

Measuring teacher capabilities to teach in superdiverse classrooms

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The capability approach (CA) has primarily been used in economic contexts, with a focus on wellbeing. Its use in the field of teacher education could be highly promising, but it has not yet received enough attention from the researchers in the field. One unique reason for a limited use of the approach in teacher education could be the complexity in measuring teacher capabilities using the CA. Measuring capabilities in context consists of measuring the capacity a teacher has to exercise their freedom within their role. Some authors (e.g., Nebel & Nebel, 2018) have cautioned against the measurement in this space, as the process narrows the constructs under consideration. Additionally, teaching has certain professional expectations and regulatory requirements that mean some freedoms are not appropriate. In addition, the transition from a theoretical model to a quantifiable set of variables has practical limitations in terms of measurement.

CA provides a comprehensive framework that allows researchers to holistically capture teachers' capabilities to address diversity in classrooms. It is important to understand that capability within this approach is not just knowledge and skills that educators acquire through formal or informal professional learning, it must also capture information about opportunity and freedom to choose behaviours (also referred to as doings and functionings). We, therefore, need to measure capability in terms of knowledge and skills necessary for the profession, but also conversion factors. We need to determine how and why individuals respond differently in the same settings despite similar capabilities.

An expert panel of educators, researchers, and stakeholders from a range of diversity perspectives provided insights into themes and practices that would be indicative of the capabilities needed in a superdiverse classroom. The panel provided insights into potential capabilities and functionings. They also suggested personal heterogeneities, environmental factors, variations in the social climate, and differences in relational perspectives as conversion factors that may explain how teachers develop their capabilities to teach in superdiverse classrooms.

Classroom vignettes were developed presenting aspects of diversities that teachers can expect in diverse classrooms. These will allow teachers to consider the potential capabilities needed in the field and the challenges they experience in having the freedom to undertake them personally in the classroom. Example vignettes, together with a measurement framework used to evaluate the capabilities are presented. In addition, an overview of the methods used to measure conversion factors and the statistical models used to consider them as part of the model, are discussed.