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3. RETHINKING MISSIONS AND VALUES
OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Insights from the Capability Approach and the Institutional Perspective

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, HEIs throughout the world face challenges that interfere not only with their functioning but also with their very identity as institutions. These are challenges stemming from the changed context both in society as a whole, in science and in the wider realm of education. Tapper and Palfreyman (2000) define the main problems facing contemporary universities as the three 'Ms': marketization, massification, and managerialism. The three 'Ms' create a completely new situation in higher education because they "attack" the traditional essence and founding principles of the university. Another challenge to the development of higher education is the increased status hierarchy among universities which plays strongly to the self-interest of universities (Marginson, 2011a). This hierarchy has been legitimised and maintained by various rankings which also seem to "reflect the greater differentiation of institutional missions within mass systems – especially with regard to research" (Scott, 2015, p. 8). At the same time discussing the new challenges for higher education, Pritchard et al. (2015) emphasise that the differentiation of mission and profile in HEIs is still widely seen as a means of adjusting higher education provision to the growing and increasingly diverse demands of the European labour markets for a highly qualified labour force. Some HEIs however have adopted a purely instrumental role for higher education as entirely subordinated to the demands of the labour market.

According to many authors, the result of these developments is that higher education and its main institution – the university – have fallen into crisis[2] and are "losing legitimacy as they move away from their historical character, functions, and accumulated heritage as educational institutions" (Gumport, 2000, p. 67). In such a situation, fresh theoretical frameworks are needed to provide new perspectives for discussing and capturing the essence of higher education.

The present study focuses on the capability approach and the institutional perspective as frameworks for discussing roles, missions and values of higher education. More specifically, the aim of this chapter is twofold. First, to theoretically outline the heuristic potential of the capability approach in conceptualising and understanding the influence of higher education as an institution on individuals and society. Second, to show the capacity of this approach to restore and give new

meaning to some values such as social justice inherent in, and promoted by, higher education. This study makes two main contributions. First, it enriches the discussion of missions and values in the contemporary postmodern higher education world. We do so by developing our own theoretical model which simultaneously takes into account two perspectives: the institutional and the capability approach. Second, it contributes to the discussions on social equity in higher education.

The chapter proceeds as follows. First, we discuss our theoretical framework derived from the combination of the capability approach perspective with the approach to higher education as an institution. We consider the intrinsic, instrumental and empowering values of higher education and the understanding of equity as a value of higher education. This is followed by a presentation of a theoretical model of higher education missions/roles. After that, the data and analysis methods are described. The main findings are subsequently presented. Then these findings are discussed in the light of previous research, and the heuristic potential of the capability approach and the institutional perspective in conceptualising the roles and values of higher education is outlined. The last section provides some concluding remarks.

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Human Capital Approach

Human capital theory is the best known and probably the most influential theory conceptualising education and its personal/social role and outcomes. It was pioneered in the 1960s by Becker (1964/1993) and Schultz (1963), and some other scholars from the University of Chicago. The main thesis of human capital theory is that education is important both for individuals and societies as it disseminates knowledge and creates skills that serve as an investment in human beings as an economic factor. Recent reformulations of human capital theory have stressed the significance of education and training as the key to participation in the new global economy. The European Strategy "Europe 2020" defines education as a crucial driver towards building smart growth – an economy based on knowledge and innovation – and as a contributor to people's employability (European Commission, 2010). Human capital theory remains the most powerful approach to education for OECD countries as well – it is argued that "the overall economic performance of the OECD countries is increasingly more directly based upon their knowledge stock and their learning capabilities" (Foray & Lundvall, 1996, p. 21).

Although human capital theory is so influential, it has also been highly criticised. Two of the lines of this criticism are important for the present analysis. The first one stresses the fact that the economy is conceptualised as an analytically separate realm of society that can be understood in terms of its own internal dynamics, although it is well known that an economy is influenced by politics and culture. The second line of criticism questions the assumption that individuals always act rationally to maximise utilities (Block, 1990; Fitzsimons, 1999). If we apply this

reasoning concretely to the way human capital theory conceptualises education, we could argue that it becomes problematic because it is economistic, ahistorical, fragmented and exclusively instrumental (Marginson, 1993; Robeyns, 2006). In order to overcome some of the shortcomings of human capital theory and to reach a more balanced understanding of the roles and values of higher education, we will rely on two theoretical perspectives – the understanding of higher education as an institution and the capability approach.

Higher Education as an Institution

Institutional theory explains the production of social structures not in terms of the functional needs or the power of actors but by emphasising that the emergence and development of local organisations depends on wider environmental meanings, definitions, rules, and models (Meyer et al., 2007). Applying institutional perspective to higher education allows us to outline the following characteristics of higher education germane to the present analysis. *First*, higher education is, and has been, the central institution of modern societies. As Meyer et al. (2007, p. 210) put it "[f]rom its medieval origins to its post-modern incarnation, universities are not mainly local organizations justified by specific economic and political functions or shaped by particular historical legacies or power struggles. A much broader cultural and civilizational mission has always informed higher education. Its legitimacy and development throughout history have been linked to enacting this broader mission which today includes the idea that universities are sites for developments that lead to social progress". *Second*, in its central "university" form, higher education has a history of almost a millennium, and throughout the whole period, it has nearly monopolised some very central steps in the implementation of the Western and modern day cognitive models of progress and justice, models now circulating through the themes of excellence (progress) and equity (justice), so prevalent in higher education. *Third*, though in terms of cultural content the university is surprisingly homogeneous throughout the world and follows isomorphic trends in its development, its organisational forms (for example, degree of autonomy or status – private or public) vary substantially across countries and even within national states. *Fourth*, as an institution, higher education "has an impact on society over and above the immediate socializing experiences it offers the young" (Meyer, 1977, p. 55). At the level of the individual, this influence is mainly associated with the effects on identity formation of entering higher education and acquiring the status of student/graduate. An individual's opportunities and expectations are substantially transformed when he/she becomes a college graduate, and this transformation is independent of the particular college or particular student experience involved (Meyer, 1970). At societal level, conceiving higher education as an institution, and not only as an organisation for producing trained individuals, allows us to see that "the university serves a highly collective function". It links the "role structure of society to universalized cultural knowledge" and "defines certain types of knowledge

