Education Policy: Values Driven and Evidence Informed

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Miscellaneous
Objectives and Educational Goods

Key findings

Key finding #1: *Good education policy, as well as useful education policy research, requires careful attention to and trade-offs among the many values at stake.*

Key finding #2: *Central to the goals of education policy are what we refer to as educational goods—the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and dispositions that children and youth develop for their own benefit and for the benefit of society.*

Which specific educational goods are most relevant may vary across contexts, and policy choices often require choices among these goods.

Key finding #3: *Education policy affects not only the average level of educational goods but also their distribution across students and groups of students.*

Decision makers often must weigh considerations such as how equally educational goods are distributed against the extent to which students receive at least an adequate or minimally acceptable level of educational goods.

Key finding #4: *Also relevant to good decisions are what we refer to as independent values—values that contribute to human flourishing in ways that are not directly related to the production of educational goods, such as the level of all other goods or the joy that children experience while in school.*

Evidence

Key finding #1: *Good education policy, as well as useful education policy research, requires careful attention to and trade-offs among the many values at stake.*

This handbook provides extensive evidence on the effectiveness of a range of education policy approaches. Research evidence helps decision makers learn how specific strategies are likely to affect educational outcomes, including academic achievement, school attendance, graduation rates, and other measures of student success. However, evidence alone does not drive good decision-making. Policy choices require value judgments that align with a broader vision for society, including a more productive

workforce, a well-functioning democracy, and greater fulfillment from art, sports, and positive social interactions. Decisions about education policy often involve difficult trade-offs. For example, we may choose to prioritize improving standardized test scores for one group of students even if doing so means reducing opportunities for others to develop creativity, collaboration, or social-emotional skills. While evidence informs us about the likely consequences of our choices, the values that we hold ultimately shape the decisions that we make.

Policymaking in education is inherently values driven, involving the weighing of conflicting goals and navigating trade-offs that affect both individual outcomes and societal well-being. Consider the case of standardized testing: while such tests provide valuable data on student achievement, an overemphasis on test scores can limit other valuable educational experiences, such as those tied to the arts and physical education, as well as social-emotional learning (SEL). Similarly, policies that focus on improving graduation rates may inadvertently incentivize schools to push students through the system without ensuring that they have mastered critical skills. In such cases, although evidence highlights potential outcomes, it is the underlying values—such as the desire for students to develop a basket of capabilities and not just one or the goal of equity in educational opportunities—that ultimately drive policy decisions.

As decision makers strive to improve education, they need clarity regarding what counts as improvement. The evidence will likely show some of the advantages and disadvantages of the choices that they may make, but if they do not have clarity regarding all the valued outcomes that could be affected by their choices, then they might overlook a key potential advantage or disadvantage just because researchers did not evaluate the effects for that outcome. Researchers can affect policymakers' ability to assess the trade-offs inherent in policy choices by focusing on one set of potential outcomes and ignoring others. What to research is, in itself, a choice based on researchers' assessment of what outcomes are valued, whether they make that choice explicitly or not. Policymakers and the researchers who provide evidence for policymakers need a robust language for discussing values and articulating trade-offs to have meaningful debate about education policy.

The primary goal of this chapter is to enrich the language available to education decision makers and researchers by offering a framework for thinking about the values that are relevant for decisions about education policy. The chapter is not about the process of education policymaking. Instead, by providing a clearer understanding of the values that underlie education policy choices, we aim to help decision makers better navigate the complex landscape of education policymaking. The framework that we describe here is grounded in values commonly held in many countries today, although we recognize that these values may not be universally applicable. Some people will want to substitute values or group values differently from we do. Any country-specific variations would not negate the main point that a shared framework and language that articulate and focus on core values can help guide good education decision-making across contexts.

We distinguish three types of values. The first relates to students' prospective capabilities and, in particular, the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and dispositions that children and youth should develop for their own benefit and for the benefit of society. Many education policies are designed specifically to increase such capacities and, in doing so, to help children flourish as adults. We refer to this category of values as

educational goods. The second set of values, which we call **independent values**, includes those that commonly come into play when education policy decisions are made; however, they are not specifically educational goods. These values may include children's experiences while they are in school or other goods, such as housing or healthcare, that might have to be traded off, for example, when more resources are devoted to developing educational goods. The third set of values consists of **distributional values.** Policymakers have reasons to care about not only the *overall level* of educational goods and the realization of independent values but also how these goods are *distributed* across people.

