

Does Fair Education Mean Ideal Education?: Focusing on Elizabeth Anderson's Critique of Luck Egalitarianism

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Educational disparities are one of the most essential issues surrounding education and equity. Previous research includes many empirical studies which have been conducted to eliminate educational disparities. However, the normative question “Why do educational disparities matter?” has not been carefully examined in empirical studies on educational disparities. This question can be answered based on the value of fairness. But what is fairness? Is it enough if a fair educational system is realized? Based on the above concerns, this paper examines the value of fairness, which is a normative assumption of studies on educational disparities. The paper confirms that the value of fairness behind the argument “educational disparities should be corrected” can be clarified and justified by luck egalitarianism, and clarifies the problems associated with pursuing fairness by examining Elizabeth Anderson’s critique of luck egalitarianism. Specifically, the paper focuses on the harshness objection and the humiliation objection. It shows that, even if fairness in education is achieved, it may not result in an ideal education for all, because it may leave some children in a harsh situation and humiliate them in the process of providing compensation through redistribution. The paper then discusses three values that should be added to fairness: fresh start, sufficiency, and respect. After that, it discusses why these values are important and what issues should be considered in future empirical research on educational disparities. The paper also presents suggestions toward examining the problems of meritocracy.

Keywords: educational disparities / fairness / distributive justice / normative theory and empirical research / meritocracy

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1. Introduction: Why Do Educational Disparities Matter?

Educational disparities (i.e., gaps in educational opportunities and educational attainments and/or unequal distributions of academic resources caused by social background, such as socioeconomic status, gender, region of origin, ethnicity, or disability) are one of the most essential issues surrounding education and equity. Many empirical studies, mainly in the sociology of education, have been conducted on these issues, including investigations of the academic achievement gap, regional disparities in educational opportunities, and the gender gap in college enrollment. The premise of these studies is that educational disparities are unjust and should be corrected to the greatest extent possible.

But why do educational disparities matter? What, precisely, makes educational disparities bad? This question, which becomes far from obvious upon reflection, can be answered based on the value of fairness. That is, it is considered unfair that ascriptive factors that cannot be controlled by individuals, such as socioeconomic status, gender, region of origin, ethnicity, and disability, affect educational opportunities, resources, and attainments. It is unfair that the chances of acquiring educational attainments, an important resource for expanding life chances, differ depending on “birth”; this means that Japan is a status-based society (Matsuoka 2019). If we pursue a fair society that is not restricted by social background (i.e., “from aristocracy to meritocracy”), it is necessary, with evidence-based discussion, to understand the current state and mechanisms that generate educational disparities and to find out how to narrow educational disparities.

But is it enough if a fair educational system is realized? Is meritocracy an ideal society? Is the aim of narrowing educational disparities solely to achieve fairness? Surely not. There are other values to be pursued in addition to fairness, and pursuing fairness risks undermining other values. However, while empirical studies on educational disparities have refined methodologies for quantitative analysis, they have not sufficiently examined what problems lie in the normative argument that “educational disparities should be corrected.” In educational studies, of course, there are plentiful normative studies on educational values, but there is still insufficient discussion of what implications this has for empirical research on educational disparities. To the author’s knowledge, it is likely that, not only in Japan but also in other countries, there is little research carefully examining the normative assumption of studies on educational disparities.

Therefore, this paper aims to examine the normative assumption of studies on educational disparities through a major theory of equality in contemporary political philosophy about fairness, namely luck egalitarianism. Specifically, after confirming that the value of fairness behind the argument that “educational disparities should be corrected” can be clarified/justified by luck egalitarianism, the paper clarifies the problems associated with pursuing fairness by examining Elizabeth Anderson’s critiques of luck egalitarianism (i.e., the harshness objection and the humiliation objection). It then discusses three values that should be added to fairness: fresh start, sufficiency, and respect. After that, it examines why these values are important and what issues should be considered in future empirical research on educational disparities.

