin, and D. Galster, "Making them employable or capable; Social integration policy at the crossroads," in *Education, Welfare and the Capabilities Approach*, ed. H.U. Otto and H. Ziegler (Barbara Budrich Publishers, 2010), 71-84. Nussbaum, "Creating Capabilities," 1-237.

<sup>32</sup> Marina Santi, "Democracy and inquiry. The internalization of collaborative rules in a community of philosophical discourse," in *Philosophical Foundations of Innovative Learning*, ed. D. Camby (Saint Agustin: Academia Verlag, 2007), 110-123. Nussbaum, "Creating Capabilities," 1-237.

<sup>33</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, (Beacon Press, Boston, 1981).

<sup>34</sup> Lipman, Matthew, *Thinking in Education*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, Mass, 2003).

<sup>35</sup> Hugh Matthews, "Children and regeneration: Setting and agenda for community participation and integration," *Children & Society*, 17, no. 4 (2003): 264-276.

<sup>36</sup> Ann Brown and J. Campione, "Guided discovery in a community of learners," in *Classroom Lessons: Integrating Cognitive Theory and Classroom Practice*, ed. K. McGilly, (MIT Press – Bradford Books, Cambridge, Mass, 1994), 229-270.

on themselves and consequently do not learn to participate in groups. In such a case it could be said children are raised and educated too individually. Sija Kuhumba explains this well when criticizing Sen's Capability Approach for portraying a too individualistic approach. Sen does not explain individuals as part of a community within his theory. For this reason, according to Kuhumba, Sen's conception of human development is too weak. There should also be a focus on the virtues of solidarity and cooperation. In contrast to Sen's capabilities approach, the Ubuntu philosophy does emphasize these virtues. By merging the Ubuntu philosophy and the Capability Approach, the community is included in the discourse of human development.<sup>37</sup> "By doing so, developmental policies in areas such as education, healthcare, social freedom, economic freedom and political freedom can aim at fostering the wellbeing of the entire community" (Kuhumba 2017, 128). It is therefore important that children learn what community means and how they can participate in a community. The consequence of my introduced personal education does not mean that the individual is the only important thing in an educational system. By allowing children to participate at all levels, classes will become diverse. Children at VMBO are not limited anymore to only communicating with their own social bubble because they are given the opportunity to follow subjects at a higher level, and vice versa. It could even be investigated to keep lessons such as gym and mentor classes as diverse as possible to make sure that children who mainly stick to one level still receive the positive outcomes of diversity, but this is just a short suggestion for increasing diversity. The subject of diversity will be discussed in more detail later in this thesis. For now, I want to make clear that more personal education does indeed lead to lead to children better understanding society due to the increase in (social) diversity.

I will now look at the differences in the conception of participation. I argue that there is a form of participation in which choice plays a role for children and a form of participation in which choice does not play a role. It can be understood as children making a conscious choice, or as an imposed choice where parents decide the form of participation for their child. For example, a child may be asked what kind of sport they would like to participate in, or the child may be instructed by their parents to engage in a specific sport. In both cases, there is a form of participation but the factor of 'making a choice' differs. We see this reflected in the current school system as well as within the advice of the Education Council. Within the school system,

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<sup>37</sup> Shija Kuhumba, "Amartya Sen's capability approach as theoretical foundation of human development," *Journal of Sociology and Development*, 1, no. 1 (2017): 128.

there is almost no room for a child to make a choice. Freedom of participation is therefore not fully present. But as just argued, children can partly be regarded as capable agents. Children should therefore have freedom of choice in order to participate appropriately. In this way, participation can be regarded as freedom of participation. By giving children the opportunity to participate at the level that suits them, the freedom of participation grows. For this reason, personal education is extremely important for equal opportunities of participation for each child.

Another important element of participation is the extent to which a child itself possesses the ability to participate. "...the range of 'possible functionings' for children—that is, their 'capability set'—may be restricted by their capacity and/or by their social and physical environment" (Biggeri and Santi, 378). Individual and social conversion factors are important for the ability to convert resources into capabilities.<sup>38</sup> These operate primarily through the educational system<sup>39</sup> and through the capabilities of parents.<sup>40</sup> This is a crucial element that needs to be discussed, as studies discussed above show that parents play a major role in the level children achieve in secondary school. This is because children with parents with a high socio-economic background have better access to shadow education<sup>41</sup>, something I will discuss in chapter 3. This is also because parents with a higher socio-economic background are more willing to think along and help their child when it comes to education.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, as indicated before, this group of parents is generally better at arguing, therefore, it is easier for them to convince teachers of the qualities of their child, resulting in better advice for the level that the child will follow. Parents not only influence the extent of shadow education children receive but also the advice that teachers give. It is therefore extremely important that the opportunities to participate are considered when discussing policy regarding education.

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<sup>38</sup> Amartya Kumar Sen, *Commodities and Capabilities*, (North-Holland, Amsterdam, 1985). Amartya Kumar Sen, "Capability: Reach and Limits," in *Debating Global Society: Reach and Limits of the Capability Approach*, ed. E. Chiappero-Martinetti (Fondazione Giacomo Feltrinelli, Milan, 2009), 15-28.

<sup>39</sup> H. U. Otto and H. Ziegler, "Capabilities and education," *Social Work and Society International Online Journal*, 4 no. 2 (2006), 269-287.

<sup>40</sup> Biggeri and Santi, "The Missing Dimensions," 378.

<sup>41</sup> "Education at a Glance 2021," OECD, Accessed June 1, 2022, <https://www-oecd-org.proxy.library.uu.nl/education/education-at-a-glance/>.

<sup>42</sup> Dieuwke Zwier, Sara Geven and Herman G. van der Werfhorst, "Social inequality in shadow education: The role of high-stakes testing," *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, 61, no. 6 (2021): 413.

Participation is strongly linked to the opportunities a child receives. For example, when parents have the opportunity to pay for shadow education, children will show better results. These better results often mean that they are admitted to better schools and have better chances in the labor market. In addition, self-development grows, because children have more room for the development of their own capabilities in and outside of school. Amartya Sen's argues in *Children and Human Rights* for the importance of the 'opportunity aspects' of freedom, meaning that the opportunities children have are strongly related to public policy and social programs. Freedom is not only about exercising your own choices, because, for example, you don't have complete control over whether someone blows cigarette air in your face, since this partly depends on the other person and possibly your own legal sanction.<sup>43</sup> It is therefore important that the opportunities children have are set in such a way that they can strive to become their best self. By teaching children at an early stage how they can make a choice and make sure that they can participate correctly, they can substantiate themselves and indicate what they need independent from their parents.