as authoritative in society, and authoritative on the basis of the highest cultural principles (e.g., science, rationality, natural law)" (Meyer et al., 2007, pp. 206–207). Higher education – to a much greater extent than the other levels of education – "constructs and alters the network of positions in society in addition to allocating individuals to these positions" and "confers success and failure in society quite apart from any socializing effects" (Meyer, 1977, pp. 56, 64).

The Capability Approach

The capability approach has been pioneered by the the Nobel Prize-winning economist Amartya Sen, and then further developed by the political philosopher Martha Nussbaum and many others. It is a theoretical framework for conceptualising and evaluating phenomena such as poverty, inequalities, well-being and human development. The concern with the problems of injustice is an integral part of this framework. According to the capability approach, it is not so much the achieved outcome (functioning) that matters, but the real opportunities that one has for achieving those outcomes (capability). The main reason behind this is hidden in the diversity of human beings. Actually, different people need different things to achieve the same level of functioning (understood as various things that a person may value *being* or *doing* such as health, employment and education). For Sen, capability is a kind of freedom and refers to "our ability to achieve various combinations of functioning that we can compare and judge against each other in terms of what we have reason to value" (Sen, 2009, p. 233). Every person has his or her own set of capabilities, which refers to all the things they can be or do, and which in fact determine the choices they can make. In other words, capability relates to the presence of valuable options, in the sense of opportunities that exist not only formally or legally but that are also effectively available to the agent (Robeyns, 2013). In this regard, the capability approach is very sensitive to "the importance of the agency aspect", which is related "to the view of persons as responsible agents" (Sen, 1985, pp. 203–204). This framework recognises that "having education affects the development and expansion of other capabilities so that an education capability expands other important human freedoms" (Walker, 2012, p. 454). Sen (1992) argues that a person's capability to achieve valuable outcomes provides a general approach to the evaluation of social and educational arrangements. By emphasising important personal and social values, such as freedom, agency and personal (identity) development, justice and well-being, the capability approach sets a framework for critical evaluation of current developments in higher education. Furthermore, the capability approach "offers a language not only to identify moments of equity and the persistence of normalizing and alienating practices, but also a practical framework for acting towards, and for judging equality" (Walker, 2006, p. 142). Last, but not least, the capability approach is context sensitive. In fact, the heuristic potential of the capability approach in higher education research has been widely explored in relation to specific problems such as access, pedagogy and employability in both

developing and developed contexts (eg. Boni & Walker, 2013; Ribeiro, 2015). This has been possible due to the potential of the approach to be complemented by other theories. However, in none of the studies has the capability approach been complemented by the institutional perspective.

Missions/Roles and Values of Education via the Capability Approach Lens

The first question which arises in discussions on roles and missions of higher education is whether to start from ends and values or from resources. We find the capability approach quite relevant in this respect as it argues that our acts and evaluations should start from what has ultimate value, and only in a second step of the analysis ask what means are needed to secure these ends. Moreover, within the capability approach perspective we must adopt a holistic view, which means to take into account all possible ends (sets of capabilities) and not limit our choice to some of them (Robeyns, 2013). We acknowledge that this is a normative approach. Its advantage is that it allows us to define the roles of higher education based on our understanding of its specificity as an institution and thus to develop a framework for evaluating social arrangements and policies in higher education. In addition, "by starting from ends, we do not a priori assume that there is only one overridingly important means …, but rather explicitly ask the question which types of means are important" for the achievement of a particular end, as for some ends "the most important means will indeed be financial resources and economic production, but for others it may be particular political practices and institutions" (Robeyns, 2013, p. 420). The other approach – to start from available resources and try to systematise the missions and roles actually performed by HEIs – would leave us without reliable criteria for analysing recent developments in higher education and for outlining future developmental horizons.

Drèze and Sen (2002, pp. 38–40) outline five different ways in which education (together with health) can be valuable to the freedom of a person: *intrinsic importance*, *instrumental personal roles*, *instrumental social roles*, *instrumental process roles* and *empowerment and distributive roles*. Robeyns (2006) develops a modified version of this typology in accordance with two dimensions: economic – non-economic and personal – collective. She distinguishes the following roles of education: (1) *intrinsic* – valuing knowledge for its own sake; (2) *instrumental personal economic role* – the role of education in helping people "to find a job, to be less vulnerable on the labour market, to be informed as a consumer, to be more able to find information on economic opportunities" (ibid., p. 71); (3) *instrumental collective economic role* – an educated workforce is necessary for economic growth; (4) *non-economic personal instrumental role* – being knowledgeable about different issues, being able to speak with strangers, being open-minded; (5) *non-economic collective instrumental role* – "children learn to live in a society where people have different views of the good life, which is likely to contribute to a more tolerant society" (ibid., p. 71).