2. Normative Assumption of Studies on Educational Disparities

2.1 Luck Egalitarianism and Educational Disparities

Luck egalitarianism is a theory of distributive justice formulated in terms of propositions such as “[i]t is unjust if some people are worse off than others through their bad luck” (Lippert-Rasmussen 2016: 1). Central to this idea is that disparities created by arbitrary factors over which the individual has no control—so-called brute luck—are unfair and should be eliminated as the responsibility of society, without placing blame on individuals.

Brute luck has two main elements: the risk of disadvantage (e.g., having an accident, undergoing a natural disaster, getting sick, losing a job) and personal attributes (e.g., socioeconomic status, gender, ethnicity, disability, inborn ability) (Abe 2021). Luck egalitarianism demands that both aspects of brute luck be eliminated as much as possible, or even extinguished altogether. Once this is accomplished, the remaining disparities will not be the result of brute luck, but rather of option luck—luck and risk over which the individual has control—coming within the realm of individual responsibility.

Luck egalitarianism as distributive justice is said to have its origins in the critique of John Rawls’ theory of justice by Ronald Dworkin; through discussions by Richard Arneson and Gerald Cohen (Lippert-Rasmussen 2016), luck egalitarianism has formed a major paradigm in theories of equality in political philosophy (Inoue 2019). Luck egalitarians continue to refine such aspects of their theories as (a) what they believe is the relevant conception of equality of opportunity, (b) how much of a role luck should play in the distribution of economic benefits and (c) what is the best conception of ‘luck’ (Lamont and Favor 2017). One of the reasons why luck egalitarianism has attracted much attention is that it considers not only equality but also choice and responsibility, so it suggests how to overcome the problem of Rawls’s theory: “the difference principle looks at only the end-state distribution, and not at people’s intentional choices that led them to the end-state distribution” (Hirose 2015: 43)⁽¹⁾.

To put this theory in the context of educational disparities, a situation in which educational opportunities, resources and attainment differ according to social background is based on an arbitrary factor (i.e., brute luck) and is considered an inequality that should be corrected, because social background cannot be controlled. One also cannot claim ownership over all the goods and benefits that one obtains as a consequence of one’s good fortune (Miyadera 2014: 47-48). This is why empirical analysis is conducted to determine whether there are socioeconomic disparities in academic achievement, gender inequalities in educational attainment, and so on. In a nutshell, the normative assumption of studies of educational disparities can be summed up as “We should remove the influence of brute luck on the education of children as much as possible, in order to give all children a fair educational system regardless of their social background.”

The application of luck egalitarianism to educational studies can be found in previous studies. For example, Calvert (2015: 10) proposes the “luck egalitarian conception,” which claims that “[a]n individual’s educational well-being should not be a function of those circumstances which are for that individual a matter of luck but only of the choices she freely makes about her education.” Ikeda (2023) also suggests that, following luck egalitarianism, “the position that ‘disparities and inequalities due to factors beyond one’s control (bad luck) are not one’s responsibility (or the opposite)’ may be shared by the studies on sociology (of

education) advocating meritocracy and equal opportunity.”

This idea seeks fairness in two ways. First, for those who are born into disadvantaged backgrounds, and who, despite their will to study, are unable to receive an adequate education, it is unfair that they suffer educational disadvantages due to factors beyond their control. According to luck egalitarianism, they need not resign themselves to the inevitability of their situation. Elsewhere, from the perspective of those who are dissatisfied with excessive egalitarianism, luck egalitarianism is fair and acceptable. This is because luck egalitarianism calls for the correction of disparities only when they are caused by brute luck. Luck egalitarianism does not completely deny the concept of self-responsibility; it is characterized by its emphasis on individual responsibility under certain conditions, in order to pay attention to “who pays the cost of redistribution” and “whether it is an excessive burden for those who pay the cost.”