In *The Quality of Life*, Wulf Gaertner explains that opportunities are not the same for everyone. "Here, too, I want to mention only a few items: to receive further education, to be regularly employed, to take a holiday, to participate in social life. Some of these functionings are to some extent related to the notion of opulence. They have, however, a lot to do with a person's ability to choose between different ways of living, in other words, with a person's capability set."<sup>44</sup> Therefore, even if the rule I'm arguing for were set, there's a bigger problem involved when talking about opportunities. Opportunity inequality starts at the beginning of a child's life, and even before. As indicated before, the level of income and education play a major role in the support of shadow education children receive. For example, when parents do not master the Dutch language, it will be not as easy for the child(ren) to receive help from home with even simple questions about their homework. Even when opportunities within the school system are as equal and free as possible for the child, there is still the problem of opportunity inequality outside of school, which has a major impact on a child's development. This is an extremely important element that cannot be ignored in the educational policy, because, as indicated, it affects the education a child receives. Therefore, to assure a justified educational system, it

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<sup>43</sup> Amartya Kumar Sen, "Children and Human Rights," *Indian Journal of Human Development*, 1, no. 1 (2007): 243-244.

<sup>44</sup> Wulf Gaertner, "Amartya Sen: Capability and Well-Being," In *The Quality of Life*, ed. Wulf Gaertner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 2.

must be included in the policy. In the next subchapter, I will argue for the importance of more personal education when considering the child's freedom within the educational system. Here I will also show the extensiveness of the influence of inequality of opportunity within the educational system, which should be strongly taken into consideration when discussing the right way of education.

### 2.3 Structural injustice within the educational system.

Inequality of opportunity is a serious problem in Dutch society. This problem of inequality of opportunity can also be found in the educational system. Moreover, the educational system plays an important role in reducing or exacerbating inequality of opportunity in general. By understanding that this is part of structural injustice, it becomes clear that the educational policy must properly take into consideration the different social classes in society. Solving the problem of inequality of opportunity is beyond the scope of this thesis, but I want to make clear that social class plays a major role in the freedom a child enjoys, also within education. This cannot be ignored when implementing the educational policy. It is therefore vital that insights into inequality of opportunity in children are included in the process of choosing the right level of education. By including structural injustice as an argument for more personal education, it becomes clear how society currently works and that certain children are disadvantaged in their freedoms by the current system. By recognizing that inequality of opportunity can be understood as a structural injustice, it becomes clear that school systems contribute to this, albeit unintentionally. Therefore, the educational policy must change to personal education, in order to combat inequality of opportunity among children. In this chapter, I look at the notion of *structural injustice* as developed by Iris Marion Young in *Equality of who? Social groups and judgments about injustice*<sup>45</sup> and Robin Zheng in *What is my role in changing the system? A new model of accountability for structural injustice*.<sup>46</sup>

Young describes structural injustice as "... a set of reproduced social processes that reinforce one another to enable or constrain individual actions in many ways. What we refer to by groups differentiation of gender, race, class, age, and so on, in the context of evaluating inequalities as unjust, are structural social relations that tend to privilege some more than others. Identifying patterned inequalities on measures of well-being among these groups is thus only the beginning,

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<sup>45</sup> Young, "Equality of Whom?," 1-18.

<sup>46</sup> Zheng, "What is my role," 869-885.

of identification of these forms of basic and persisting injustice...” (Young 2001, 2). Inequalities in resources and/or opportunities are thus caused by rules and relationships of social institutions. Decisions are made by others, which can affect the life of an individual. It is not due to luck, chance, or individual preferences and choices. For example, when issues affecting poor rural populations are discussed by a government agency in the city center, this group is less likely to be able to influence such decisions, because they do not live close to the place where influence can be exercised. This is not to be regarded as bad luck, but as the effects of institutional routines of public business leaders and officials.<sup>47</sup>

People are born into a certain social position in society. In this thesis, the focus is on the social class of the socio-economic group of a child and its parents, and the consequences associated with this in the current educational system. When people are in a low socio-economic group, this can be understood as a social class that is part of structural injustice. In this situation, structural injustice entails that this particular social group is the victim of the current educational system, because the educational system provides room for inequality of opportunity. As a result, this social group experiences limitations in the education they enjoy, compared to people of a higher socio-economic background. The outcome of the social position that children with a low socio-economic background experience in education is worse compared to that of other children. The current educational system is so flawed that parents with a high socio-economic background purchase forms of shadow education. This only widens the gap between children with different socio-economic positions. As a result, inequality of opportunity increases. As indicated, this is not the fault of shadow education, but the outcome of poor education in schools. Because schools provide flawed education, inequality of opportunity is given room to exist.

Furthermore, inequality of opportunity due to less personal education can be understood as a structural injustice because it is based on institutional routines. The educational system is designed to such a degree that children with a high socio-economic background have more opportunities to flourish, since this group has, among others, the benefit of developing their capabilities properly by obtaining extra help outside of school hours. The educational system can therefore be understood as an institution with certain routines that allow inequalities of opportunity to exist, and even increase. As argued before, the educational system is flawed because forms of shadow education are required for children to obtain the right education.

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<sup>47</sup> Young, “Equality of Whom?,” 8.

Shadow education is necessary for the current educational system, but only accessible to a specific group of children. This reinforces inequality of opportunity.

Then there is the bigger picture of systematic injustice that needs to be solved. Young argues that each individual is responsible for the structural injustice they contribute to.<sup>48</sup> However, this argument leaves too much room for certain systems to remain intact, because responsibility is placed with an individual or a smaller group of identifiable people, and not with the system itself. It helps to understand why structural injustice exists, but it does not aid in finding a solution. To assign responsibility to someone or something is beyond the scope of this paper. However, it is important to comprehend how the system works to understand that the policy has to change.

The Education Council does, however, allow the current system to return after the third grade. Children would still be labeled as VMBO, HAVO, and VWO. I argue that the complete system would have to be modified to actually make change happen. I do so with the help of Zheng's argumentation of structural injustice. Zheng explains the following: "the term 'structural injustice' refers to the sum total of oppressions, and the ways in which they interact with and compound one another, taken holistically."<sup>49</sup> The different structures that social systems consist of make it more difficult to bring about change within them. For this reason, pressure must be applied throughout the entire system. Only then can a slow step-by-step evolution be delivered to create a new equilibrium, or on the contrary, there can be room for changes that endure.<sup>50</sup>

When the advice of the Education Council is applied, there will be room for old patterns to return after the third grade. In other words, after the third grade, inequality of opportunity is given the opportunity to flourish again. As argued, inequality of opportunity can be understood as a structural injustice within the educational field. For this reason, it should not have a chance to arise. By giving each child personal education, in which children can make choices and participate according to equal opportunities, each child gets the opportunity to develop their capabilities well. Additionally, according to Zheng, it is not only individual actions and attitudes that need to change, the unjust system itself needs to change as well.<sup>51</sup> The social roles that a person possesses determine the individual's place within the system, which is why individuals

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<sup>48</sup> Zheng, "What is my role," 869.