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The Robeyns's typology is very systematically developed, but it does not fully recognise two important aspects of the capability approach perspective to education. First, it is important to note that Drèze and Sen emphasise the social dimension not only of education outcomes, but of the process of improving education as well (Drèze & Sen, 2002). Second, the non-economic personal instrumental role should not be confined to its role as a *transfer* of knowledge that produces non-economic personal benefits, but should also pay attention to the substantial *transformative power* of education as a factor for identity formation and agency empowerment. Unterhalter (2009) emphasises that Sen distinguishes the instrumental role of education from its empowering and distributive role in facilitating the ability of disadvantaged, marginalised and excluded groups to organise politically. We think that this transformative and empowering role of education is very important and should not be defined as a purely instrumental one insofar as it could be fully realised only based on intrinsic knowledge and values.

These two typologies clearly show that the capability approach perspective to education goes beyond the human capital perspective, which currently dominates higher education policy, by adopting a broader vision of human development and acknowledging both the intrinsic and the instrumental roles of education. Thus, the notion of capability in Sen's view implies a larger scope of benefits from education than "merely" improving economic production. It includes influencing social change and enhancing the well-being and freedom of individuals and peoples. The human capability perspective focuses on the impact that education may have on expanding human ability to lead a valuable life and to enhance the substantive choices that people have (See Sen, 1999, pp. 292–297). Nussbaum (1997, 2006) pays special attention to the role of (liberal) education, arguing that it cultivates humanity by developing three capacities crucial for the health of democracy: the capability for critical self-examination and critical thinking about one's own culture and traditions; the capacity to see oneself as a human being who is bound to all humans with ties of concern and the capacity for narrative imagination; the ability to empathize with others and to put oneself in another's place. It is also acknowledged that education has a crucial role for "reproducing and transforming social norms and culture and for identity formation (who we take ourselves to be), for determining "which identities and abilities count (and which are devalued), and what we see as possible for ourselves" (Walker, 2007, p. 178). It is also important that it "is of intrinsic worth in our personal development, and instrumental in opening up economic opportunities", "is constitutive of other aspects of human well-being" and "potentially enables other capabilities" (ibid).

Equity/Justice as a Value of Higher Education

Social justice is one of the central values in both the capability approach and the current developments in higher education. It has become a constituent part of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) through the social dimension in higher

education which has been firmly emphasised within the Bologna Process since 2003 (Berlin Communiqué). Equity is an indispensable dimension of the widening of access to higher education: inequalities in access to higher education, especially those due to socioeconomic factors, are important characteristics of higher education systems and how they fulfil their missions.

In turn, social justice is at the centre of the capability approach. According to Sen, it is in fact a "momentous concept" (Sen, 2009, p. 401) which is closely linked to the idea of equality. The central questions which Sen raises are how justice could be enhanced and how the identifiable injustices may be redressed. More specifically, Sen outlines two distinctive traditions of justice. The first approach, which Sen calls "transcendent institutionalism", aims to identify what perfectly just social arrangements might be and concentrates primarily on getting the institutions right. The second approach – realization-focused comparison – is concerned with "social realizations" resulting from actual institutions, actual behaviour and other influences (Sen, 2009, pp. 5–7). More specifically, the "comparative" approach concentrates on ranking alternative social arrangements instead of focusing exclusively on the identification of a fully-just society. Sen insists on the comparative route to justice because of the possibility, despite having just institutions, of observing injustices at individual level and in people's everyday lives. Overall, Sen's comparative approach to justice could contribute to identifying spaces of injustice and engaging in their removal.

As Marginson (2011b) convincingly argues, these two understandings of justice resonate in the two perspectives in which social equity in higher education has been recently conceptualised: *fairness* and *inclusion.* The fairness perspective "implies ensuring that personal and social circumstances – for example gender, socio-economic status or ethnic origin – should not be an obstacle to achieving educational potential" and thus "access to, participation in and outcomes of tertiary education are based only on individuals' innate ability and study effort" (Santiago et al., 2008, pp. 13–14)*.* The fairness aspect is reflected in the so-called social dimension of higher education, which is realised as important within the Bologna process. The social dimension implies that the "student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels should reflect the diversity of our populations" (London Communiqué, 2007, 2.18). The inclusion perspective points "to the significance of improvement in participation of any particular group irrespective of how other groups have fared" (Clancy & Goastellec, 2007, p. 146). Thus, whereas the first approach focuses on the *proportional distribution of student places* (or graduations) between different social groups, the second one "focuses on growth in the *absolute number* of people from hitherto under-represented socio-economic groups, as defined in terms of income measures or social or occupational status" (Marginson, 2011b, pp. 23–24). This aspect is reflected in the benchmark on higher education in the Europe 2020 strategy according to which, by 2020, the proportion of 30–34-year-olds with tertiary educational attainment should be at least 40 percent.