Thus, luck egalitarianism offers a fair and satisfactory alternative, both for those who receive compensation and for those who pay the cost of redistribution. Luck egalitarianism, sometimes called responsibility-sensitive egalitarianism, presents a balanced theory of equality that, by simultaneously considering the seemingly conflicting values of equality and responsibility, discourages the spread of irresponsible regimes in society while rejecting the critique of self-responsibility for the weak.

2.2 Problems of Luck Egalitarianism

On the other hand, some authors have pointed out problems with luck egalitarianism, including the difficulty of distinguishing between brute luck and option luck, that is, to what extent the individual is responsible (Uzuki 2009, Takamiya 2019), and the erasure individual history and identity by aiming to neutralize brute luck (Miyadera 2006). While these critiques are crucial, this paper focuses on Elizabeth Anderson’s critiques of luck egalitarianism: the harshness objection and the humiliation objection (Anderson 1999).

(1) The Harshness Objection

The harshness objection is the critique that luck egalitarianism, if applied directly to policy, leaves extremely harsh conditions as the responsibility of the individual. Anderson cites the case of the uninsured driver—an individual who had the opportunity to get insurance and was aware of the risk of a traffic accident, but nonetheless remained uninsured and got into a traffic accident due to their reckless driving. According to luck egalitarianism, this accident is not brute luck but option luck, and there is no need to use public funds to provide emergency medical care to the driver. As such, there is no problem in leaving him on the road as he is. However, this is too harsh and can hardly be called egalitarian, which is the summary of the harshness objection.

The cause of this problem is related to the combination of equality with responsibility. That is, disadvantages due to brute luck are compensated for, while adverse consequences due to option luck, no matter how severe the circumstances, are considered the responsibility of the individual and are therefore not compensated by society.

In the context of education, we can raise the issue of how to deal with children who, despite the absence of negative factors in their social backgrounds, remain low in educational attainment by their own will and choice. Certainly, from the standpoint of fairness, even if children are disadvantaged in later life courses by not studying hard or by not choosing to

go to college, they should accept these disadvantages if the situation is based on their own will and choice. But does this apply to all cases? Let us consider an example, the case of a musician who gave up on her dream.

Naomi dropped out of high school with the dream of becoming a musician. However, despite her efforts, her dream did not come true, and she is now living in poverty, working part-time. To escape her life of poverty, she would like to obtain a high school diploma, attend college, and pursue a solid career. However, due to poverty, she is unable to raise the funds to attend school, and thus cannot obtain a high school diploma and attend college. As a result, she has given up her pursuit of a more rewarding career.⁽²⁾

If luck egalitarianism is applied to Naomi's case, it will not support her. This is because it was she herself who chose to drop out of high school and dream of becoming a musician, despite understanding the risks involved, and thus it is she who must assume the consequences of her failure. This may be a fair situation. But all things considered, is it a just situation? It seems too harsh to pin this unhappy situation on an individual who made poor choices for perhaps understandable reasons, leaving no opportunity to relearn and no escape from poverty.

(2) The Humiliation Objection

The humiliation objection is a critique that the policy of compensation associated with luck egalitarianism undermines individual dignity and imposes stigma. Here is the case for what Anderson calls "letters to the disabled."

To the disabled: Your defective native endowments or current disabilities, alas, make your life less worth living than the lives of normal people. To compensate for this misfortune, we, the able ones, will give you extra resources, enough to make the worth of living your life good enough that at least *one* person out there thinks it is comparable to someone else's life (Anderson 1999: 305).

Disabled persons may be able to stabilize their standard of living by receiving compensation. From the value of fairness, such redistribution from the advantaged (able-bodied persons) to the disadvantaged (disabled persons) is a desirable policy. But who would not feel humiliated by such a letter, without having their self-esteem compromised? Luck egalitarianism "*disparages the internally disadvantaged and raises private disdain to the status of officially recognized truth*" (Anderson 1999: 306).