<sup>49</sup> Zheng, "What is my role," 871.

<sup>50</sup> Zheng, "What is my role," 877.

<sup>51</sup> Zheng, "What is my role," 869.

bear responsibility through their social roles.<sup>52</sup> Social roles are both normative, because they prescribe how an individual in a certain role should behave, as well as predictive, because they express someone who will perform in that role to the extent of a belief. These social roles also consist of relationships with others, because social roles and rules are based on certain appropriate forms of behavior.<sup>53</sup> Zheng explains further that systems such as societies function as one organism, which allows them to stay together. Each organ knows its function, and together all organs function in a structured and coordinated way. The system would always strive to restore order when certain roles stray from function, in this way the system keeps itself intact.<sup>54</sup> For this reason, I argue that it is important for change to be made throughout the system, and not just for a part of it. If the advice of the Education Council is followed, children remain obliged to follow one level of education after the third grade. As a result, there is no room for personal education, which, as argued, leads to poorer development of everyone's capabilities. There is, however, a difference in the extent to which capabilities are developed among children as a result of shadow education. This in turn leads to inequality of opportunity, which is possible because the school system itself does not provide good education.

The educational system must be adapted to such a degree that inequality of opportunity is included in policy-making as an issue that must be countered. Having all children follow one level of education after the third grade brings the new system to a halt, which leads to the return of old patterns, not change, because the system itself was not changed as a whole. By not just making changes in one place, but in the entire system, the possibility to restore the balance between all children arises. Education is a vital factor in reducing or exacerbating inequality of opportunity, and for this reason, it should be carried out in the best way possible.

Another important factor is the space given for diversity to exist when personal education is applied. As stated before, the Education Council itself also states that diversity contributes to the development of children. In addition, Brighouse indicates that education can help children learn more about all forms of society that they do not get involved with within their own parental home.<sup>55</sup> This should not only be learned from education, but also from the environment in which you find yourself. This supports my hypothesis that there must be personal education. If the

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<sup>52</sup> Zheng, "What is my role," 870.

<sup>53</sup> Zheng, "What is my role," 873.

<sup>54</sup> Zheng, "What is my role," 874.

<sup>55</sup> Harry Brighouse, *On Education*, (Londen; New York: Routledge, 2006), 28-61.

system lets each child follow the subject at their own preferred level, there would be much more room for diversity in the classes, also after the third grade, which would contribute positively to personal development as well. It is therefore important for every child to receive personalized education in which, among others, diversity is present to a large extent. This way, children obtain information from other social classes and will therefore have a better understanding of society and of how to develop outside their own social class. By keeping school classes mixed for as long as possible, children are not only raised in their own social class, but they also see how other social classes work. As a result, they learn to better understand society, which contributes to their development. The Education Council also understands this, among other things, as a strong argument for implementing their own advice. When children are only allowed to follow one level again after the third grade, this important factor of diversity disappears. On the other hand, when children who would normally only follow VMBO subjects are given the opportunity to follow HAVO or VWO subjects, the classes remain much more diverse, which leads to better developments of their capabilities.

It can be argued against this that, when assuming the advice of the Education Council, children up to and including the third grade do have the space to participate with a substantially/significantly diverse group. Providing children with personal education after the third grade can then be seen as having merely a small impact and the advice of the Education Council can be regarded as 'enough'. However, this view conflicts with the freedom that children should be able to enjoy. In this case, children should experience the freedom to receive a good education in which they can develop themselves in the best manner possible, not where they can develop themselves well 'enough'. Restricting this freedom, in whatever way, unavoidably restricts the child's development as well. Children then no longer have the freedom to develop their capabilities and to fully prepare themselves for the life they will have as an adult. A counterargument such as a "small impact" only indicates how accepting we are of a flawed system, rather than bringing about change and granting the greatest development possible to every child.

When children have received various levels of education up to, and including, the third grade, it can still be argued that children do not experience any difference in the level of subjects they follow. In other words, it can occur that children must take all subjects at the same level, simply because that is the level that they have. However, this is only a preliminary argument, as it would entail that the policy do not need to change massively to achieve major change for certain

students. Furthermore, children do differ in qualities. For example, a child can be very good at math, and less good at history. In any case, it sounds intuitively incorrect to argue that a child has exactly the same level of each subject. The counterargument therefore does not hold, and only provides more room to argue that the educational policy must change to develop personalized education.

I am strongly aware that the structural injustice within and outside of education is more substantial than what I have described here. The aim of this thesis is not to completely solve inequalities of opportunity among children and to map out every detail that belongs to this difficult and big topic, but to show how much structural injustice is nourished by the current educational system. This gives reason to include structural injustice within the argumentation of personal education. The focus lies on the inequality of opportunity, to show the connection between inequality of opportunity, diversity, freedom, the basic capabilities, and personal education.

#### 2.4 More personal education leads to better basic capabilities for educational functioning levels.

I will now discuss the list of basic capabilities for educational functioning levels compiled by Lorella Terzi. I will apply my argumentation to this list and investigate each point to see whether it delivers better results and creates more freedom for children, based on the argumentation that I have presented. The list looks as follows:

- “• *Literacy*: being able to read and to write, to use language, and discursive reasoning functionings
  
- *Numeracy*: being able to count, to measure, to solve mathematical questions, and to use logical reasoning functionings
  
- *Sociality and participation*: being able to establish positive relationships with others and to participate in social activities without shame
  
- *Learning dispositions*: being able to concentrate, to pursue interests, to accomplish tasks, to enquire
  
- *Physical activities*: being able to exercise and being able to engage in sports activities

- *Science and technology*: being able to understand natural phenomena, being knowledgeable on technology, and being able to use technological tools
- *Practical reason*: being able to relate means and ends and being able to critically reflect on one's and others' actions" (Terzi 2007).

For the first point, Terzi argues that functions such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing are essential for promoting communication functions and learning discursive reasoning. Furthermore, she argues that when developing literacy in the broad sense, it is also important to be able to express yourself in different forms. Thought and imagination are important here, as are creativity and faith.<sup>56</sup> Nussbaum (2003) states that the intrinsic value of literacy is crucial for human dignity.<sup>57</sup> Learning from this position is important not only for learning capabilities but also for developing human skills in the broad sense.