Discussing the goals of equity *policy*, Marginson argues that equity as inclusion should be prioritised over equity as fairness (Marginson, 2011b, p. 26). We claim that for *explorative and explanatory purposes*, both perspectives should be simultaneously taken into account. Thus, our view is in line with Clancy and Goastellec (2007) who state that "it is necessary to take account of changes both in relative and absolute levels of participation". This means that in order to explore and explain the higher education situation in a given country, we need to answer at least three main questions: *"What growth?", "Access for whom?"* and *"Access to what?"* The answer to the first question will provide a general view of the increase in absolute numbers of students and graduates, and the inclusiveness of the higher education system. The second question will reveal the relative chances of different social groups to enter and graduate from HEIs. The third question refers to the differences in status and prestige of different HEIs and in types of programmes, and thus its answer will show the existence of additional inequalities, caused by the internal differentiation and stratification of higher education systems. This third question seems to be underestimated in the discussions of equity, but it becomes more relevant given that the expansion of higher education was accompanied by processes of differentiation. In this regard, we think that this question also should be taken into account in the discussions on equity. We designate it as *a relational aspect of equity*. It captures inequalities in access to and participation in different types of HEIs and programmes (Bachelor & Master's or different fields of studies).

Alongside the important value of social justice when we look at higher education via the capability approach, we should emphasise that the idea of social justice is also reflected in the understanding of the ultimate roles of higher education and how it may enhance the people's well-being.

IN SEARCH OF A NEW MODEL OF MISSIONS/ROLES OF HIGHER EDUCATION

We view the missions and roles of higher education as two sides of the definition of the underlying purpose, i.e., the reason for the existence of higher education as an institution: missions express this purpose in a more theoretical way, whereas roles define it in a more operational manner.

Already in 1963 Kerr (1963, pp. 8–9) ascertained that "[t]he university is so many things to so many people that it must, of necessity, be partially at war with itself". Gradually it became evident that the raison d'être of higher education in contemporary societies consists simultaneously of three purposes or activities – teaching, research and service (Tight et al., 2009). Through them higher education serves different missions/roles for individuals and societies. Specific higher education systems and HEIs combine the three activities and the missions/roles associated with them in different manners putting stress on one or the other (see Strike & Labbe in this volume).

Taking into account the above discussions, we develop a model of missions/ roles of higher education which bridge the capability approach and the institutional

perspective and follow two lines of reasoning: (1) *level of influence*: individual and societal (which corresponds to the division between private and public), and (2) *character of influence*: intrinsic, instrumental and transformative/empowering (see Table 1). The model clearly demonstrates the complex nature and plurality of roles/missions and values of higher education as an institution and the heuristic potential of the capability approach for capturing them. At individual level, we differentiate the missions/roles of higher education related to different aspects of personality development, alongside graduates' employability, and classify them according to their instrumental, intrinsic or transformative/empowering value. At societal level, in addition to the widely discussed role of higher education for economic and cultural development, we identify its role for societal legitimisation of different types of knowledge and values. We also acknowledge its human development role from two different perspectives: an instrumental one, in terms of improvement of the population's knowledge and skills, and an empowering one, in terms of expanding the actual freedoms that people enjoy.

We define this model as an ideal type in the Weberian sense. This means that it has no ontological reality and is simply a cognitive instrument for capturing and understanding the diversity of missions/roles of higher education as an institution. Furthermore, we do not focus on the mission and values at the level of a given HEI, which are well-studied (see for example Boni & Gasper, 2012; Strike & Labbe, and Leiber, in this volume).

Mission/roles of higher education as an institution can be defined at two levels – at the level of each specific HEI and at supra-institutional level. In turn, the supra-institutional level can refer to a national system of higher education, to a European (or other regional) higher education system or to higher education as a global institution existing in different historical periods. Thus, missions/roles of higher education are taken to be embedded in different social and organisational contexts.

Table 1 does not present any specific indicators but instead identifies aspects that could lead to concrete indicators in particular contexts. Thus, it provides a first step that must be followed by a discussion of the most suitable indicators for assessing how each one of the higher education roles is incorporated in missions of concrete higher education systems or HEIs and how it is realised in different social contexts. At this stage we can only start this discussion.

In fact, the capability approach has inspired many initiatives for measurements of human development, poverty and well-being. Thus, for instance the ideas of capabilities are incorporated into quantitative indicators to measure progress in the real world for the calculation of the Human Development Index (HDI).[3] Furthermore, for its 20th Human Development Report the United Nations introduced the Inequality-adjusted HDI in order to capture the losses in human development due to inequality in health, education and income (UNDP, 2010). Building upon Sen's ideas that poverty is not related only to income, but should be better seen as a capability deprivation, in 1997 United Nations introduced the Human Poverty Index (HPI). It was designed to account for deprivations in health, education, and standard

Table 1. Model of mission/roles of higher education as an institution in a capability approach perspective

Level of influence Character of influence	Individual	Society
Instrumental	• Employability (formation of graduates' abilities to find employment by developing relevant knowledge, skills, attitudes, identities) • Formation of status identity (being a student or a graduate)	• Human capital development and well-being • Legitimisation and stratification of different types of knowledge/disciplines • (Re)structuring of professional roles • Promoting economic growth • Cultural and intellectual centre
Intrinsic	• Valuing and acquiring knowledge for its own sake	• Knowledge development • Legitimisation of values in society: progress, rationality, equity (as fairness and inclusion), tolerance, freedom of thought, diversity

Transformative/ Empowering	• Personality development
	
	  ○ Formation of responsible identity
	  ○ Development of abilities for independent and critical thinking and imagination
	  ○ Agency development and empowerment of a person to control his/her environment
	
	• Promoting the individual's mobility
		• Expanding human freedoms and possibilities
		
		• (Re)distributive – facilitating social group mobility and the ability of different groups, disadvantaged included, to organise and express their interests)

of living at country level. It was substituted later on by the so-called Multiple Poverty Index (MPI) that takes into account how many people experience these deprivations, whether they are overlapping and how many deprivations people face on average. OECD also developed a framework for measuring well-being, drawing upon ideas from the capability approach (see for instance OECD, 2015). All these indicators – in addition to GDP per capita – could be used at national level to assess the role of higher education system for promoting economic growth and well-being.