In the context of education, the issue of stigma against poverty and low academic achievement is important. It is difficult to imagine educational practices that humiliate children in such a blatant way as the "letter to the disabled." But we must be sensitive to the possibility that some supportive messages such as "Given the challenging nature of your family background, let's provide you with additional educational resources" or "You are not academically gifted, so let's provide you with more educational opportunities to compensate for your lack of talent," may harm and stigmatize poor and low-achieving children, even though they can contribute to closing the achievement gap. Let us consider an example of an

assistant teacher in a junior high school math class:

Several assistant teachers are assigned to a junior high school math class in order to help children with low academic ability keep up with the class. When one of the students, Ken, is stumped by a basic question, one of the assistants goes over to help him solve the problem. However, Ken does not understand several of the next questions either, so the assistant stays to help him further. After a while, Ken becomes embarrassed and asks the assistant teacher to leave.

In this case, the educational practice that incorporated the assistant teacher could be positioned as a fair educational practice. However, what if this practice makes low-achieving students feel humiliated?

The above discussion examined problems related to educational disparities based on luck egalitarianism, focusing on Anderson's harshness objection and humiliation objection. How can we overcome these critiques, i.e., the problems associated with the pursuit of fairness? Section 3 will examine how to respond to the harshness objection, and section 4 will examine how to respond to the humiliation objection.

3. Response to the Harshness Objection: Fresh Start and Sufficiency

In response to the harshness objection, this section examines two approaches: (3.1) fresh start and (3.2) sufficiency.

3.1 Fresh Start

When people are in a situation that differs from the life plan they envisioned, they sometimes wish to start life anew. If this unfavorable situation is due to brute luck, such as a disadvantaged family background or a natural disaster, society will promise to redistribute resources to the affected individual, giving them a chance to start their life anew. But if it is not due to brute luck but to option luck, luck egalitarianism does not allow them to be compensated.

But is it desirable for a society to offer no support to individuals who feel regrets like "Why did I make that choice at that time?" or "Why didn't I study harder?" and wish to start life anew? Marc Fleurbaey (2008) addresses this concern by proposing the theory of fresh start, based on egalitarianism, for those individuals who wish to reflect on their past choices and are indeed motivated to make a fresh start. According to Fleurbaey, "the ideal of freedom includes the idea of a fresh start and thus moves in the direction of forgiveness" (Fleurbaey 2008:178), and policies based on this idea are tolerant of changes in preferences and allow redistribution of resources to those who regret past choices.

Some may think that redistribution to those who regret their choices is unfair. Dworkin, who is regarded as a leading luck egalitarian, denies the fresh start approach with a pointed question: "Why should the spendthrift be rewarded for hard work and frugality he never practiced, out of taxes raised from those who have worked hard and been frugal?" (Dworkin 2002: 113). Also, the fresh start view would introduce the problem of moral hazard, because

if they guaranteed to possess equal opportunities insofar as they regret it, they don't have the any reason to make the prudent and cautious choice (Hirose 2015: 56).

Indeed, compensating people for their failures and changing preferences is costly. If that cost were to be imposed on serious workers and thrifty consumers, it would not be fair. However, Fleurbaey asserts that "the cost of such mistakes and changes must be shared by the community as a whole": he believes that we should encourage people to repent and change their preferences, that is, to make a fresh start, even at the cost of undermining the value of fairness.

Overlapping with this idea of Fleurbaey is dynamic luck egalitarianism, proposed by Patrick Tomlin. This is an addition to ordinary luck egalitarianism that posits the following: (a) in determining the justness of an inequality traceable to choice we should ask whether or to what extent the person was responsible not at the time of choosing, but rather at the point in time in which the assessment is being made, and (b) that responsibility can diminish—that is, people should not (necessarily) be held responsible for their choices forever (Tomlin 2013: 400). This allows one to justify a reallocation of resources toward a fresh start because one is not necessarily permanently responsible for the choice, even if one was fully responsible for it at the time it was made.