The first point from Terzi's list, literacy, has declined sharply in the Netherlands in recent years. The Education Council states that VMBO pupils have a less stimulating reading environment at home than pupils from HAVO and VWO. Furthermore, it appears that children are less likely to pick up a book when it is not discussed in class. As a result, a child does not learn what kind of books they find interesting, and therefore do not succeed in finding the right book.<sup>58</sup> When personal conversations between the teacher and the child do not take place, children are to a certain extent prevented from finding the right books that fits their interest and can help them grow in their capabilities. This can be understood as a negative influence. By educating children in a more personal manner, teachers obtain a good insight into what children find interesting. Teachers can then motivate and stimulate children to read and participate. Furthermore, inequality of opportunity leads to large divisions in society. Through personal education, the problems that children experience while studying can be addressed in a better way. This facilitates the children's understanding and will lead to better results on tests. Thanks to a more personal educational system, it is therefore not only easier for children to develop in an educational field, but also to develop as human beings participating in society. Through

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<sup>56</sup> Terzi, "The Capability to," 37-38.

<sup>57</sup> Martha Nussbaum, "Capabilities as Fundamental Entitlements: Sen and Social Justice," *Feminist Economics*, 9 no. (2-3) (2003): 33-59.

<sup>58</sup> "Taal en Rekenen," Onderwijsinspectie, Accessed June 13, 2022, <https://www.onderwijsinspectie.nl/onderwerpen/peil-onderwijs/taal-rekenen>.

personal education, children from all kinds of different social classes are given the opportunity to fully develop themselves in *literacy*. This prevents inequality of opportunity.

The second point that Terzi identifies, numeracy, together with literacy, belongs to the core of education. Functions like counting, comparing, measuring, and anything related to logical reasoning contributes to a better understanding of the world. It also helps children to better understand their own place in the world.<sup>59</sup> This function also goes beyond the importance of education itself and responds to the development of children in being human. The Education Council states that much potential for growth remains untapped when it comes to math skills. According to them, this is because the capabilities and needs of a child themselves are not properly aligned when teaching math.<sup>60</sup> Personalized education leaves more room to consider the capabilities and needs of individual children. Hence, personalized education would contribute to improving math skills, which in turn contributes to a better understanding of the world and a person's place in it. It is essential to provide more personalized education as it contributes to a better understanding and knowledge of everything that encompasses life. Failure to implement more personal education is therefore a restriction on the freedoms that children should have and develop for themselves. It also increases inequality of opportunity because of the problems surrounding shadow education. Children with parents with a low socio-economic background learn less well to understand how the world works because the school system is not good enough to teach them. This is while children with parents with a high socio-economic background do learn this with the help of forms of shadow education.

The third point, sociality and participation, becomes possible when personal education is implemented. This is because of the degree of diversity the regulations will entail. As I have argued, when children from different social classes are put together in classes, they learn to handle and understand society as a whole and not just within their own social bubble. This makes it easier for them to form their own opinions outside of their social bubble and consequently develop their emphatical skills. Furthermore, Terzi argues that “participation is also crucial in education and more so when considering the essential role it plays in the exercise of agency. In this sense, the capability of positively participating in educational activities may

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<sup>59</sup> Terzi, “The Capability to,” 38.

<sup>60</sup> “Veel leerlingen leren niet zo goed rekenen als ze kunnen,” Onderwijsinspectie, Accessed June 13, 2022, <https://www.onderwijsinspectie.nl/actueel/nieuws/2021/04/09/veel-leerlingen-leren-niet-zo-goed-rekenen-als-ze-zouden-kunnen> .

well promote the adult mature capability so important for Sen's approach” (Terzi 2007). Further, according to Terzi, personal and social development provides a fundamental foundation for learning. Learning involves social functions such as collaboration, being supported or being supportive, and being part of a group.<sup>61</sup> More personal education, therefore, contributes to promoting more social contacts, also outside of their social classes, because diversity is strongly present.

The fourth and fifth points, learning dispositions and physical activities, can be considered as the beautiful outcomes of applying more personalized education. Personal education leads to better knowledge of the subjects. Because children better understand what the subjects are about, they are also better able to concentrate and complete tasks. An example was just given on the basis of books. When children read more books, their knowledge would increase not only about subjects but about the world. This allows them to pursue their general interests. They will also be better at communicating, making it easier for them to make inquiries. In addition, due to greater self-confidence and less stress, children will be better at physical activities.

The sixth point, science and technology, are of great importance to experience and understand the natural world and its manifestations. It is important that children learn to use different technologies.<sup>62</sup> This coincides with general learning achievements which, as I argue, are more effective when more personalized education takes place. In this way, each child has the space to learn to deal with technologies in their own way, instead of according to a standardized system that does not take into account personal potential.

The last point, practical reason, is specified by Terzi as “the ability to relate means and ends and to reflect on actions. This, on the one hand, relates to the ability to evaluate and form independent judgments, while, on the other, establishing the prerequisites for the more mature capability to exercise practical reason in terms of forming a conception of the good and planning one's life” (Terzi 2007). I argue that this point shows the importance of all my arguments. When more personal education is instituted, there is room for every child to develop themselves in complete freedom, and therefore also develop their own practical reason. By learning to make choices, understand the consequences of these choices, and to participate in the class setting I

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<sup>61</sup> Terzi, “The Capability to,” 38.

<sup>62</sup> Terzi, “The Capability to,” 38.

argue for, it is possible for children who are victims of inequality of opportunity, boys and girls in general, and children who are not victims of the current system, to develop their capabilities in complete freedom. This makes it possible for everyone to participate in the labor market and within society.

It can be argued that the list I propose here, as a basis for establishing more personalized education, is not exhaustive, or may even contain too many elements. For instance, Martha Nussbaum also has a list of central human functional capabilities that could be interpreted as the list.<sup>63</sup> Ultimately, each of these lists would show that more personalized education contributes to improving the development of each child's capabilities.

Personal preferences will eventually make some lists seem more important than others, but the argumentation surrounding this discussion is beyond the scope of this paper. The point I am making with this list is that it indicates what children are supposed to learn in school. The capabilities proposed in this list can only come about properly when they receive personal education.