We could benefit from some other indicators such as whether higher education (both at national level and at the level of a concrete HEI) contributes to societal progress by transfer of knowledge and technology or by focusing on fundamental or applied research (Leiber, in this volume). When it comes to the transformative/empowering role of higher education, the work of Walker and McLean (2013) could serve as a helpful guide in this regard. They have developed the so-called Public-Good Professional Capabilities Index in order to enrich the debates on the responsibilities of universities to educate professionals for the public good. However, for other roles of higher education, like the intrinsic one, there is a need to develop new indicators, given that up to this moment this role seems to be the least measured.

As we will show in the next section of the chapter the role of higher education in promoting equity/justice at the level of a given higher education system can be captured with the 'representation index' which measures the proportion of students having parents who have completed a certain educational level. The indicators for equity might be enriched with the following two, used as goals in the mission statements of HEIs in Germany: the proportion of those HEIs that take care of non-traditional students and the proportion of those HEIs that promote equal opportunities for women and men (Leiber, in this volume). The first of these indicators can also be used at the level of a particular HEI as a proportion of non-traditional students.

PROMOTING EQUITY/JUSTICE THROUGH ACCESS TO
HIGHER EDUCATION: DATA ANALYSIS

Research Methodology

In this part of the chapter we focus on one of the missions/roles of higher education – legitimising equity as a value – since equity is a key value in both the capability approach and the contemporary higher education systems. More concretely, we study the role of higher education in promoting justice through the way in which access to higher education is realised. Our analysis is based on data from the European Social Survey (ESS), 2006–2012, the Eurostudent survey (2015) and Eurostat. We focus at country level because we would like to keep to the same level of analysis as the one on which we developed the model for missions/roles – namely at the level of higher education as an institution or national higher education system.

To assess the inclusion aspect of equity, we use data from Eurostat as of 2013 and measure it against the proportions of 30–34 year olds with tertiary educational attainment.

To analyse the fairness aspect of equity, we use data from Eurostudent (2015). This aspect is measured via the so-called "representation index" (for more details, see Hauschildt, Gworć, Netz, & Mishra, 2015, p. 48). This index sets the proportion of students with a certain educational background (i.e. having parents who have completed a particular educational level), for example, higher education, against the

proportion of 40–59 year-old men[4] with the same respective educational attainment in the population. It measures to what extent this group from the general population is represented within the student body. A value of 1 represents a perfect balance between the percentages of students' fathers who have attended higher education and the 40–59 year-old men with higher education in the population. Values above 1 indicate overrepresentation of this group within the student body. Values below 1 indicate that this group is underrepresented. We focus specifically on two groups with different educational backgrounds within the student body, measured by fathers' highest level of education – those with a low education background (ISCED 0–2) and those with a high education background (ISCED 5–6).

To capture the relational aspect of equity, we use data from Eurostudent (2015) and the ESS (2006–2012). We use Eurostudent data for the proportions of students with higher education background (i.e. students whose fathers have tertiary degrees) in different types of HEIs (university and non-university). Based on the ESS, we also calculate the proportions of people with higher education background that have attained various tertiary programmes, in terms of field of study and level of the programme.

Results

Figure 1 shows the inclusion aspect of equity in higher education, measured by the proportions of 30–34-year-olds with tertiary educational attainment in the EU 28 and
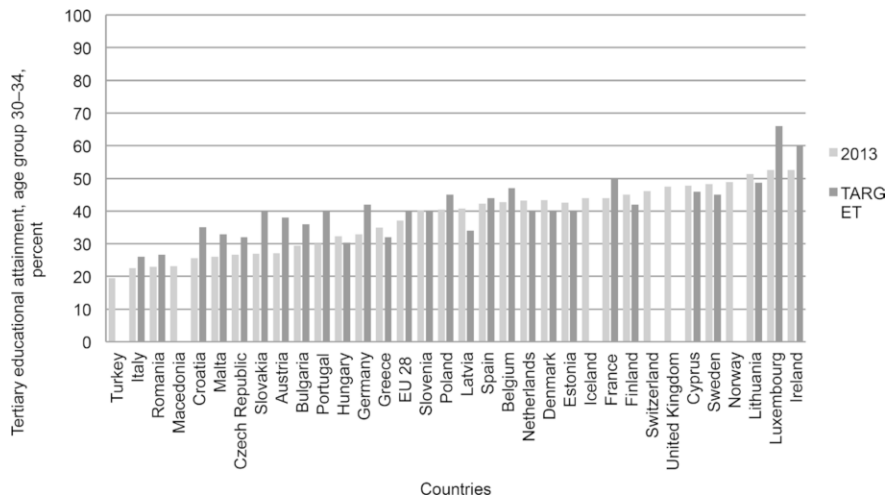

Figure 1. Tertiary educational attainment, age group 30–34 by country, 2013, in %.
Source: Eurostat, Extracted on 05.07.2016, code t2020_41

non EU-countries for 2013. It demonstrates that although higher education expansion took place in all countries, countries vary in terms of the inclusion aspect of equity. Thus, whereas 16 of the EU 28 countries have reached the ET 2020 benchmark of 40 percent, countries like Italy, Romania, Croatia, Malta, the Czech Republic and Slovakia are lagging behind.