Below, we describe these three types of values in more detail and then describe how individuals might use this typology of relevant values when they consider education policies and the research that informs these policies.[1]

Key finding #2: *Central to the goals of education policy are what we refer to as educational goods—the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and dispositions that children and youth develop for their own benefit and for the benefit of society.*

Educational goods refer to the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and dispositions that children and youth develop for their own benefit and for the benefit of society. These goods encompass a wide range of outcomes, from cognitive skills to social-emotional competencies. Although the word "goods" may suggest concrete or material commodities, it means only that the capacities referred to are positive, in the sense that they contribute to valuable outcomes for the individual possessing them and/or for others, either in the present or in the future.

The value of any given type of knowledge and skill depends on context. In the United States today, literacy is more or less essential for the labor market success that generates an income, but it was much less important in the 1700s. In contrast, physical strength and coordination are less valuable today than they were then, and technological change has reduced their value even since the 1970s. Of course, some capacities, such as the capacity to defer gratification, to plan for the future, or to hold attention, may be essential for some reasonably high level of well-being, regardless of context.

Family members and other adults deliberately influence which educational goods children develop by the way in which they raise them. Many features of children's upbringing are involved. How parents talk to, discipline, and socialize their children are as relevant to the development of educational goods as are experiences in day care, school, and other formal settings outside the family. The educational process begins before children enter formal schooling and carries on after they leave it. Most people continue to acquire knowledge and skills, and their attitudes and dispositions evolve over the life course. Education policy, health policies, tax policies, and housing policies can all affect children's educational development. Here, we focus most on policies associated with schooling because they are designed specifically to produce educational goods in children and youth.

We do not have space here to construct a comprehensive list of the *specific* capabilities needed to enable people to flourish and contribute to the flourishing of others. The list would be extremely long, and the precise items on it would vary across contexts. However, these fine-grained capabilities group into broader categories that capture the

underlying abilities of importance. In particular, six key capacities contribute to individuals' flourishing: the capacities for economic productivity, personal autonomy, democratic competence, healthy personal relationships, treating others as equals, and personal fulfillment.

Capacity for economic productivity

The capacity for economic productivity refers to an individual's ability to participate effectively in the workforce and contribute to the economy, broadly conceived. It is closely linked to the development of cognitive skills such as literacy, numeracy, problem solving, and critical thinking, which are essential for success in today's knowledge-based economy. However, economic productivity extends beyond cognitive skills alone. It also encompasses the ability to work collaboratively, manage time efficiently, and adapt to evolving labor markets and technological changes. In a rapidly changing global economy individuals need the skills and knowledge needed to adapt to new technologies, industries, and work environments.

In many countries, education policy emphasizes the development of economic productivity because of its direct link to economic growth and social well-being. Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) subjects are often prioritized in school curricula due to the labor market demand for workers with these skills. Similarly, vocational education and training programs are designed to equip students with the practical skills needed for specific industries, hence enhancing their employability and future earnings. The capacity for economic productivity is important both broadly and particularly in societies with weaker social safety nets. Notably, the capacity for economic productivity is not identical to and might not be well measured by examining earnings or even earning power. Let us give an extreme case: someone who generates a high income through a protection racket is economically unproductive, despite having high earnings and earning power. However, it may be the case that some entirely legal work, such as the promotion of gambling or cigarette or marijuana use, diminishes the economy, even though such work generates high incomes. Additionally, some low-paying occupations, such as occupational or physical therapists, may add more to the economy than is reflected in the incomes of practitioners.

Education policies that support the development of economic productivity help individuals achieve financial stability while promoting broader economic growth and societal well-being, hence contributing to both individuals' own flourishing and the flourishing of others.

Capacity for personal autonomy

The capacity for personal autonomy refers to individuals' ability to make informed, independent decisions about their own life and to act on those decisions. It enables individuals to pursue their own goals and to live according to their values and preferences. Education fosters personal autonomy by equipping students with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for critical thinking, ethical reflection, and self-determination.

Personal autonomy involves the ability to engage in reflective decision-making, exercise self-control, and take responsibility for one's actions. It also includes the capacity to navigate complex social, ethical, and moral dilemmas and to act in ways that

are consistent with one's principles. Policies that promote personal autonomy typically emphasize critical thinking, moral reasoning, and civic education—subjects that help students develop the intellectual and emotional tools needed for autonomous decision-making.