In addition to the intuition that it is unfair to hold people accountable for their past choices indefinitely, this idea has the benefit of addressing the phenomenon that "inequalities tend to be exacerbated, given that once an inequality has been established, the person with more has more options available to her" (Tomlin 2013: 396). This mechanism of widening inequality is called the Matthew effect, which is also related to the mechanism of the academic achievement gap (Kazumi 2023). Given the possibility that educational disparities can widen over time due to the Matthew effect, not only should inequality in the early stages of life be considered problematic, but it makes sense to incorporate the idea of a fresh start, which endorses constraining the advantages that each stage (within basic education) confers on the next one (Segall 2013: 151), into equality theory.

Based on the fresh start or dynamic luck egalitarianism, we can respond to the musician's case in section 2.2(1): it is possible to justify providing educational opportunities to Naomi, who dropped out of high school to become a musician, and thus to avoid the harshness objection.

3.2 Sufficiency

Let us discuss another approach, which focuses on a theory of distributive justice called sufficientarianism. Sufficientarianism is a distributional theory explained by the proposition that "what is important from the point of view of morality is not that everyone should have the same, but that each should have enough" (Frankfurt 1987: 21). Rather than focusing on the inequality of welfare or resources between one group and another, sufficientarianism aims to ensure adequate welfare or resources for all by setting an absolute standard (threshold) and redistributing to those who fall below that standard: this distributive principle is called sufficiency, not equality.

Based on this principle, the question raised by the musician's case in section 2.2(1) can be answered as follows. If a "high school diploma" is regarded as an educational threshold that everyone should have, then the cost of graduating from high school (including the cost of the high school equivalency examination) should be borne by society. Alternatively, if the

threshold for livelihood security is that no one should fall into poverty, then policies that improve the living conditions of the individual would be required, regardless of her educational attainment status. Thus, the harshness objection can be avoided by adopting the sufficiency principle, which unconditionally guarantees welfare and resources above a certain threshold without holding individuals accountable.

However, the sufficiency principle is also problematic. According to the above interpretation, it would not cost Naomi anything to get a high school diploma, and she would be able to escape poverty. However, Naomi's desire to go to college cannot be fulfilled by the sufficiency principle. This is because sufficientarianism considers the distribution below the threshold but is indifferent to the distribution above it. Of course, this problem would be solved if the sufficiency principle's threshold were raised to the attainment of a college degree instead of a high school diploma. However, some may object to setting a minimum standard of guaranteeing a college degree to all as too high a demand. Thus, where to set the threshold is controversial, and herein lies the difficulty of the principle of sufficiency.

There is another related problem. Suppose that everyone could get a high school diploma. Although this situation means that all students would have basic academic skills at the level of a high school graduate, when we look beyond these basic academic skills, there is an academic gap there. This gap in academic skills is a factor in creating disparities in subsequent life stages, such as college entrance examinations and job hunting. If there is still an academic achievement gap based on family background, this remains a problem from the perspective of fairness (Kazumi 2023: 200).⁽³⁾

Sufficientarianism is a straightforward distributional theory and presents a conception that can withstand the harshness objection. However, given that sufficientarianism also has its problems, it seems useful to combine sufficientarianism and luck egalitarianism in a complementary way, rather than pitting them against each other.⁽⁴⁾ That is, a pluralistic approach is needed in which the basic needs of all are first met, and then luck egalitarianism is applied for distributions above that threshold. This approach would avoid the harshness objection and still address the problem of disparities above the threshold. Indeed, such an approach has also been proposed by luck egalitarians (Segall 2010, Tan 2012).⁽⁵⁾

4. Response to the Humiliation Objection: Respect

What are the values underlying an egalitarian society? One value, Jonathan Wolff says, is fairness, "the demand that no one should be advantaged or disadvantaged by arbitrary factors" (Wolff 1998: 106). There have been various debates on fairness from Rawls' theory of justice to luck egalitarians. However, egalitarianism has at least one more important value: respect (Wolff 1998, 2010). Wolff points to the tradeoffs that can be made in the quest for fairness, which can lead to the undermining of respect. He then criticizes much of the discussion of distributive justice, including luck egalitarianism, for focusing on achieving fairness while overlooking the value of respect.