## 2.5 The basic capabilities and structural injustice intertwined.

The factors I have discussed in this chapter are interdependent on each other to counteract inequality of opportunity. In addition, it shows that personal education is important not only because of the inequality of opportunity that has room to exist in education, but because it contributes to the development of the capabilities of each child. Concerning the choice factor as discussed in chapter 2.1, it became clear that children in the third grade can be partially regarded as capable agents who can make conscious choices. Children have sufficiently developed the capabilities necessary at that age. But they should not be construed as fully capable agents. In the third grade, children are, for example, not yet able to see the consequences sufficiently. It is therefore important that children are included in the process but are not yet regarded as fully responsible to make the choice for themselves. When children are partly engaged in the choice-making process, it will also contribute to inequality of opportunity because parents with a lower socio-economic background are less able to discuss matters. As a

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<sup>63</sup> Martha Nussbaum, *Women and human development: The capabilities approach*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 78-79.

result, they often fail to convince teachers of their children's capabilities. By involving children in the process, they not only learn to develop capabilities at an early stage with which they can make choices, but it also becomes clearer for teachers what the interests of the child are. Direct contact between all parties would lead to a better agreement. Personal education would also ensure that children develop these personal capabilities. Making choices regarding the fitted level of education and the learning process beforehand is strongly linked to the possibility to participate. It is namely important that children learn to participate as an individual in society, as well as to be able to make choices for themselves as individuals. This can come about well when personal education is implemented, as it contributes to vastly diverse classes. However, participation is only possible for every child if they are given a fair chance to do so. Opportunity inequality clearly plays an important role here and it is therefore important to give children equal opportunities to participate so that they actually have equal opportunities. This is only possible if the whole system is adapted, and not just up to the third class. By understanding the different types of participation possibilities, and including children in the decision-making process of educational levels, it becomes clear that more personal education is important for the development of children's capabilities and combatting inequality of opportunity. These are very important aspects when we talk about personal education. It became clear that inequality of opportunity is part of a structural injustice, which also presents itself within the current educational system. Because education and inequality of opportunity cannot be seen apart from each other, it became clear that education policy must take into account each child as an individual to a great extent. Personal education is therefore important, which was further confirmed when I looked at Terzi's list. In this way, the educational system will ensure freedom in the development of capabilities in meaningful areas for every child.

### **3. Empirical research and the educational market.**

It is now clear that more personal education is necessary for the proper development of the basic capabilities of choice and participation, and for combating inequality of opportunity as structural injustice. It is essential to understand the efficacy and importance of more personalized education, I first look at the origin, content, and consequences of shadow education. By understanding what shadow education entails, it can become clear why it exists and to what extent the problem lies with shadow education itself, or whether it is part of a larger, systematic problem. From this, I argue that there is actually much to be learned from shadow

education, because this form of extracurricular support produces good results and can thus provide a guideline for improving and instituting more personalized education.

### 3.1 Accessibility of shadow education.

*Lyceo* is a Dutch company that provides shadow educational services. They indicate that students score, on average, 0.9 points higher (on a 1-10 scale) on the final exam after following an exam training from Lyceo.<sup>64</sup> This kind of extracurricular help is expensive and is therefore mainly accessible to children whose parents can afford it. Several studies have shown that children with a high socio-economic background participate more in shadow education than children with a low socio-economic background. But not only the financial situation plays a role here. Parents with a high socio-economic background also often have more knowledge about the situation surrounding educational institutions and are often more involved in the career of their children.<sup>65</sup>

In 2018, the OECD, an organization for economic co-operation and development, looked at social inequality within developed countries, focusing on data concerning children who do go to college and those who do not. The gap between children of low-educated parents and children of highly educated parents was found to be large in all countries. There was a clear correlation between children with low-educated parents and the low degree to which these children progress to higher education. In addition, this group of children also appeared to drop out of their studies more quickly, leading to a growth in the educational inequality gap.<sup>66</sup> Because on average more and more people move on to higher education, competition in education and on the labor market is increasing. This creates a growing pressure on students in primary and secondary education to perform as good as possible by means of high-test scores.<sup>67</sup> This is reinforced by high-stake tests becoming increasingly important for admission to a good follow-up education. Altogether, this is leading to a huge rise of shadow education, because education

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<sup>64</sup> “Examentraining,” Lyceo, Accessed June 13, 2022, <https://www.lyceo.nl/examentraining/>.

<sup>65</sup> Zwieter, Geven, van der Werfhorst, “Social inequality in shadow education,” 413.

<sup>66</sup> “Education at a Glance 2021,” OECD, Accessed June 1, 2022, <https://www-oecd-org.proxy.library.uu.nl/education/education-at-a-glance/>.

<sup>67</sup> Claudia Buchmann, Dennis J. Condrón, & Vincent J. Roscigno, “Shadow education, American style: Test preparation, the SAT and college enrollment,” *Social Forces*, 89, no. 2 (2010), 436-441, <https://www.jefftk.com/buchmann2010.pdf>.

is expanding, and the use of these high stakes tests is increasing.<sup>68</sup> This is substantiated when we look at more empirical research, which shows a strong correlation between the education level and income of parents and the extent to which children receive shadow education. For example, Mark Bray and Percy Kwok conducted research at six different high schools in Hong Kong, examining three groups of 630 students. In Hong Kong, shadow education is used to ensure that children score higher on high-stakes tests so that they have a better chance of being admitted to a good university. The results showed that the more educated the parents were, the more likely the child was to receive some form of shadow education. This study also showed that lower-income parents were less likely to send their children to tutoring.<sup>69</sup> A similar study conducted by George Psacharopoulos and George Papakonstantinou showed similar results. They conducted their research in Greece looking at 3,057 first-year students. They were asked whether they had received some form of shadow education, such as tutoring or a preparatory course, during their last year of secondary school. The research showed that both a higher level of education and a higher income of the parents were decisive for receiving shadow education.<sup>70</sup> Because shadow education is mainly accessible to children of parents with a higher income and a higher level of education, social inequalities among children increase.<sup>71</sup>

### 3.2 The discussion and cause surrounding shadow education.

The question that arises here is whether shadow education is the cause of this growing inequality, or whether the problem lies elsewhere. Within philosophy there is much criticism on forms of shadow education. For this thesis, I look at Daniel Halliday's argument. Halliday

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<sup>68</sup> George F. Madaus, "The influence of testing on the curriculum," in *Critical issues in curriculum: Eighty-seventh yearbook of the national society for the study of education*, ed. Laurel N. Tanner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 83-121.

<sup>69</sup> Mark Bray & Percy Kwok, "Demand for private supplementary tutoring: Conceptual considerations, and socio-economic patterns in Hong Kong," *Economics of Education Review*, 22, no. 6 (2003), 611-620. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0272775703000323> (Accessed June 1, 2022).

<sup>70</sup> George Psacharopoulos, & George Papakonstantinou, "The real university cost in a "free" higher education country," *Economics of Education Review*, no. 24 (2005), 103-108. <https://eclass.uoa.gr/modules/document/file.php/PPP445/Psach%20&%20Papak.pdf>. (Accessed June 1, 2022).

