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Gender, schooling and global social justice

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Abstract

The paper draws on the capability approach to examine the history of global concern with gender equality in education as a form of human security. Demands of civil society - feminists, campaigners for national liberation and religious leaders - as to why education should be extended to girls and women are sometimes contrasted with the outlook of governments concerned with economic or political development. The paper challenges this distinction and points instead to the ways in which civil society and government have in different periods supported demands for gender equality or gender difference in education. A further distinction entails considering demands regarding gender and schooling with regard to whether they are reflective of a prevailing or desired social order (be this national or global) or refractive, placing some stress on agency. The capability approach is classed as a 'refractive' approach with considerable critical reach with regard to democratic participation, an expansion of the notion of rights and the potential to be responsive to the most marginalised. But governments and civil society have engaged in reflective arguments for gender equality and gender difference in education. The paper concludes that unless the refractive dimensions of the capability approach are popularised as part of global campaigns for gender equality in education its critical potential with regard to thinking about human security may not be realised.

Introduction

At the Millennium Summit of the UN one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set aimed at gender equality in education. Goal 3 was broadly framed and aimed to 'Promote gender equality and empower women '. This was intended not to be specific to any particular sector but to underpin all the other goals (Menon and Sen, 2003). However within the goal the target by which the goal was to be measured was set quite narrowly in the following terms 'Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005 and in all levels in education by 2015'. (UN, 2000). Eliminating gender disparity is generally understood to mean only overcoming barriers to equal access to and sometimes achievement in schooling for girls and boys. Gender parity is measured by whether or not there are equal numbers of girls and boys in a population enrolled in school or completing school. The disjunction between the wide framing of the goal and the extremely narrow focus of the target has occasioned considerable discussion and debate (MDG Task force, 2004; Marphatia, 2004; Unterhalter, forthcoming) But international advocacy with regard to the MDG has continued to link the two together. Thus Kofi Annan, promoting the MDG in UNICEF's *State of the World's Children* report for 2003 said:

> …millions of young girls never attend school at all, millions more never complete their education and countless numbers never receive the quality education that is their right. These millions of girls slip easily to the margins of our societies…As they grow into women, they are ill prepared to participate fully in the political, social and economic development of their communities…(Annan, 2003)

Educating girls is here both the means to ensure greater social cohesion and inclusiveness for women, which is one way to understand gender equality and empowerment. However the statement goes on to emphasise that the education of girls and women is not just one amongst many strategies to ensure gender equality, it is the turnkey strategy which will make all other desired outcomes happen:

> To educate girls is to educate a whole family. And what is true of families is also true of communities and, ultimately, whole countries. Study after study has taught us that there is no tool for development more effective than the education of girls. No other policy is likely to raise economic productivity, lower infant and maternal mortality, improve nutrition and promote health – including to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS. No other policy is as powerful in increasing the changes of education for the next generation.. Two of the Millennium Development Goals are focussed on education for girls and boys alike. They are not only goals in their own right, how we fare in reaching them will be crucial to our ability to reach all the others. Only by translating them into reality can our international family grow stronger, healthier, more equitable and more prosperous.
> (Annan, 2003)

The text bears the hallmark of familiar elisions. By education what is meant is schooling, bringing girls into schools ensures they participate socially, politically and economically This places the onus on women and not on the societies which may discriminate against them and exclude them from this participation. (Unterhalter, 2000) It is the education of women that is 'a tool for development' enhancing the capacity for global health, equity, prosperity and societies' strength. These are large ambitions. The empowerment of women, it is implied is the magic key to unlock the door to global good fortune and ensure a form of human security.

Similar large aspirations were vested in the aim to close the gender gap in schooling by the Commonwealth Education ministers, who, in their communique to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting after their 15th meeting in 2003 acknowledged education as a key dimension in establishing human security . Six action areas to achieve this were identified, one of which was eliminating gender disparities in education (Commonwealth Education Ministers, 2003)

It is evident from this that concerns with gender equality in education as a global aspiration have considerable resonance that go beyond any specific learning needs of particular groups of women and girls in particular settings. Gender equality in education has become like human rights, peace, or clean air. It is self evidently good. But beneath rhetorical flourishes there is a serious identification of gender equality in education as a key form of human security. In this paper I examine the history of the emergence of global concern with gender equality in education, the forms this

concern has taken and the ways in with utilising the capability approach and understanding education as a key capability one can contour different inflections and different periods in this history.