Why does the pursuit of fairness undermine respect? Wolff says that failures of common courtesy, expressions of distrust, and shameful revelations are the main factors which undermine respect. Let us here examine the case of "shameful revelations." According to luck egalitarianism, when cash transfers are provided to the poor as a welfare program, it is only

those who have fallen into poverty due to brute luck over which they have no control who are eligible for compensation. Thus, to determine whether the cause of poverty is due to brute or option luck, it is necessary to ask each person how they fell into poverty and scrutinize them to determine whether they deserve to receive the benefits.

What does it mean for the recipients themselves to admit that they never had the opportunity to obtain work? Except in cases where poverty is caused by external factors such as family background and economic stagnation, this is to admit that one is a failure who lacks talent and aptitude for work. “[T]hink how it must feel—how demeaning it must be—to have to admit to oneself and then convince others that one has not been able to secure a job, despite one’s best efforts, at a time when others appear to obtain employment with ease” (Wolff 1998: 114).

Thus, to implement equitable redistribution, it is necessary to collect various forms of data from individuals—to determine whether the disadvantage under consideration is based on brute or option luck—which would harm self-esteem by requiring the individual to make “shameful revelations.” To avoid this problem, Wolff suggests that unconditional rather than conditional cash transfers should be implemented to place particular emphasis on avoiding the humiliation of the most disadvantaged, even at the cost of creating free riders.

The following questions come to mind, however. Is lack of talent actually experienced as something to be ashamed of? Is it reasonable to consider it shameful? Wolff makes the following statement.

For example, it is quite common for teachers, doctors, or social workers to claim that some particular trait is “nothing to be ashamed of.” However, unless people typically were ashamed of such a trait there would be no need for such reassurance. Even if there is no good reason why a particular trait should lower your respect-standing, the fact is that it can, or, at least, may lead one to believe that it will. So even if a source of shame is contingent and even irrational it can still be experienced as a source of shame (Wolff 1998: 115).

From the standpoint of ideal theory, it would be important to criticize the arbitrariness with which lack of talent is associated with humiliation and to realize a society in which the problem of “shameful revelations” does not arise. However, as Wolff argues, it seems important to consider the trade-off between fairness and respect from the standpoint of non-ideal theory (Valentini 2012), considering the possibility that some people may feel embarrassed by a lack of talent.

From the above, responding to a child who says, “I don’t want to be taught because I am embarrassed,” with “There is nothing to be embarrassed about having difficulty in studying and being taught,” is likely not a practical solution, even if that were the correct answer. Although it is important to create a classroom culture in which students can easily ask each other questions without feeling embarrassed, creating this classroom culture may not be so easy. We should remember that there could be situations in which children feel embarrassed at their difficulty in learning, and we must pursue practices that avoid such humiliation.⁽⁶⁾

For example, proficiency-based classes may be effective. Of course, when implementing proficiency-based classes there is a risk of negative stigma being attached to classes for students with low academic ability. On the other hand, if students can avoid the humiliation of

having difficulty understanding what a teacher says and of being unable to solve problems that others can easily solve, the advantages of proficiency-based classes may outweigh the disadvantages. Although it needs to be examined empirically and cannot be answered in this paper, the question “What kind of humiliation do children experience in the classroom?” calls for consideration.

5. Conclusion: The Role of Normative Theory in Empirical Research

This paper has confirmed that the value of fairness behind the argument that “educational disparities should be corrected” can be clarified/justified by luck egalitarianism, and clarified the problems associated with pursuing fairness by examining Elizabeth Anderson’s critiques of luck egalitarianism. It then discussed other important values that should be added to fairness.