Figure 2 illustrates the fairness aspect of equity in higher education. It shows that the most inclusive higher education systems are not necessarily the fairest ones, and vice versa. This is especially visible in the cases of Lithuania, Italy and Malta. At the same time, there are overlaps on the one hand in the cases of Ireland, Norway, Switzerland and Finland and, on the other, of Slovakia, Romania and Croatia. Thus, the last three countries are among the least equitable – both in terms of equity as inclusion and as fairness.
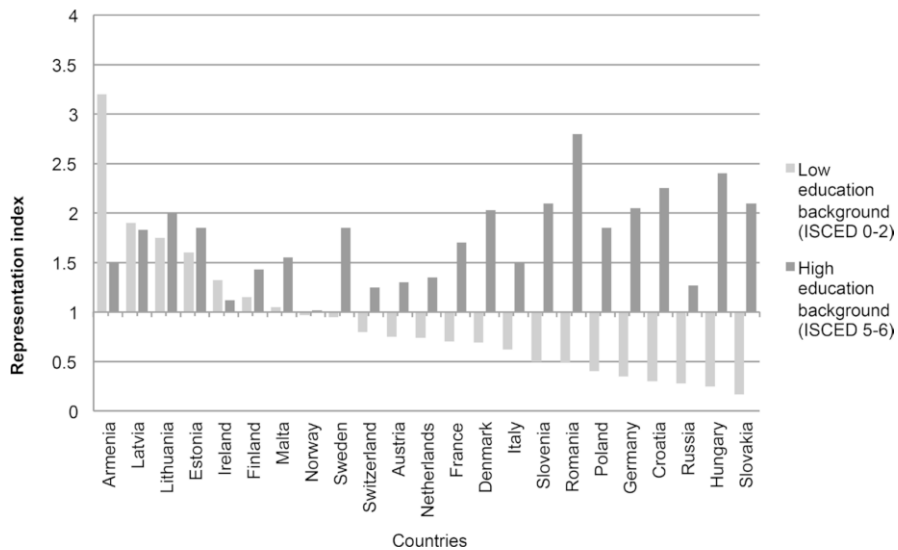

Figure 2. Representation of students from high and low educational backgrounds
(based on fathers' educational attainment) by country.
Source: Adapted from Hauschildt, Gworć, Netz, and Mishra (2015, p. 54)

As regards the relational aspect of equity, it is worth noting that not all types of HEIs are inclusive to the same extent. Thus, Figure 3 shows that in the majority of countries in the EHEA, the proportion of students with high educational background (i.e. students whose fathers have tertiary degrees) in the non-university sector (e.g., Universities of Applied Sciences/Polytechnics) is lower than among students studying in universities. This trend occurs in all countries (for which data are available) amongst the students in different types of HEIs by education background,
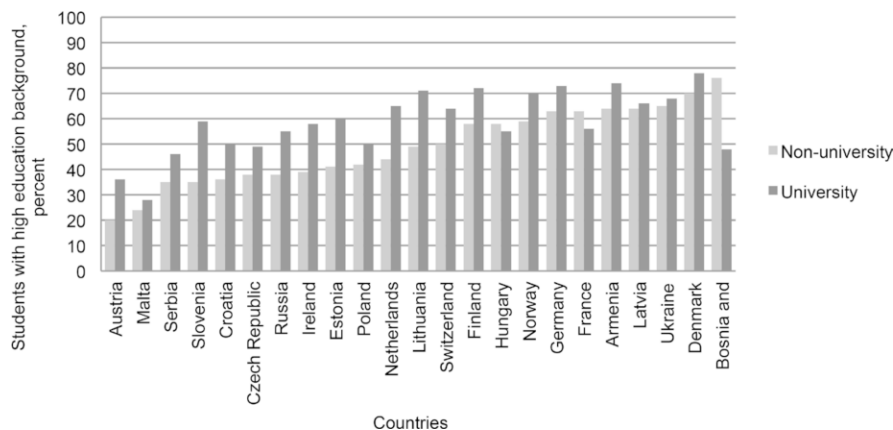
*Figure 3. Students with high education background by type of HEI and by country, in %.
Source: Adapted from Hauschildt, Gworć, Netz, and Mishra (2015, p. 57)*

except Bosnia-Herzegovina, France and Hungary, where the proportion of students with higher education background in the non-university sector prevails over the respective proportion in the university sector.

Figure 4 reveals a common pattern in all countries studied: the proportion of graduates who have at least one parent with a tertiary degree is higher within more prestigious (Master and PhD) types of degrees and is significantly lower for less prestigious short and medium ones, such as Bachelor and other 3 years tertiary degrees. This difference is especially salient in the cases of Slovakia and Hungary. This suggests that, most likely, the children from low socioeconomic background have lower chances to access the same type of HEIs as that accessed by children with highly qualified parents.

The distribution analysis of the graduates from different socioeconomic backgrounds within different fields of study shows that the (cap)ability of people of a high educational background to attain a degree differs by countries. The data presented in Figure 5 suggest that the children of a low educational background can hardly have a real opportunity to matriculate for a law programme, given that this field is chosen by people with high educational background. Conversely, it seems that education as a subject is one of the most inclusive fields when it comes to people with lower educational background. Thus, some specialties are not really accessible to children of low and medium socioeconomic background, which means that there is a qualitative difference in the possibility that certain fields of study will admit people of lower socioeconomic background.