An outline history of global concern with gender equality in education

Arguments for providing education for women as a key element of public policy are relatively recent. In societies with literate elites, generally in Asia, North Africa and Europe up to the 18th century there are examples of women who have access to libraries or learning, sometimes as a mark of exceptionally high status, and sometimes, as was the case with the influence of humanism on certain key political families in Western Europe, to indicate a belief in the way knowledge, particularly of the Classics and religious writings, could make men and women better people. While for men this learning was part of their claim to be good rulers, for women it was often linked with an argument that women who acquired learning were good subjects and were not innately credulous or evil (as is implied by some readings of the Biblical story of Eve). (Anderson and Zinsser, 1997, 92-5). These concerns were not yet phrased in terms of national identities, let alone global connections. When the education of women was argued for, these elite women generally assumed they were making an argument for women who resembled them. The form of education they proposed was based largely on reading, thinking philosophically and undertaking some work in mathematics . This was an education much like that these women received in their homes. (Bell, 1976)

The argument that public education, funded by some source other than private wealth, should be extended to women began to be advanced in the 18th century. Conventional histories of these developments note the expansion of primary education for girls and boys in the 18th and 19th century linked partly to the expansion of literacy . The concern for women and men to acquire skills in reading was sometimes linked with the injunction that they read key religious texts to be full members of religious communities. It was also associated with the development of some states and then formations of the nation where literacy was linked with the exercise of new forms of political authority (Wieser-Hanks, 2001). A problem with analysing the history of the expansion of women's and girls education only in these dimensions is that it locates education primarily as a national project and fails to include global or international dimensions of education. A second problem is that it fails to distinguish different forms of the argument for the extension of education to women. and girls, that it is this analysis does not seek to distinguish what conceptions of religious or political participation by girls and women were believed would be advanced by different forms of education.

The history of the struggle for the education of girls and women has two contrasting dynamics – one of equality and one of difference. Proponents of the gender equality argument made the case either that women and girls were no different to men and boys. This could be on the grounds that they were members of the same faith, the same national or ethic group, or shared common human rights. A variant of this view was developed by Mary Wollstonecroft in the period of the French Revolution, where many radical and revolutionary thinkers believed women should be confined to the home and that education was unwomanly,. Wollstonecroft argued that all women required publicly funded education to overcome the lack of reason which was

encouraged in them by their families and the sexual dynamics of their societies. Through education women would be made fit to exercise their rights (Wollstonecroft, 1792). This argument recognised the existence of socially constructed obstacles to women and girls participating in their societies, some of which women and girls themselves contributed to. The task of education was to help overcome these obstacles and facilitate full equal participation.

In opposition to the argument for women's education on the grounds of equality a different group of champions argued for women's education on the grounds of their difference from men. These argument took the shape at one end of a continuum suggesting women should be educated in specific domestic or other 'womanly' arts that accorded with their specific sensibilities, endowments and aptitudes. This was the argument made by the Dutch 17th centry writer Anna Maria van Schurman, whose 1637 work *Whether the study of letters is fitting for a Christian woman* argued that education would make women better wives (Anderson and Zinsser, 1988, 345).At the other end of the continuum proponents of difference argued that women's critique of existing social arrangements (political, social and economic) should be nurtured and strengthened to challenge prevailing injustices and this could only be done through developing different framings for knowledge and different relationships of learning. These alternative visions of different worlds realisable in the present have been characterissed as examples of heterotopias by Maria Tamboukou in her account of 19th century women teacher trainers setting up alternative spaces for reflection, critique and new practice. (Tamboukou, 2003)

A further distinction is necessary in trying to group advocates of girls' and women's education as proponents of equality or difference. Some equality and difference theorists tend to *reflect* mainstream aspirations for example with regard to the nature of political institutions or the sexual division of labour. For equality theorists reflection entails accepting existing political and economic arrangements, and believing that if women have equivalent education to men they would be able to gain access to and participate in these centres of power as equals. For difference theorists working through a framework of reflection entails accepting gender difference within the family, public institutions and the economy as natural or pregiven.