<sup>71</sup> C. Buchmann, D.J. Condrón and V.J. Roscigno, "Shadow education, American style: Test preparation, the SAT and college enrollment," *Social Forces*, 89, no. 2 (2010): 435-462. Mark Brak, *The Challenge of Shadow Education: Private Tutoring and Its Implications for Policy Makers in the European Union*, Luxembourg: European Commission, 2011. Mark Bray, "Shadow education: Comparative perspectives on the expansion and implications of private supplementary tutoring," *Procedia—Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 77 (2013): 412-420.

argues why there are moral reasons for imposing restrictions on forms of shadow education. In doing so, he looks at the response that parents have, namely purchasing forms of shadow education. Parents are willing to do this because parents always want to help their children as much as possible. According to Halliday, shadow education is objectionable when the balance between the educational screening function and the development function is disturbed. Here, the “educational screening consists of various ways in which educational institutions sort students according to broadly meritocratic criteria, so as to play their familiar gatekeeping role with respect to places at universities, coveted jobs, and so on. Education’s developmental function consists of the various ways in which institutions train children for citizenship, prepare them for autonomous life as adults, and otherwise contribute to their well-being (present and future)” (Halliday 2016, 151). Because the educational screening is at the expense of educational development, Halliday argues that the educational market is causing an arms race problem.<sup>72</sup> Halliday mainly focuses on counteracting further arms race problems, instead of tackling the problem at the source. The focus of his paper is mainly on the problem of shadow education, and not on its origin and what the bigger picture entails. With the help of Jason Brennan and Peter M. Jaworski, I show that shadow education is not the problem, but purely a response to a problem.

Brennan and Jaworski argue that “there are ... things that should not be bought and sold, but that’s only because they are things people shouldn’t have in the first place.”, and that “...there are legitimate moral worries about how we buy, trade, and sell, but no legitimate worries about what we buy, trade, and sell” (Brennan and Jaworski 2015). Furthermore, they argue that “If you may do it for free, you may do it for money” (Brennan and Jaworski 2015). In conclusion, a person is allowed to buy and sell something, if it is something you may have, possess, use, and dispose of.<sup>73</sup> It is not the market itself that introduces a wrongness. If there is something on the market that can be considered wrong, it was already wrong before it came on the market.<sup>74</sup> Brennan and Jaworski substantiate this with an example of dog fighting. Dogs are unfairly mistreated in these fights and buying a ticket to such a fight is generally perceived as something that should not be done. But it's not the tickets here that shouldn't be for sale, but the dogfight itself shouldn't exist. The wrongness didn't start when the ticket sales hit the market, but with

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<sup>72</sup> Daniel Halliday, “Private Education, Positional Goods, and the Arms Race Problem,” *Politics, Philosophy & Economics*, no. 15 (2016): 152-159.

<sup>73</sup> Jason Brennan & Peter M. Jaworski, *Markets Without Limits*, (London; New York: Routledge, 2015). 10.

<sup>74</sup> Brennan & Jaworski, “Markets,” 10.

the genesis of dogfighting itself. That's why Brennan and Jaworski introduce *The Principle of Wrongful Possession*. This entails that “If it is inherently morally wrong for someone to possess (do, use) X, then (normally) it is morally wrong for that person to sell X” (Brennan and Jaworski 2015).

I will now show that when we apply this principle to the educational market, it becomes clear where the problem occurs. Forms of shadow education are possible because it is a reaction to the current poor educational system. Parents send their children here because children are lagging in normal classes, sometimes they can't keep up, they don't get the results needed for further education, they don't receive personal help in the classroom and therefore need extra help, etc. It is not wrong for children to receive the right education, it is wrong that the current educational system, unfortunately, cannot provide this, which means that shadow education is necessary. It is morally wrong to offer *bad* education, and therefore it is morally wrong to sell *bad* education. That does not make it morally wrong to sell *good* education, such as forms of shadow education. Because the educational system in the Netherlands is lagging, the arising of the shadow education market is possible on the existing scale. If the educational system were constructed in such a way that it can provide children with good education, shadow education would not be necessary in the first place. The problem, therefore, lies with the educational system itself, and not with shadow education.

### 3.3 What we can learn from shadow education.

In addition, I argue that shadow education is not only something that can be interpreted as good, but it also actually goes beyond this. Shadow education produces good results, and it should not be regarded as a negative expression of the current flawed education in the Netherlands, but as an inspiration for improving this flawed current system. According to Fabrizio Bernardi and Gabriele Ballarino, cultural and/or economic factors should not play a role in the accessibility of education, it aims to be accessible for everyone and needs to ensure equal opportunities for all students.<sup>75</sup> By examining why shadow education produces these good results, the current system can learn and improve its own policy, resulting in more equality among children and

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<sup>75</sup> Fabrizio Bernardi & Gabriele Ballarino, “Education as the great equalizer: a theoretical Framework,” in *Education, Occupation and Social Origin: A Comparative Analysis of the Transmission of Socio-Economic Inequalities*, ed. Fabrizio Bernardi & Gabriele Ballarino (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2016), 1-19.

better education for everyone. The entire content of this argument becomes clear thanks to this thesis. Now I will first look at the company Lyceo, so that it becomes clear what exactly it is that they offer that produces good results for children. This can then be regarded as a major source of inspiration for the current educational system to adapt the policy to more personal education.

In addition to homework guidance, tutoring, and exam training, Lyceo also offers other services such as fear of failure training, summer school, study choice advice, refresher courses, and much more. Thanks to this help, children develop better study skills, more self-confidence, disadvantages are eliminated, and children receive extra explanations and exercises.<sup>76</sup> It is now clear that Lyceo responds to the needs of the child, whereas the current educational system only adopts one guideline from which there is not much that can be deviated from. Because they personally look at where in the teaching material a child does not understand the material anymore and provide what this child needs to continue and improve, it is possible to score good results. Children, therefore, receive more personal attention and deliver better results. This is not the only part personal education contributes to, it also ensures less stress, more self-confidence, and more free time. Because children better understand what the teaching material is about, they can do their homework better. This leaves more free time for other important aspects of a child's development, such as play and sports. More personal education contributes to both good results and good development of children themselves. It can therefore be understood as the right form of education.

Another problem that arises in the current Dutch school system is the labels VMBO, HAVO, and VWO that are given to children. Children are expected to be equally good in every subject they take. The effect of this is that the subject that children are worst at determines the level they follow. Because if this didn't happen, there's a good chance that kids would have to repeat the year or fail their final exams. So, for example, if a child is less good at history and Dutch, and can handle that at VMBO level, but is good at mathematics, which the child could handle at HAVO or even VWO, the child would always be placed at VMBO level. More personalized education would therefore contribute to the development of capabilities appropriate to children. By having children take subjects at the level they can handle, they will gain better knowledge about the material. When children do not understand a subject well, concentration and

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<sup>76</sup> “Werkwijze,” Lyceo, Accessed June 13, 2022, <https://www.lyceo.nl/over-lyceo/onze-werkwijze/>.

motivation decrease. With more personalized education, children will stay more focused and motivated because they understand what they are doing. They will be challenged and can develop their interests because they can participate during the lesson.