To sum up, although it was not possible to find exhaustive data for all countries in all of the aspects of equity on which we focus, Slovakia definitely stands out as a
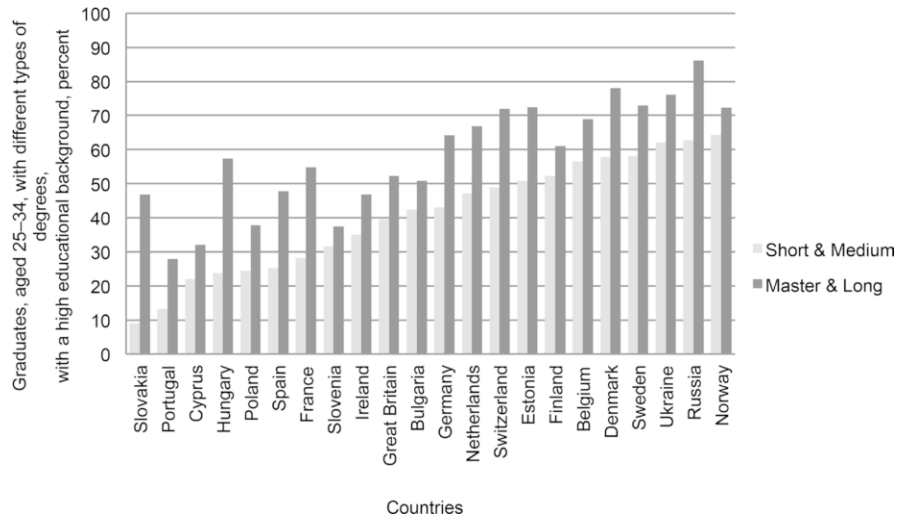
Figure 4. Graduates, aged 25–34, with different types of degrees, with a high educational background (who have at least one parent with higher education) by country, in %.
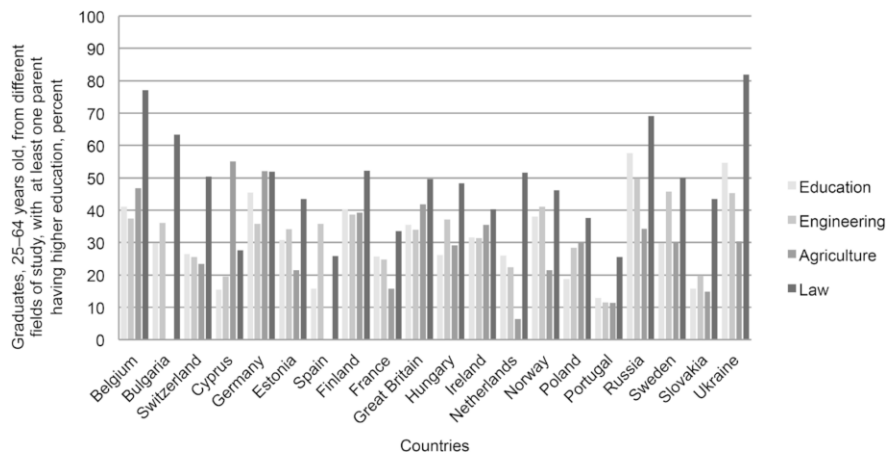*Source: ESS 2010–2012 (own calculations), weighted (dweight), no. 5,513*

Figure 5. Graduates, 25–64 years old, from different fields of study, with at least one parent having higher education by country, in %.
Source: ESS 2006–2008 (own calculations), weighted (dweight)

country where the higher education system experiences the most severe problems in achieving equity in higher education, whereas Norway seems to be the most equitable in all dimensions – inclusion, fairness and relational. However, a more accurate answer could be obtained by employing models that take into consideration the variety of degrees (in terms of either field of study, type of degree, or HEIs), e.g., multinomial logistic regression; this is an approach worth following up in further research.

DISCUSSION

The chapter demonstrates the heuristic potential of the capability approach and the institutional perspective to shed new light on, and to critically assess, the complexity of roles played by higher education in the contemporary post-modern world, characterised by growing inequalities and the outburst of new social conflicts. Our findings suggest that:

- The capability approach and the institutional perspective have a heuristic potential for conceptualising and critically evaluating the mainstream missions and values in higher education in the contemporary market-driven knowledge economy.
- The institutional perspective broadens our view of higher education roles especially by emphasising that higher education influences both individuals and societies not only through but also above the socializing experiences it offers the students.
- The capability approach has the capacity to restore and give new meaning to certain values – for example, social justice – to which human capital theory has not paid due attention.
- There are considerable differences in access to higher education across European countries. The results show that the inclusion and fairness aspects of equity may not necessarily go hand in hand. This is why we claim that both of them should be taken into account in evaluating the extent to which equity is achieved and legitimised as a result of the functioning of higher education in diverse country contexts. In addition, the relational aspect of equity, i.e. inequalities in access to and participation in different types of HEIs and programmes, also does matter.

In demonstrating the heuristic potential of the capability approach as a framework for discussing roles, missions and values of higher education, our findings are in line with Walker and Boni (2013) who claim that the capability approach offers an opportunity to "re-imagine a different vision of the universities" in the new century as well as to reconsider the role of universities for human development, which is often understood only as human capital formation and the preparation of people to be part of the workforce. More specifically, the two authors argue that the human development and capabilities perspective (ul Haq, 2003; Nussbaum, 2011; Sen, 1999, 2009) "foregrounds *both* economy *and* society", whereas its aims are "human well-being, equality, justice (local and global) and the sustainability of democratic societies" (Walker & Boni, 2013, p. 22).