These theorists working within a paradigm of reflection can be contrasted with a second group, who, drawing on Lois McNay's consideration of Bourdieu' s work on habitus, I have termed refractive theorists. (McNay, 2000) Refractive theorists do not consider social structures or gender roles as pre-given. They analyse how the demand for education for girls and women is refracted through aspects of social inequality that is constantly made and remade. Thus refractive equality theorists would consider how the structures of gender inequality are differently contoured according to different fields and dynamic interactions. The struggle for gender equality through education is always a struggle to advance demands made by women and girls in the face of different forms of exclusion, silencing or discrimination. Refractive difference theorists would analyse how different spaces available to women and girls allow them opportunities to envision and practice forms of education that are critical of existing mainstreams and the extent to which there are opportunities to move these critical and transformatory views from a margin to a mainstream.

At the risk of oversimplifying reflective theorists assume that provision of education to girls and women will have the desired effect with regard to either achieving equality or difference. Refractive theorists acknowledge the importance of different forms of agency or freedom in negotiating social conditions that constrain the achievement of equality or difference.

The framing is expressed thus:

	Reflective theorists	**Refractive theorists**
Proponents of equality	Let girls have the same education as boys because they are the same and institutions and opportunities must be available to both	Let girls have the same education as boys to overcome their inherent or constructed disadvantages
Proponents of difference	Nurture girls' and women's knowledge of the domestic and the local under existing assumptions about the sexual division of labour and the form of the family and the community	Develop separate spaces for critique and contestation so that girls and women can develop visions and strategies for transformed social relations

In my view the capability approach falls within the refracive paradigm. Its stress on agency separates it from reflective analyses which subordinate agency to structure. Moreover Sen's notion of the differential in conversion factors acknowledges different socially situated processes which might require women to need different or additional forms of schooling at certain times. Nussbam's notion of a threshold of capabilities, one of which includes freedoms of association and decisionmaking also aligns the approach within the refractive paradigm. By contrast more limited views of rights , responsibilities or needs which are bestowed because of prevailing political, economic or cultural arrangements would draw their impetus from a reflective paradigm

These debates concerning equality and difference have often been recorded in relation to the work of champions of women's education who are located in particular national settings, for example the writings of Rokheya Begum in Bengal , Charolotte Maxeke in South Africa or Kartini in what is Java (Rokeya, 1988; Kartini, 1995; Walker, 1984) The adoption of the ideas of these key figures by national movements of the 20th century often tended to minimise the way in which there was an international circuit of ideas concerning women's education that was promoted through transnational religious groupings as well as international feminist, anticolonial, antislavery or democratic political organisations. The translation and relatively cheap publication of printed material which was shipped around the world from the early 19th century and the existence of an international postal service were means through which these ideas circulated.

The equality/difference dynamic with regard to arguments for women's education took particular forms given the complexity of the global political economy from the

19th century. It is possible to discern at least three different global social formations from this time. While these overlap and intersect, in any particular historical instance it is useful to separate them out analytically. Firstly there is the centre-periphery formation generally associated with the expansion of capitalism and political power from western Europe, and the engagement of elites and mass based movements in a large number of countries across the world either in support or vehement opposition to this this. (Wallerstein, 1979;Carnoy and Samoff, 1990) This depiction of a global social formation draws on Marx's analysis of capitalism and maps colonialism as the construction of a 'centre' which extracts surplus value from its 'periphery'. In this social formation political, economic and cultural power are located in a metropolitan centre and through various material forms of exploitation and discrimination and cultural processes of 'othering' a periphery is constructed. Anti-colonial and national liberation theorists turned this model on its head asserting the importance of the demands of the 'periphery' which should become central.