Promoting personal autonomy in education presents several challenges. Some education systems may prioritize conformity and obedience to authority over encouraging independent thought and self-expression. In highly standardized education systems, students may have limited agency in shaping their learning experiences, which can constrain the development of autonomy. Nonetheless, personal autonomy is an essential educational goal that supports both individual empowerment and social well-being. Policies that support the development of personal autonomy help individuals develop a strong sense of identity, make informed decisions about their future, and engage meaningfully in their communities, contributing to achieving the broader goal of preparing students for fulfilling lives and active participation in democratic processes.

Capacity for democratic competence

The capacity for democratic competence refers to the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to participate effectively and responsibly in democratic processes. These abilities are essential for the functioning of a democratic society because they enable people to engage in informed civic discourse, respect diverse perspectives, and contribute to the development of fair and just policies. Education plays a crucial role in fostering democratic competence by providing students with the knowledge of democratic institutions, the skills to engage in civic activities, and the dispositions to participate ethically and responsibly in political life.

Democratic competence requires a range of skills, including critical thinking, deliberation, and collaboration, as well as dispositions such as tolerance, respect for diversity, and a commitment to justice. Education policies that promote democratic competence often emphasize civic education, social studies, and the development of critical thinking skills. These policies aim to prepare students to engage thoughtfully and constructively in democratic processes, whether by voting, participating in community organizations, or advocating for social change. Note that, although voting behavior is often used as a measure of civic engagement, it may not be a reliable indicator of democratic competence. For example, people who vote their prejudices might be less democratically competent than people who refrain from voting because they question their prejudices.

One of the challenges in promoting democratic competence is ensuring that students develop a deep understanding of democratic principles. In some education systems, civic education may be reduced to teaching facts about government institutions without giving students the opportunity to practice the skills of democratic participation. Developing classroom environments that encourage open dialogue, critical thinking, and respect for diverse viewpoints may be an effective way of cultivating democratic competence. Overall, by equipping students with the skills and dispositions needed to engage in democratic processes, education can contribute to the long-term health and vitality of democratic institutions.

Capacity for healthy personal relationships

Healthy personal relationships are central to human flourishing. The capacity to form and maintain positive relationships with others—whether in the context of family, friendship, or community—is essential for emotional well-being, social connectedness, and personal fulfillment. Education contributes to the development of this capacity by promoting the social-emotional skills needed to navigate relationships, resolve conflicts, and communicate effectively. A focus on these capabilities in schools is most common in the early grades (e.g., preschool and kindergarten). While people differ in regard to the role that they believe schools, rather than families, should play in developing these skills, few people question the importance of such capacities for flourishing.

SEL has increasingly been recognized as a critical component of education policy aimed at promoting healthy personal relationships. SEL programs focus on developing skills such as empathy, emotional regulation, teamwork, and communication, which are essential for building and sustaining positive relationships. These programs are often integrated into the broader curriculum, with SEL principles being incorporated into subjects such as language arts, science, and social studies.

The capacity for healthy personal relationships contributes to both individual and societal well-being. Students who develop strong social-emotional skills are better equipped to form meaningful connections, manage stress, and contribute to a positive and supportive community. Policies that prioritize healthy personal relationships contribute to a more compassionate society where individuals can build relationships based on mutual respect and understanding.

Capacity for treating others as equals

Treating others as equals is a fundamental principle of justice and fairness. It involves recognizing the inherent dignity and worth of all individuals, regardless of their background, identity, or circumstances, and acting in ways that reflect this recognition. Education plays a critical role in fostering individuals' understanding of all peoples' moral worth and in developing individuals' capacity for treating others as equals by teaching the values of fairness, equity, and respect for others.

Treating others as equals requires students to understand the principles of equality and justice. It also requires students to develop the dispositions to act in ways that promote these principles in their interactions with others. Education policies that support this capacity often focus on reducing bias, addressing discrimination, and creating inclusive school cultures where all students feel valued and respected.

By developing the capacity to treat others as equals, education can contribute to the creation of a more just and inclusive society. Students who learn to value and respect the dignity of others are more likely to become advocates for equity and social justice. Education policies that prioritize this capacity help foster a society where individuals are treated fairly, and diversity is celebrated as a source of strength.