Previous educational studies have pointed out that the values behind studies on educational disparities can be articulated by luck egalitarianism (Miyadera 2014, Calvert 2015, Ikeda 2023) and that luck egalitarianism has problems (Miyadera 2006, Uzuki 2009, Takamiya 2019). However, the contribution of this paper is important in its discussion of the problems of luck egalitarianism using Anderson’s critique (i.e., the harshness objection and the humiliation objection) and theoretical examination of what these objections mean and what kind of values are required in addition to fairness on the issue of educational disparities. The above discussion also presents suggestions toward examining the problem of meritocracy.

Also, this paper has discussed three values that should be added to fairness: fresh start, sufficiency, and respect. From this discussion, significant implications can be drawn for empirical research on educational disparities. In other words, research on educational disparities should not only clarify educational inequality from the perspective of fairness, but also empirically examine other values, namely fresh start, sufficiency, and respect.

In the light of fresh starts, longitudinal data analysis is required to examine whether children who once struggled with their studies or did not choose to go on to college are guaranteed the opportunity to try again when they change their minds and start to reconsider their desire to study hard and go on to college. From the principle of sufficiency, it would be worth considering setting a threshold of academic achievement and educational needs that all children should meet, and then examining how many children reach that threshold; note that how to guarantee academic achievement and educational needs to all children is a different research topic from narrowing educational disparities depending on social background. From the value of respect, the research question “What kind of humiliation do children experience in the classroom?” would be important. In addition, we should study not only academic achievement and non-cognitive skills, but also relational capacities such as democratic competence, healthy personal relationships, and treating others as equals (Brighouse et al. 2018: 24-27).

Of course, there are many other topics to consider in empirical research on educational disparities. The values other than fairness required in education are not limited to fresh start, sufficiency, and respect. We also need more careful theoretical studies on these values. However, it is worth emphasizing the significance of examining the normative question “Why do educational disparities matter?” because it contributes to answering the essential question

“What kind of questions should be examined empirically?” We should remember the claim that “[p]hilosophy supplies resources for thinking better about the goals or values that decisions are, or should be, trying to achieve, while social science research yields information about how likely the various options are to achieve them” (Brighouse et al. 2018: 1-2). If the social sciences as empirical studies collaborate with political philosophy and philosophy of education, which are familiar with normative theory, it is expected that new research questions will be found on educational disparities.

Note

- (1) The “capability approach” of Amartya Sen is often referred to in educational studies. However, capability is a concept that deals with the issue of “equality of what,” while luck egalitarianism deals with the issue of “what kind of distribution is just.” Since the focus of this paper is the latter, it focuses on luck egalitarianism rather than capability.
- (2) This case refers to that of Anna, who dreamed of becoming a rock star and dropping out of school (Hirose 2015: 55)
- (3) In this context, the property of positional goods—“goods with the property that one’s relative place in the distribution of the good affects one’s absolute position with respect to its value” (Brighouse and Swift 2006: 472) —is relevant.
- (4) Anderson (2007) and Satz (2007) advocate the principle of educational adequacy, which guarantees the sufficiency of capability needed to be able to function as a peer in public social interaction. However, Brighouse and Swift (2009) argue that as well as sufficiency (adequacy), equality is also an important value in education.
- (5) In this context, some may react with “Why should the driver and the musician in the example of the harshness objection have to accept such disadvantageous situations?” or “Certainly, it may be important to accept the responsibility of one’s own choice, yet it seems too harsh to accept these consequences.” Serena Olsaretti (2009) has an important discussion of these issues based on “the principle of stakes,” which I would like to discuss in a separate paper.
- (6) In addition, it is important to note the “decent society” of Avishai Margalit, which says that “there can be humiliation without humiliators, in the sense that the people causing the humiliation did not intend to do so. “ (Margalit 1996: 10).

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