A second social formation is based less on an analysis of global hierarchies as of collectivities. Here the global political economy is analysed as a facilitative or constraining backdrop to the work of transnational communities of more or less equals. Some examples are religious or ethnic groups united in adherence to a set form of knowledge and associated practices, or professional or artisanal groupings with shared skills and approaches to work. In certain periods the global political economy can support the development of these transnational communities through facilitating their communication and tolerating or actively providing opportunities for their practices. Examples might be the expansion of Christian missionaries linked to imperial advancement in America, Asia and Africa or the migration of miners between different goldrush sites as far afield as North America, Chile, South Africa and Australia throughout the 19th century. The global political economy might also constrain or limit the development of these communities of practice through prohibiting travel or allowing this on very restricted terms, discriminating against members of the community or censoring their ideas. Some examples are limitations placed on Jewish migration at different periods in the 19th and 20th centuries or the restrictions placed on members of the Bauhaus, a professional group of artisits from many different countries, working in Germany in the 1930s. In both cases the prohibitions on transnational movement had specific consequences for how the identities, forms of knowledge and educative practices of the collectivities developed.

Thirdly, global social formations develop based on institutions and technologies which expand unevenly in networks. These have had a cumulative effect to increase human understanding of people far away progressively lessening some, but not all effects of temporal and spatial distance .. Some examples are the growth of print capitalism and the publishing industry, the institution of a postal service, the development of transnational markets and money exchanges, and later the expansion of radio, TV and the internet. The establishment of international structures of governance and organisation, like the League of Nations and later the United Nations organisations and institutions all fall under this third formation.

These different formations of the 'global' each has a different articulation of the reflective and refractive dimensions of the equality /difference debate with regard to women's and girls' education. I have attempted to sketch these articulations below:

Global articulations of reflective and refractive arguments for gender equality in education

Versions of the global	**Reflective argument for equality**	**Refractive argument for equality**
Centre-periphery	Construct national identities including girls and boys for the centre and/or the periphery through education	Improve societies at the centre' and/or 'periphery' through education (eg better growth, governance, human development). Assist girls and women to overcome specific exclusions from these benefits.
Communities of practice	Give girls and boys equal access to the key forms of knowledge and practice that underpin these communities	Make special arrangements for girls to access the essential knowledge and practice of the community
Enlarging institutions	Distribute the education benefits of the institutions (books, radio programmes, international conventions) to girls and boys	Make special arrangements within institutions to overcome the disadvantages women experience(gender sensitivity, gender mainstreaming)

In the three social formations of the global reflective arguments for gender equality in education proceed by making demands with regard to inclusion of women and girls in centre-periphery projects, in formations of global collectivities and as equal beneficiaries of the expansion of global institutions, However the intention of these equality projects is not to fundamentally challenge or alter the prevailing forms of political, economic or social organisation within these different global formations. By contrast refractive arguments for gender equality in education note there is something lacking in existing arrangements which a specific gendered intervention can fix to ensure equality., thus specific programmes for women and girls develop as part of centre and/or periphery projects or the establishment of communities of practice or in expanding institutional formations.

The centre-periphery analysis in its reflective articulation has strikingly similar effects for the rulers and the ruled. The reflective analysis that women require equal education to men, because they are inherently the same, is a feature of both the arguments of a pro-imperial and anti-imperial feminists. Millicent Garrett Fawcett advanced the claim for Englsh women's education in terms of fitting them to 'rule India'. In the same period Olive Schreiner, despite some problematic formulations regarding the 'childishness' of 'Others' argued that women needed education to advance the causes of those who were suffering the effects of imperialism, black South Africans and Boers. (Caine, 1997; Schreiner, 1911; Schreiner, 1923). By contrast, the refractive articulation of the centre periphery aspiration for equality would see women, say in England and India, working together on projects for gender equality in education acknowledging their different histories and contexts, but

simultaneously articulating a version of a common goal. Some examples have been documented by Ann Marie Goetz with regard to the negotiations concerning the Beijing Platform of Action in 1995 and by Cynthia Cockburn concerning women working across difference for peace in areas of intense ethnic strife, such as the Balkans and Northern Ireland (Goetz, 1998; Cockburn, 1997)

Global articulations of reflective and refractive arguments for gender difference in education can be expressed as follows