Capacity for personal fulfillment

Personal fulfillment refers to the ability to lead a meaningful and satisfying life. It involves the pursuit of activities, relationships, and experiences that bring joy, purpose, and a sense of accomplishment. Some people have difficulty achieving personal

fulfillment, and this difficulty hinders their flourishing. Education plays a key role in fostering people's capacity for personal fulfillment by helping them discover their passions, develop their talents, and pursue their goals.

Education policies that promote personal fulfillment often emphasize the importance of a well-rounded curriculum that includes opportunities for exploration and creativity. This approach may involve providing students with access to a wide range of subjects and extracurricular activities, such as the arts, sports, and community service. Policies that support student-centered learning and project-based education also contribute to personal fulfillment by allowing students to pursue projects that are personally meaningful to them. Promoting personal fulfillment in education requires recognizing that each student's path to fulfillment is unique. While some students may find fulfillment in academic achievement or career success, others may find it in expressing themselves through art, helping others, or cultivating relationships.

The capacity for personal fulfillment is closely linked to the other capacities discussed in this framework, but it also stands alone as a distinct educational goal. By helping students discover what brings them joy and satisfaction, education can contribute to their overall well-being and happiness. Policies that prioritize personal fulfillment help create an education system that supports students in leading meaningful lives.

Key finding #3: *Education policy affects not only the average level of educational goods but also their distribution across students and groups of students.*

Distributive values help determine whether educational opportunities and outcomes are allocated fairly. Many people use the terms "equity" or an "equitable" distribution to talk about fairness. While these terms are useful for highlighting the importance of fairness, they do not provide details on what distributions are more or less valuable. For example, if an education policy increases the opportunities for children from low-income families with highly involved parents, does this policy increase equity? As is true for educational goods and independent values—which each include multiple types of values that we might have to trade off against each other when we make decisions—distributive values are also multidimensional. Some decision makers may place a high value on generating a more equal distribution so that individuals have a more equal opportunity to flourish. However, others may place a higher value on a distribution in which worse-off individuals are raised to the highest level possible, regardless of the levels of those above them.

We identify three key distributive values: adequacy, equality, and benefitting the least advantaged.

Adequacy

The principle of adequacy holds that all students should have access to the educational goods necessary to achieve a specified standard of well-being. Adequacy is often used as a guiding principle in school finance litigation, where the goal is to ensure that all students receive a "minimally adequate" education. Defining what constitutes an adequate education can be challenging. Different people may have different ideas about what level of education is sufficient for a flourishing life. For some, adequacy may be defined in terms of academic achievement or career readiness; for others, it may be defined in terms of personal fulfillment or civic participation.

Some advocates of the principle of adequacy claim that no other distributive principle is needed: as long as everyone has enough educational goods, differences between individuals do not matter. Others find this stance unsatisfying. Imagine that everyone is adequately well educated (understanding "adequacy" to mean whatsoever you like). Now, suppose that new resources are available for educational purposes and that, however they are distributed, everybody's education remains adequate. Adequacy provides no guidance as to how to distribute the new resources. However, it seems intuitive that some ways of distributing them are better than others.

Equality

The principle of equality holds that all students should have an equal chance of flourishing, regardless of their background or circumstances. Because educational goods are so important for flourishing in our society today and because people are moral equals, it seems reasonable that all students should have access to a basket of educational goods that provides them with an equal ability to flourish.

However, achieving equality in education is exceedingly difficult, as doing so requires addressing the deeply entrenched social and economic inequalities that exist in society, as well as the substantial individual differences in the capacity to develop educational goods. Even if all students have access to the same educational resources within schools, students from wealthier families will be advantaged by their access to additional support and enrichment opportunities outside of school. It is hard to imagine a society that tolerates extensive background inequalities and that is willing to distribute public educational resources sufficiently unequally to fully counteract those effects, even though the society could move toward a more equal distribution. Even within the same family, children in the same educational setting will develop very different educational goods, given the variation in their initial capabilities. Some children are born with severe cognitive impairments and may require much greater investment to reach levels of educational goods that others can surpass with far less. Equalizing educational goods may involve refraining from fostering—and perhaps even reducing (e.g. through physical or psychological mistreatment)—the capabilities of talented children, leading to a potentially high cost in terms of the loss of productive capacity.