Furthermore, because children take subjects at the level that suits them, there is more room to develop their capabilities during the lessons, instead of losing time on the stress of not understanding a subject and the consequences that come with it, such as being anxious about failing. Shadow education works so well because children receive help from the moment they don't understand the subject anymore. They gain support from the point they no longer understand the material. It is not the same as during school hours where they walk into the classroom and simply must participate in what is being presented, but rather that the child's needs are personally looked at, in which the child itself also has a saying. By teaching subjects according to the appropriate level, children gain the opportunity to start from the point they can understand the subject, and not from a moment where they are already confused and are not able to keep up anymore.

An important aspect that should be taken into consideration is the way in which children study. Studies show that gender influences the way in which a child studies. It should therefore be included in the argumentation about more personal education. For example, it appears that when girls are in their moment of rest, for example when they listen to the teacher, have better blood-circulated brains than boys. As a result, there is more activity in the brain, which makes it easier for them to maintain their concentration. Research even shows that boys can fall asleep if they sit in a rest position for too long. The hormone testosterone in boys makes them impulsive, aggressive, competitive, and active more quickly. Girls have more oxytocin, which is also referred to as the cuddle hormone. This makes it much more important for them to be liked and to be nice themselves. But this distinction is not so easy to make. It turns out that about 20% of girls study the way boys do, and about 20% of boys study the way girls do.<sup>77</sup> In addition, research carried out by the Education Council also shows that boys have a less favorable school career and women a less favorable professional career.<sup>78</sup> We can learn from these results that

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<sup>77</sup> "Jongens leren anders dan meisjes," Boombereopsonderwijs, Accessed June 13, 2022, <https://boombereopsonderwijs.nl/breinonderzoek-jongens-leren-anders-dan-meisjes/>.

<sup>78</sup> "Denkbeelden jongens en meisjes leiden tot verschillen in school-en beroepsloopbanen," Onderwijsraad, Accessed June 13, 2022, <https://www.onderwijsraad.nl/actueel/nieuws/2020/10/7/denkbeelden-jongens-en-meiden-leiden-tot-verschillen-in-school--en-beroepsloopbanen>.

the same kind of teaching pattern cannot be applied to an entire group of children. When this would happen, they would all be considered the same and not as an individual. As said, even between boys and girls, it proves difficult to completely grasp the dynamics in which children study, because the results show that some study in a different way. The development of someone's capabilities can therefore also be considered as extremely personal and it should be treated as such. For this reason, too, the advice of the Education Council should not stop in the third grade. Education should be more personal for everyone.

The question that arises here is that of whether it is possible to provide children with personal education in such a way that they achieve better results. Children may be perceived as capable agents when they hit third grade, but that does not mean that they fully developed the capacity to communicate perfectly. From this argumentation follows that it can be hard for a child to express precisely what problem they encounter. Moreover, teachers are not able to fully understand everything a child expresses, simply because they are not able to look inside a child's head. But this problem would persist in any form of education. Furthermore, the adaptation to more personal education would not only mean that schools must adapt their system, but also education such as the PABO, a teacher training programme. During these courses, teachers should learn better how to deal with a child in a personal way, instead of the groups they currently exist in.

The data from shadow education shows that more personalized education leads to better knowledge and therefore better results. By giving children the freedom to receive a personal education in which there is room for personal choices and freedom of participation, the total development of the child increases. Besides this, inequality of opportunity as structural injustice is tackled.

#### **4. Problems with policy change.**

In this chapter, I discuss possible objections that might be raised from an economical perspective on the topic. A crucial problem that arises when introducing new systems, including a new educational system, is that it is too expensive. In recent years, improving education and the problem of underfunding's within education has been a major debate in the media and politics. Several teachers have indicated that the workload is too high and the wages too low. An agreement has therefore been reached whereby primary school teachers will gain

an average of 10 percent, thereby closing the pay gap between primary and secondary education. This entails that 919 million euros must be made available on a structural basis each year. The deal also frees up money to reduce work pressure and increase opportunities for teachers to retrain. Furthermore, for schools that suffer from a disadvantage, it will be possible to attract teaching staff, thanks to structural extra money. The aim is to make working within the education field more attractive and to make it easier to retain staff. According to the government, the problem of high work pressure and staff shortages should be tackled in this way.<sup>79</sup>

#### 4.1 The economical perspective.

It is now clear that much more money is being invested in education than before, and the question is whether the policy I am advocating for are not too expensive. It is extremely important that teachers are properly trained and receive an appropriate salary. But next to this, it is also important that children are properly schooled. The focus of the investments mentioned is now mainly on the teachers themselves, and not the current educational system. It is important that there are enough teachers to teach every child, and this is also seen as a solution for better education. But as I have argued, the system itself is flawed, and change needs to be made throughout the system, and not only for the teachers.

Teacher Nico writes a blog, called *meestermetmissie* (teacher with a mission), in which he discusses the problems that arise in education. In this blog, he states that the underachievement of students, the teacher shortage, the high workload, and the image of teachers are symptoms of the problems in education. They can be understood as the negative effects that arise from the causes, such as the practical features of the standard teaching methods and the standardized tests that are being used. Teacher Nico indicates that it is necessary to thoroughly investigate what kind of improvement is needed and that a large amount of money should not just be spent on the teachers themselves. Raising salaries does not solve the functioning of education. It is therefore important to see that the current system is the problem of the effects that result from it. The system produces exactly the things it was designed for. When a culture of education is created where teaching is taught using standard teaching methods in standard subject areas, the

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<sup>79</sup>“10 procent erbij voor leraar basisschool, kloof met voortgezet onderwijs verdwijnt,” NOS, Accessed June 13, 2022, <https://nos.nl/artikel/2426091-10-procent-erbij-voor-leraar-basisschool-kloof-met-voortgezet-onderwijs-verdwijnt>.

response of students perceiving it as boring is not a surprise. The current educational system has a factory setting, in which the schools exhibit a form of transfer education. The teacher stands before a large class of children to transfer all the same knowledge at once. This form of education, the factory educational system, makes it seem like children are suffering from behavioral problems when they don't act according to the factory manual.<sup>80</sup> But the reality entails that those children are simply being ignored in their human needs. It is therefore important that money is not put into an existing system that is not working, but that money is also spent on developing a new system where all children can grow in their capabilities and develop themselves accordingly. It is therefore necessary to carefully reconsider what the money should be spent on. The money should be used to organize more personalized education and help schools introduce this new system. If this does not happen, children's freedoms to fully develop in their personal capabilities are curtailed. I can't think of any reason why society would want this to happen. By educating children well and learning to participate and make choices, they will start doing what they like and become happy and fulfilled in their careers. Good education is an investment for the future because well-educated people make a good contribution to society.