This chapter shows that at least five main ways can be outlined in which the capability approach could help in discussing the roles, missions and values of higher education. *First*, it broadens our understanding as to how higher education may be understood beyond the narrow human capital agenda in which human lives are viewed exclusively as means to economic gain. By looking at people and their well-being as ends, the capability approach provides grounds to conceptualise the different meanings of higher education and to take into account the plurality of its outcomes. *Second*, it is sensitive to human diversity, and diversity of groups and settings. It suggests the importance of contexts and therefore the possibility of a plurality of roles and missions in different contexts. *Third*, it suggests how equity in access to higher education could be measured, namely, by focusing on the opportunity aspect of the freedom that people have to achieve what they value in terms of comprehensive outcomes. *Fourth*, it also shows that employability of higher education graduates, which is high on policy agenda for higher education, is very important but not the sole and all-embracing mission of HEIs. In addition, applying the capability approach to studies of graduates' employability requires us to pay special attention to the qualitative side of graduate employability (as related not simply to graduates' ability to find employment but also to their ability to find employment of a specific quality in terms of payment, required level of education and career opportunities); and also as related to its subjective side as connected not only with graduates' knowledge and skills, but with their attitudes, identities and values. *Fifth*, it provides a framework for assessment of social arrangements and policies and how they contribute to achievement of higher education missions and goals. For example, the capability approach allows us "to ask how higher education contributes to the formation of a society which is free, fair and equal in the way it provides for each individual to realize his or her fullest potential reflectively to choose and lead a good life" (Walker, 2008, p. 269). In this regard, Walker (2008) argues that widening participation in higher education, in these terms, can be achieved only as a matter of 'widening capability' and not just through increase of the number of people who can gain access to higher education.

Drawing upon the capability approach and the institutional perspective, we developed a model of missions/roles of higher education. Our model is an attempt to provide a broader vision for higher education than the one which is based on the human capital perspective, by rethinking the mission/roles and values of higher education via the capability approach and the institutional perspective. As such, it is consistent with other attempts to do so, which also have recognised equity as a human development value of a key importance to assess quality of university work (Boni & Gasper, 2012). However, in contrast to Boni and Gasper's model which is developed at university level, in our model we adopted two lines of reasoning: (1) level of influence: individual and societal and (2) character of influence: intrinsic, instrumental and transformative/empowering. In contrast to the HDI, our model focuses specifically on higher education and together with the societal, it has an individual level of influence. At this stage though, our model is open for

discussion and needs further development in order to provide specific indicators for each of the roles.

Regarding equity as a value in higher education, our findings are in line with other studies showing that the diversity of students in higher education cannot by itself be taken as an indicator of greater "equality" within the system because "an unevenness persists with regard to who studies what and where" (Archer, 2007, p. 646). That is why the qualitative side of access to higher education, i.e., to the life chances of students from different socioeconomic backgrounds to access different types of HEIs, fields of study and degrees, gains special importance.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In the context of the Bologna process, improving social justice and graduate employability have been defined as higher education priorities (Berlin Communiqué, 2003; London Communiqué, 2007; Bucharest Communiqué, 2012). On the one hand, HEIs have not only been urged to ensure that they train "employable" graduates, but some governments have introduced a performance indicator based on graduates' employment-related outcomes, in order to measure HEIs' performance (Smith et al., 2000; Moreau & Leathwood, 2006). On the other hand, social justice has become a constituent part of the EHEA through the social dimension of higher education. Despite the efforts made within the Bologna Process, there are concerns that widening access to, and participation in, higher education is only one step towards guaranteeing equity in higher education and equal opportunities to all (Elias & Brennan, 2012; Ilieva-Trichkova & Boyadjieva, 2014). In addition, according to some authors, with its emphasis on employability and the professional relevance of programmes, the Bologna process is an instrument destructive of the traditional values of higher education (Teichler, 2011).

Within this context, further and ongoing discussions on the missions and values in higher education are indispensable. The capability approach and the institutional perspective could be very beneficial in this regard, especially in generating new insights about how the missions of HEIs can be diversified and further developed by incorporating a bottom-up approach that acknowledges not only the instrumental but also the intrinsic and transformative/empowering value of higher education.

DATABASE

Available at: http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/
ESS Round 6: European Social Survey Round 6 Data (2012). Data file edition 2.1.
ESS Round 5: European Social Survey Round 5 Data (2010). Data file edition 3.2.
ESS Round 4: European Social Survey Round 4 Data (2008). Data file edition 4.3.
ESS Round 3: European Social Survey Round 3 Data (2006). Data file edition 3.5.
Norwegian Social Science Data Services, Norway – Data Archive and distributor of ESS data.

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NOTES

[1] The authors have made equal contributions and are listed in alphabetic order.

[2] See for example the discussion, organised by the International Sociological Association "Universities in Crisis", available at: http://www.isa-sociology.org/universities-in-crisis/

[3] HDI has been criticised for not providing information on capabilities but on outcomes. Sen (2009, p. 239) himself writes that "[w]e cannot reduce all the things we have reason to value into one homogenous magnitude". Nonetheless, it is not as narrow as GDP per capita, since it includes information on three domains of human development – health, education and income and has been an alternative to GDP per capita for guiding policy for more than two decades. In this period several attempts to improve the HDI have been made. Thus, the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative is trying to increase the data availability on the missing dimensions of human development (www. ophi.org.uk).

[4] This group is chosen in this age interval to represent the parent generation of students.

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