Pursuing equality by any form of leveling down reduces the human capital available to society, which decreases material resources and the prospects of life-improving technologies being developed and affordably produced. Investing in the development of highly talented people can pay off for others through highly talented people's enhanced productivity, which may redound to the benefit of all. Suppose that there is indeed a trade-off between equality in the distribution of educational goods, on the one hand, and the total amount of those goods produced, on the other hand. It may seem perverse to favor equality in those cases where an unequal distribution of educational goods would benefit those who have least. This example shows that pursuing equality of educational goods is not necessarily the only—or even the best—way of pursuing equality in the likelihood of flourishing and contributing to the flourishing of others. Nonetheless, education policy is one of the most common levers we use to pursue distributional values, including the distributional value of equality.

Benefitting the least advantaged

The third distributional value, benefitting the least advantaged, means prioritizing improving the situation of society's least advantaged, and it often entails ensuring that vulnerable or marginalized individuals receive additional support. Because the distributional value of adequacy does not provide insights into how to think about the relative merits of distributions that have the same proportion of individuals reaching adequacy and because the distributional value of equality does not take into account the overall level that individuals achieve, this third distributional value further clarifies common distributional values. In terms of education policies, benefitting the least advantage means improving the educational outcomes of students who are furthest behind.

In practice, education decision makers typically have to make trade-offs between the three distributive values—sacrificing equality for the sake of benefitting the least advantaged, for example, or choosing to ensure that as many children as possible achieve adequacy rather than helping those with the lowest prospects for flourishing. Hence, in addition to weighing different educational goods against one another, policymakers face the challenge of balancing the various distributional values. This point is perhaps particularly relevant to discussions of equality, which is sometimes rejected simply because full or complete equality (of anything) is an implausible goal. Equality need not be all or nothing. For example, one could value a move toward a less unequal distribution of educational goods without endorsing strict equality.

Key finding #4: *Also relevant to good decisions are what we refer to as independent values—values that contribute to human flourishing in ways that are not directly related to the production of educational goods, such as the level of all other goods or the joy that children experience while in school.*

While the six capacities identified here as educational goods are critical for understanding the goals of education, they are not the only values that matter for education decision-making. Independent values refer to values that contribute to human flourishing in ways that are not directly related to the production of educational goods. Many values fall into the category of independent values, but only a small set of them commonly comes into play in education policy decisions. Hence, while we may value clean air and open access to well-curated museums, these values are rarely relevant in education policy decisions, except to the extent that resources are devoted to education instead of other goods. The independent values that are most common in education decision-making include childhood goods, parental interests, respect for democratic processes, freedom of residence and occupational choice, and the broad category of other goods. Policymakers consider these independent values alongside educational goods so that their decisions support the overall well-being of students and society.

Childhood goods

Childhood goods refer to the intrinsic value of children's experiences during childhood. While education is often viewed as an investment in future outcomes, childhood itself is an important stage of life, with its own set of rewarding experiences that contribute to human flourishing. These goods include play, curiosity, creativity, joy, and the ability to explore the world in a carefree manner.

Education policies that focus solely on future outcomes may neglect the importance of childhood goods. For example, policies that prioritize academic achievement at the expense of play and creativity may undermine children's ability to experience joy and curiosity during their formative years. Similarly, highly structured and test-focused education systems may limit children's opportunities to engage in exploratory learning, reducing their ability to develop a sense of wonder and imagination. Recognizing the value of childhood goods may require a shift in how we think about education. Instead of viewing education solely as a means of preparing students for adulthood, we should also consider how education can enhance children's experiences in the present. Policies that prioritize childhood goods ensure that students have the opportunity to experience a rich and fulfilling childhood.

Parental interests

Parents have significant interests in the development of their children. Parental interests include the desire to influence their children's schooling, to raise them according to specific values, and to foster close family relationships. Many people experience their greatest joy and fulfillment through their family and as parents. Allowing parents to have decision-making authority over their children's experiences has direct benefits for parents. Moreover, parents often act in their children's best interests, and as a result, allowing parents to make decisions that affect their children could have benefits in terms of both childhood goods and educational goods. Education policies that support parental involvement and parental choice recognize that parents play a vital role in their children's development and well-being.

At the same time, parents do not always act in the best interests of their own children, for example, if they do not have access to the information that they need for effective decision-making. Additionally, parents may be even more likely to make decisions that are harmful to the children of other parents. For example, parents from wealthier backgrounds may seek to provide their children with additional educational advantages, such as private tutoring or enrollment in selective schools, that exacerbate inequalities within the education system. Similarly, parents' desire to raise their children according to specific cultural or religious values may conflict with the goal of promoting personal autonomy and critical thinking. Sometimes, prioritizing parents' interests is beneficial for realizing other values; at other times, it is beneficial because we value parents' interests in themselves. However, this prioritization may involve trade-offs with other goals. Balancing parental interests with other educational goals requires careful consideration of how policies impact both students and families.