In addition, the national government states that teaching staff at schools with many vulnerable pupils receive an extra labor market allowance on top of their salary. Children who suffer from inequalities, because they have, for example, a lot of worries about things not going well at home, or children who need extra help because they find certain subjects so difficult, should be given extra opportunities in this way. The extra money means there is more room for sufficient teachers, school leaders, and support staff. But the focus of the solution here lies entirely with the older parties, and not with the students themselves. The educational system should be structured in such a way that children are not the victims of problems at home. They shouldn't be saddled with extra stress. Next to this, it is also extremely important that children have enough free time to develop other capabilities. Brighthouse and Swift argue that unlimited time spent studying “would prevent most parents and children from spending the amount of time together needed in order for them to have rewarding and intimate relationships” (Brighthouse and Swift 2009, 121). It is therefore important that the school system is structured in such a way that tutoring is hardly necessary if at all, to make sure that enough free time is left for all children

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<sup>80</sup> Nico Miedema, “Onderwijsproblemen,” Meestermetmissie, Accessed June 13, 2022, <https://meestermetmissie.nl/category/onderwijsproblemen/>.

to develop other capabilities as well in other fields. For example, there should also be enough time to finish homework, play sports after school, meet friends, etc. Spending more money on the teaching staff and extra help can therefore also be seen as a plaster, to temporarily solve the problem. But this plaster will come off eventually, and the cracks of the system will show.

#### 4.2 The complexity of the policy.

Another important critical point to address is the complexity of a new policy. Even if the money were available to bring about change, the question remains whether it is a viable option. The current school system has the ability to look at the children per class, which provides a good overview. When children jump (back and forth) between levels, this also means that keeping an overview becomes more difficult. In addition, through personal education, children receive early help when they get stuck in the material. As a result, they understand the material faster, which also means that they will acquire more knowledge faster. When a child follows a subject at VMBO level and understands this quickly enough, there should also be the opportunity to move on to HAVO. Because of the personal education, there is certainly a chance that the child will also quickly understand the material at this level, and that he would move on to VWO. Conversely, this should also be possible for children. If a level that they follow remains too difficult, there should be the possibility to follow a level lower in the course. This is partly already possible in the current system, only you have to go down one level for each subject, since you can only follow 1 level. When you apply this system to an entire school, it can also cost an enormous amount of time during the school years, apart from introducing the system, to allow children to switch a lot. The question is whether this is feasible.

It is of course not the intention that children jump back and forth endlessly between levels. For example, children should not have to switch all the time for one subject between VMBO and HAVO, and then return to VMBO if they do not understand it well enough. There should be proper oversight as these choices are made and implemented. You could think of committees that monitor this progress, so that all the work does not (just) fall on the shoulders of teachers. For setting up committees you end up in the argumentation about funding, which I just discussed above.

## 5. Conclusion.

For this thesis, I've discussed the importance of personal education after the third grade. The Education Council has advised for the cito-score to no longer take place and that children up to and including the third grade should sit together in the same classroom. But when we talk about the right development of capabilities for each child, this is not enough. With the help of Alkire I showed that making choices is extremely important for the development of a child and that it can be seen as a basic capability. Children must be able to receive the opportunities to do this. The problems associated with this are closely linked to the problems surrounding inequality of opportunity. The problems mean that teachers in general recommend a lower level of education for children with a lower socio-economic background. Furthermore, this group is also less successful in arguing why a certain level might be a good fit for their child. Understanding children in the third grade as partly capable agents shows that they are capable enough to express their opinions. For this reason, they can be well included in the selection process. Furthermore, the process prior to making a choice also turned out to be very important, because they learn to deal with the process, among other things. The concept of developing the capability of choice is therefore important from several points of view, which well reflects its great importance. It is strongly linked to the problem of inequality of opportunity, which is exacerbated by not including children in the process. Inequality of opportunity is mitigated by empowering teachers, as well as parents, as well as children, contributing to a fairer process for reaching the appropriate level of decision-making.

Furthermore, it turned out that the factor of participation can also be regarded as a basic needs in education. This is because children grow up to participate in a democratic society. I also looked at Kuhumba's theory, which made it clear that children should learn to understand what a community, or as I argued, groups, entail. When children take subjects at the level that suits them, the classes become many times more diverse. As a result, children from all kinds of different backgrounds learn to communicate with their fellow students from all kinds of different backgrounds. It is important that the factor of choice is strongly linked to the factor of participation. If this is not the case, children do not learn to participate, but simply to follow orders. Furthermore, the possibility of participation must also be taken into account. The opportunity to participate is very much in line with the opportunities a child receives. It was therefore important to look at the structural injustice described by Young and Zheng, which made it clear that inequality of opportunity is a structural injustice. The whole education system

needs to change, and not just until the third grade. Only then can inequality of opportunity be combated within the school system. I am aware that making choices does not only take place when the levels must be chosen. But because it is so closely aligned with the participation factor, which in turn is strongly linked to opportunity inequality as structural injustice, this was a very important point to discuss. In the future, specific laws regarding inequality of opportunity in education could be examined. Factors such as autonomy and freedom could also be treated (more specifically). In addition, research into specific ways of studying could be expanded to understand exactly what children need. Furthermore, the list established by Nussbaum could be a good starting point for what children need during their upbringing and education, from where the implementation of personal education can be discussed in more detail. This list is now specifically aimed at adults and could be an inspiration for creating a list specifically aimed at children. These points are a good next step to further frame the correct development of children's capabilities.

Then I looked at the accessibility of shadow education for children. This clearly showed that children of parents with a high socio-economic background receive this more, which contributes to better results. As a result, inequality of opportunity increases. But forms of shadow education turned out not to be the problem. It is the Dutch educational system that appears to be negligent in providing good education, causing parents to feel the need to seek help for their children. Shadow education should be seen as a source of inspiration because it is designed in a very personal matter which produces good results. This also contributes to, among other things, more self-confidence and less stress and should be accessible for every child. Therefore, for policy making, the strategies of a company such as Lyceo could be looked at in order to learn from their policy and apply it within the normal school system.

Finally, I looked at the problems associated with setting up a new system for which I am arguing. Both price and complexity are important factors to consider. But the development of children is more important than this. By investing in good education for every child, you invest in your own society. The reasons of price and complexity were not strong enough. In the future, there could be a closer look at where the responsibility lies for combating inequality of opportunity in general. Opportunity inequality is greater than the school system itself, so there may be varying degrees of responsibility. From here it can become more clear what exactly needs to be done next. This is a major debate and is beyond the scope of this thesis.

In short, the advice given by the Education Council is not enough to combat inequality of opportunity and to fully develop the capabilities of children. Children should be allowed to take subjects at the level that suits them after the third grade. This will ensure that the development of capabilities is well established for each child and inequality of opportunity within the educational system is combated.

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