Conceptualizing Education Quality
Towards an EdQual Framework

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Outline

• Introducing EdQual
• EdQual’s approach
• Understanding quality: a critique of mainstream approaches
• Meaning of social justice
• Social justice and education quality: towards a conceptual framework
Purpose

Policy makers and practitioners have new knowledge, initiatives and a sustainable research capacity to assist them in improving the quality of education for disadvantaged learners.
University of Bristol - Lead Institution

University of Cape Coast Ghana

University of Dar es Salaam Tanzania

Kigali Institute of Education Rwanda

University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

University of Bath, UK

Project partners from South Asia and Latin America
# Research projects

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<th>10 PhD studentships</th>
<th>Use of ICTs to support Basic Education (Rwanda)</th>
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<td>Leadership &amp; Management of Change (Ghana, Tanzania)</td>
<td>School Effectiveness &amp; Educational Quality (14 Southern &amp; East African countries)</td>
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<td>Small Project Index of Inclusion, Tanzania</td>
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**EdQual**

A Research Programme Consortium on Implementing Education Quality in Low Income Countries
Education quality framework needs to:

• Facilitate analysis of change processes, including the way that quality initiatives are developed and implemented.

• focus on groups of learners and communities, not just on individuals.

• facilitate analyses of how educational processes impact on outcomes for different groups of learners in different settings.

• be guided by explicit educational values.

• be informed by an analysis of the broader historical and socio-economic context in which they are situated.

• be contextualised in relation to local contexts and the lived realities of learners and educators.
Critical approach to researching education quality:

- has an explicit value bases;

- relates issues of quality to an understanding of the broader historical, socio-economic, political and cultural context;

- is concerned with understanding the role of education systems in perpetuating and overcoming inequalities;

- is grounded in an analysis of local realities and perspectives of learners, practitioners and the communities;

- focuses on the processes of teaching and learning and how these impact on the outcomes for different groups of learners;

- seeks to empower educators and learners through supporting their development as reflective practitioners;

- is self reflexive and self critical concerning our own role as education researchers interested in Africa.
value basis

• A quality education should empower individuals and groups to realise their human rights and their rights as citizens of a particular nation;

• A quality education should extend the capabilities of individuals and groups;

• A quality education system should aim to achieve equality of outcome as well as equality of opportunity between individuals and groups;

• any understanding of education quality in SSA needs to be grounded in the realities and perspectives of African-based policy makers, researchers, practitioners, learners and communities.
Mainstream approaches to quality

Economic utilitarian human capital theory

- Rationale for investing in quality: poverty alleviation, economic growth, security.
- Quality = learning outcomes
- Use of standardized tests
- School effectiveness

Rights-based

- Right to access
- Rights within processes
  - Child-centred
- Rights through outcomes
  - Monitored for equality
UNICEF Child Friendly Schools

3 principles
(based on Convention for the Rights of the Child, 1989)

1. Inclusion
   child-seeking school seeks out children for enrolment

2. Democratic participation
   Children & all stakeholders have a role in determining structure, content and process

3. Child-centred
   Interests of the child central to all decision-making
Critique of existing approaches: Cons

- Pay insufficient attention to the global, national and local contexts that impact on quality for different groups
- Does not take account of the complexities of learner identity and of disadvantage
- HC neglects the cultural and affective dimensions of schooling
Critique of existing approaches: Cons

• Methodologically individualistic – underlying model of western humanism
• Human capital in particularly tends to treat schools as black box
• Tendency to focus on the state as the locus for change
• Rights based approaches often ignore the broader moral imperative underlying rights and the role of agency in civil society for realising rights
SOCIAL JUSTICE
Understanding social justice

• Origins in European enlightenment but has been taken up by anti-colonial activists

• ‘the acceleration of globalization has altered the scale of social interaction’ and ‘questions of social justice need to be reframed’ (Fraser, 2006: 1)

• Need to relate understanding of globalisation to the economic, political and cultural realities and interests of the African continent.
Amartya Sen and Capability Approach
economic growth cannot sensibly be treated as an end in itself. 

*Development has to be more concerned with enhancing the lives we lead and the freedoms we enjoy.*

Amartya Sen
freedoms as ends & means of development

• Evaluate the success of a society by the substantive freedoms that members enjoy

• Freedoms central to development because enhance the ability of people to:
  – help themselves;
  – influence the world.
Sen – key concepts

*functionings*
things a person may value doing or being

*capabilities*
combinations of functionings that are feasible to achieve

*poverty*
capability deprivation
Education and Human Capabilities

• Freedom as the goal of development
• Purpose of education is to develop range of capabilities that contribute to overall wellbeing that individuals, communities and nations have reason to value
• Education quality can be defined in terms of the opportunities available to develop capabilities
Implications for education quality

The outcomes of education should be a matter of dialogue, subject to debate throughout society.
Three Dimensions of Social Justice in Education

– *Redistribution* of resources to support learning and the benefits that accrue from education;
– *Recognition* of the rights of disadvantaged learners, the cultural barriers facing some groups and strategies to overcome these;
– *Participation* of disadvantaged groups in public debate and decision-making about education quality at the local, national and global level
SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EDUCATION QUALITY
The Millennium Development Goals

• Ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling
• Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015
Why Education Quality?