Versions of the global	**Reflective arguments**	**Refractive arguments**
Centre-periphery	Women's 'special affinities' make them particularly suitable for roles assigned by this model (generally linked to motherhood) and these must be cultivated through education	Draw on women's networks to harness their critique for social action in education
Communities of practice	Develop and protect women's ways of knowing within the domestic sphere as a special feature of the community	Draw on women only spaces to advance new forms of knowledge and understanding within the community
Enlarging institutions	Develop specific institutional niches to address women's and girls domestic interests	Use the educational spaces new institutions open up to develop critical perspectives on the existing social order

Reflective arguments of education for gender difference are very conservative at a local level but their attachment to global or tansnatioanl projects gives this particular force. An example of a centre-periphery project of this nature was the elevation of teaching appropriate motherhood and domesticity as an imperial obligation in 19th century England (Davin, 1978). Experiences of persecution amongst ethnic or religious groups (communities of practice) forcibly dispersed across the world often lead to celebrations of particular forms of domestic knowledge – cooking, marriage arrangements, dressing distinctively – that women must learn and teach. (Anthias and Yuval-Davis; 1989; Unterhalter, 2000b). In enlarging institutions of print capitalism or broadcasting the global reach of niche marketed women's magazines or specialist programmes aimed at enhancing domesticity that spoke across borders amplified their importance in particular national settings. (Caine, 1997)

While global reach concentrated the force of reflective arguments for gender difference it tended to have the effect of dispersing refractive arguments through multitudes of different contexts and unstable networks. While there have been periods when women's alliances have been strong and have pushed through important changes in policy and practice, for example from 1985-1995, there have been difficulties in sustaining this momentum. I want now to turn to considering the implication of these different framings for some debates with regard to the capabilities approach. In the last section I will consider how the analytical distinctions might cast a different light on the history of demands for a world wide expansion of education for women and girls.

Conceptualising gender equality in education: Rights, agency and capabilities

What issues are entailed in thinking about the capability approach in relation to these different delineations of global social formations? Both Nussbaum and Sen have developed normative analyses with regard to global social justice based for Sen on a discussion of perfect and imperfect obligation (Sen, 2002a) and for Nussbaum on a revision of Rawls (Nussbaum, 2002). But these formulations have had much less impact on actual policy by global institutions or governments concerned with global issues than quite crude interpretations of the capabilities approach understood in terms only of its underpinnings to key indicators of global inequality through the Human Development Index. When Kofi Annan, in the extract from the UNICEF report quoted at the beginning of this chapter, utilises insights from the capability approach it is in the form of the claim that women's education is a key basic capability. There are some difficulties with the universal reach of this assertion. But here I want to note he does not make reference to Sen and Nussbaum's historically and philosophically sited engagements with global social justice, rather with the much more problematic claim, not historically located, derived from correlations in the Human Development Index.

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In locating the capability approach as an instance of refractive theorising with regard to both equality and difference, I have tried to map out some of the terrain on which these refractive arguments and actions will take place globally. These entail contesting exclusions of women and girls from decision-making and key practices concerning gender equality in education situated in forms of centre periphery relations, those associated with global collectivities, and the expanding institutions of global governance and ICT. The mapping of the overlapping social formations also point to the need to facilitate spaces for critical articulations of gender difference with regard to centre-periphery relations, the formation of global collectivities and the enlargement of global institutions.

Susan Moller Okin in her critical assessment of the work of Amartya Sen, Martha Nussbaum and Brooke Ackerly makes three main criticisms of the work of Sen and Nussbaum and hence of ambiguities in the capability approach on key themes concerning gender equality and global poverty (Okin, 2003). Firstly she questions the usefulness and reach of the identification of capabilities with freedoms in Sen's work reflecting on whether this overextends the meaning of freedom. Secondly she questions the distinction Nussbaum draws between rights and capabilities. She considers Nussbaum's focus on individual rather than collective capabilities and concentration on the state pre-eminently as the body enjoined to respond in securing capabilities as insufficiently attentive to the ways in which capabilities need to be advanced in diverse ways particularly given global concerns with widening inequalities. Lastly she voices a familiar criticism of Nussbaum's method and her list of central capabilities drawing out the problem of not paying sufficient attention to the formulations of poor women in their own words.

I want to step off from these critiques in exploring some of the analysis developed in the preceding section. Firstly, with regard to the discussion of freedoms, I have classified the capability approach because of its key concern with agency and freedoms as a refractive approach. It has been invoked frequently in relation to arguments for equality drawing on centre-periphery global social formations, such as

those highlighted by the UNDP reports which have pointed to the extent of growing global inequality (UNDP, 2003). But the dynamic of these centre periphery formations especially in an era of widening inequalities means that the approach is sometimes applied as top-down policy prescriptions entailing injunctions to governments to improve access to schooling for girls on the grounds of a 'higher knowledge' held by international organisations. Thus in application policies derived from the approach, instead of drawing on a refractive practice, often lose these consultative dimensions. Policy concerning girls' education becomes a reflection of global inequalities where policy is decided by powerful bodies, for example the World Bank or large donor consortiums or governments eager to attract aid, and then rolled out with inadequate consultations or accountability. The task of building support takes time and while the importance of giving girls and women education is urgent, grossly inadequate resources have been allocated for the consultation and consensus building work of negotiating private anxieties concerning public policy. A series of case studies carried out in Africa regarding initiatives to expand girls' education highlight how important consultation and negotiation across different perceptions are, but it is these that are costly and inadequately supported (Unterhalter et al, 2004). Given these global hierarchies the centrality of freedom within the capability approach seems all the more important to emphasise rather than de-emphasise. It is substantive and positive freedoms to participated in decision making on equal terms and articulate different viewpoints that seem key normative dimensions of the capability approach that should not be attenuated, but constantly reiterated. It is the link of capabilities with freedoms that prevent the insights of the approach being used as a tool of social engineering reflecting existing global inequalities while claiming to 'fix' these in ways that are not refractive. Severine Deneulin has identified some problems with the way freedom is identified in the capability approach and has argued for additional conceptual work to allow the concept of capabilties to address human deprivation. This thinking appears extremely generative for developing some of the concerns with the refractive potential of the approach I have identified in this paper. (Deneulin, 2004).

Secondly, with regard to the relationship between capabilities and rights the education setting raises some key issues. Some critics of arguments for gender equlity based on rights have pointed out how women and girls' rights to education exist in a formal sense in constitutions or international declarations, but are not given substance in day-to-day access to or enjoyment of education (Subrhamanian, 2001). In this critique rights are framed as reflective instruments of equality. They hold open the opportunity, but do not substantively advance the cause analytically or politically nor indicate how rights can be given substance to expand education. To the extent that capabilities, with their stress on agency are refractive instruments, such formal achievements of rights would be necessary, but not sufficient for a capability analyst However the capability approach as a refractive articulation goes in different directions in relation to equality and difference arguments for women's and girls' education. While arguments about rights and equality are generally impelled towards a concern with the individual as the rights bearer, arguments about difference take up notions of collectivities and the protection of different spaces.

Until relatively recently, right have been justiciable mainly within national boundaries. Even though the growth of international courts has expanded the reach of human rights legislation very often the findings of these bodies are primarily advisory

or opinion changing. Only when the decisions of international bodies are recognised through formal instruments in particular countries are they enforceable. To the extent that capabilities do not have to be justiciable in this way, they can more fully engage with varied refractive settings and different forms of agency. Arguments made in terms of capabilities have the potential to range from the opinion changing to the direct delivery of provision. Thus advancing claims for global concern with gender equality in education on the basis of capabilities rather than rights opens many more possibilities for different kind of action involving different social formations. These can include the global social formations I have analysed in section one. Some contemporary examples of these are global networks campaigning for gender equality and education like the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) or the Commonwealth Education Fund (CEF) with centre and periphery locations; communities of practice like Education International (a global federation of teacher unions); and the enlarging institutional reach of organisations like UNICEF working directly with governments on the 25 by 2005 programme for getting girls into school. . Thus actions for gender equality in education are not only the province of national governments and although all the organisations I have listed use an appeal based on rights, it is not clear from their rhetoric how rights link with ideas about global social justice.