• Improvements in quality have a positive impact on economic growth
• Can contribute:
  – democratic citizenship
  – Sustainable livelihoods
  – Wellbeing
Context matters when defining quality

• It may be possible to identify some universal elements of a quality education

• However…..
  – No two countries are the same
  – No two schools are the same
  – No two learners are the same

• Significant implications for how quality is defined and evaluated
Social Justice and Education Quality

• Good quality education is education that provides all learners with the capabilities they require to become economically productive, develop sustainable livelihoods, contribute to peaceful and democratic societies and enhance individual wellbeing. The learning outcomes that are required vary according to context but at the end of the basic education cycle must include threshold levels of literacy and numeracy and life skills including awareness and prevention of disease.
Principles of quality in education

Inclusive
– access to quality & hence, learning outcomes

Relevant
– Outcomes are meaningful for all & consistent with national development priorities

Democratic
– Outcomes determined through public debate + accountability.
Meeting diverse needs
Inclusive & Equitable

Context
- Gender, age, health, (dis)abilities ...
- Home environment, school processes ...
- Weather, distance to school ...

Aspirations
- Influences on decision making

Conversion Factors
- Personal
- Social
- Environmental

Capability Inputs
- Resources

Capability Set
- Potential learning outcomes

Choice

Achieved Functionings
- Learning outcomes
SeeQ
School Effectiveness & Education Quality

Context
Gender, age, history of repetition & absenteeism
Local gendered norms, parental education, peer group
Rurality/urbanicity, weather

Influences on decision making

GOODS & SERVICES
Books, table, lighting & electricity
meals eaten in a day

CONVERSION FACTORS
Personal Social Environmental

CAPABILITY SET
Basic capabilities Learning capabilities

CHOICE

FUNCTIONING Reading

INDICATOR reading score
Complex irrigation creates life out of the desert

Photo & caption: Dave Bainton
A Buddhist monastery - perhaps three hundred years old, above the Village of Saboo, Ladakh

Photo & caption: Dave Bainton
Democratic & Participative
Majani Mapana Primary School, Tanzania

**Objectives**
Mitigate the impact of difficult home environments and poverty on children’s access to schooling, classroom achievement, and completion of the primary education cycle.

Majani Mapana Primary School, Tanzania

HT actions
1. Identify vulnerable children & collect information.
2. Talk to the children, visit parents.
3. Consult with teachers & school committee
4. Allocate children garden plot
6. Donate garden produce to the most vulnerable.
7. HT personal support for 1 child.
Vikuruti Primary School, Tanzania

**Challenges**
Repeated absenteeism is interrupts teaching and learning

Older children drop out to earn money making & selling charcoal.

1 or 2 girls drop out each year due to pregnancy

**Context**
Rural area within cycling distance of main road and small town centre.

¾ of children do not live with their parents, who are migrant labourers. Some children are living on their own.
Vikuruti Primary School

Resources

- Colourful library
- Shortage of equipment “to attract children”, i.e. balls, musical instruments.
- 12 well-motivated teachers who are satisfied with their placement.
- Within cycling distance of main road and small town

Head teacher despondent regarding possibility of improving attendance. He sees local poverty and lack of school funds to purchase equipment “to attract” children as main challenges.
A Quality Framework Based on Social Justice

Enabling home/community environment
- Parental/carer education
- Parental support for learning
- 2-3 meals per day
- Space to do homework
- Access to books
- Access to ECD
- Community health programmes

Enabling school environment
- Parental and community engagement
- School accountable to parent & community
- Effective leadership and school self-evaluation
- Teacher motivation and incentives
- School focused professional development
- Structured pedagogy and formative assessment
- Focus on language and literacy in foundation years
- Inclusive teaching and learning processes
- Regular setting & mentoring of homework
- A safe and nurturing environment
- Socially relevant curriculum
- Relevant achievement and learning materials
  - Effective local/district management & support for schools

A good quality education enables all learners to become economically productive, develop sustainable livelihoods, contribute to peaceful and democratic societies and enhance individual wellbeing.

Enabling policy environment
- Public debate on quality
- Teacher salaries and incentives
- Qualifications, curriculum and assessment framework
- Textbook procurement & disbursement
- International benchmarking
- Teacher training
- Leadership development
- School inspectorate & inspection framework
- Language of instruction policy

EdQual
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<th>View of individual</th>
<th>View of development</th>
<th>Quality emphasis</th>
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<td>Human capital</td>
<td><em>Homo-economicus</em></td>
<td>Economic growth</td>
<td>Measurable learning outcomes</td>
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<td>Rational choice for greater productivity or income</td>
<td>poverty reduction</td>
<td>Efficiency &amp; effectiveness</td>
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<td>Subject of entitlements</td>
<td>Ensuring legally enshrined rights</td>
<td>Inclusion, child-centred, democratic participation</td>
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<td>Fraser's social justice</td>
<td>Economic, social and political</td>
<td>Dismantling institutionalized obstacles to parity of social participation</td>
<td>Inclusive &amp; equitable Relevant Participatory/democratic</td>
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<td>Capabilities approach</td>
<td>Rational choice for quality of life</td>
<td>freedoms to live valued lives, wellbeing</td>
<td>Extending capabilities, learning to reason, democratic participation</td>
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