Okin's third critique is that the approach is too universal in its claims and not attentive enough to diverse articulations. Tiis criticism has primarily been directed at Nussbaum and her method for deriving her list of central capabilites. But the critique may also be made of Sen who stresses the universal importance of basic education, particularly for girls and women, as a key to advance other capabilities (Sen, 2002;b Sen, 2003) . An argument can be made that if some women and girls say they do not want schooling, possibly because it exposes girls to risk after puberty, or because schools are of inadequate quality, the refractive orientation of the capability approach should respect this, rather than promote the concerns for gender equality decided on by governments or international bodies. It is here that the importance of linking the approach with freedoms seems so crucial. If freedoms are substantive, information is shared and its different implications explored , institutions are developed and there is still a decision that girls should not go to school, the dynamic of the capability approach would have been engaged. However what generally happens is that adaptive preference (women's acquiescence in less education for them or their daughters) is read as capabilities. But this is a form of analysis based on the reflective , rather than the refractive paradigm. Only if adaptive preference had been asserted in the face of various forms of refraction could we confidently assert capabilities had been taken into account in developing a policy or programme. Similarly if a basic capability like education is read in shorthand as freedom and claims are made that this is refractive when no freedoms have been entailed in formulating this demand the promise of the approach will not have been realised. The analytic distinctions entailed by thinking of education in terms of refractive considerations of equality and difference need to be maintained if the social justice dimensions of the capability approach are to be realised. These are crucial processes if the approach is not to be co-opted and its key perceptions translated into a different project..

Global concern with gender and schooling

Generally histories of global concern with the education of women and girls link this with arguments for equality based on emerging national identity in the 19th and 20th

century . In the same period reflective arguments for gender difference in education were made stressing the importance of educating and locating women in a domestic sphere, for example by 19th century missionaries in Africa urging the educative importance of the hoe for boys and the needle for girls (Gaitskell, 2002). While versions of refractive arguments for equality were made by some international feminist organisations, particularly working with the League of Nations or international suffrage movements these were generally quite weak and excluded from key seats of power. (Caine, 1997; Russell, 1985)

A conventional historiography runs that a new dynamic concerned with education and women's rights emerged in documents like the UN Convention on Human Rights in 1948, the support of international programmes for literacy by bodies like UNESCO in the 1950s and the 1960s, and the revitalising of global concern with Education for All (EFA) at the Jomtein Conference in Thailand in 1990, supported by key UN agencies . However the ways in which UN agencies worked with national governments and the powerful frameworks provided by reflective forms of analysis in both their equality and difference articulations are evident to the late 1990s and even in the MDGs. Thus arguments for the education of girls and women are still being made in terms of their responsibilities for children and their location in families, as Kofi Annan's foreword to the UNICEF report quoted at the beginning of this paper illustrates. (For a more detailed history see also Unterhalter, 2000; Unterhalter, forthcoming.

A different sarticulation is made through the groupings of women's organisations who have met every 10 years at UN organised conferences from 1975. The Beijing Platform of Action adopted in 1995 makes the argument for women's education drawing on a refractive form of analysis that stresses women's diversity and articulates some insights from the capability approach. However this wider framing has had very little impact on government priorities or even on international global campaigning for an expansion of education. Often the Beijing documents are cited as important texts, for example in the 2003 UNESCO EFA Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2003) but in the absence of there being any institutional accountability mechanisms linked to these Declarations these references read as rhetorical, rather than substantive.

Thus arguments for gender equality in education as a matter of global concern in both the equality and difference frameworks are still profoundly reflective of existing social formations despite the existence of a MDG linked to gender equality. This can be seen particularly in the limited transformation of centre-periphery relations with regard to gender issues, the consolidation of collectivities based on defensive identities and the uneven reach of networks that enhance global understanding and dialogue. Organisations, like DAWN, utilising a refractive stance with regard to gender equality in education do exist and their work is not negligible, but their impact has been muted in the education sector.

To the extent that aspirations for global human security draw on the insights of the capability approach with its stress on freedoms and agency, its concerns would lie with the refractive dimensions of the equality and difference formulations of the argument for the education of women and girls. However human security is currently often understood in very attenuated forms reflecting existing centre-periphery power

relations and versions of equality that do not address the constructed forms of exclusion women and girls experience from participation and decision making. The political and analytical challenge in 2005, the year of the MDG, is to reclaim the refractive dynamic of the equality and difference arguments for women's and girls' education and to harness them to a vision of global human security that enacts the stress on freedoms and capabilities.

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