Respect for democratic processes

Respect for democratic processes is both an independent value in education and a constraint. Democratic processes often help education policies reflect the values and priorities of the community, and they allow for public participation in decision-making. Education policies that uphold democratic processes may often—but not always—promote transparency, accountability, and inclusion in decision-making, ensuring that the voices of students, parents, educators, and the broader community are heard. However, democratic processes can also be slow and contentious, and they may benefit those who have more political power in terms of both numbers (i.e., the majority over the minority) and financial influence. Respecting democratic processes in education means that even if a specific policy approach does not appear to be optimal given the evidence on its likely effect on educational goods and independent values, if

the democratic processes will support it, then it may well not be subject to being legally traded off.

Freedom of residence and occupational choice

Freedom of residence and occupational choice is another independent value that can constrain policymaking. Even if policymakers want to allocate more teachers to difficult-to-staff geographic areas, they typically will not be able to require teachers to move to those areas or to require adults in those areas to become teachers. Similarly, even if the evidence points to the benefits of schools integrated by race, ethnicity, income or other characteristics, policymakers typically cannot force families to move to residential locations that will generate this integration. Having a society in which adults are able to choose their location and occupation likely has many benefits for flourishing and is hence an important independent value, even if it constrains some potential policy approaches.

Investment in other goods

Educational goods and childhood goods are important for a thriving society, but no society would want to devote all its resources to the production of educational goods or to the provision of opportunities that produce childhood goods. Other goods also contribute to both current and future flourishing. People need resources for housing, food, healthcare, transportation, and recreation and leisure. Decisions about how much to spend on education affect what is available for investment in other government and private activities. People considering education policies will balance the value of these other goods relative to that of educational and childhood goods, given the level of current investment in both and the relative benefits of additional investments in one or the other for overall flourishing.

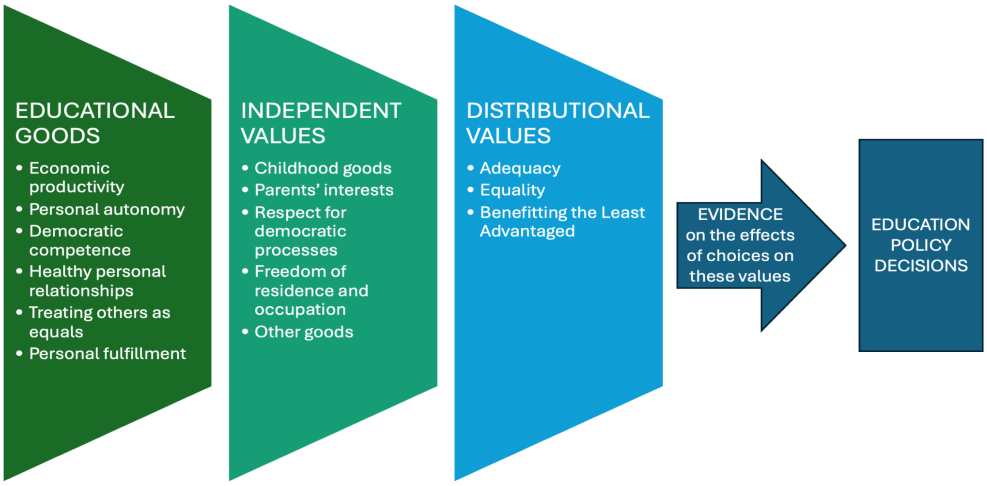
How to use these lists of values: Navigating trade-offs and competing values in education policy

As decision makers aim to design or choose education policies, knowing which values they might affect through their decisions can help them better align their decisions with their goals. To aid in this process, we have outlined key values that are most likely to be affected, grouping them into educational goods, independent values, and distributional values. Figure 1 lists the key values in each of these categories.

The first step in systematically considering values is to identify the values that are likely to be in play in the policy decision in question. While identifying all relevant values may seem overwhelming, the lists in Figure 1 are not long. A systematic consideration may be both possible and beneficial. For example, a decision maker who is constrained by respect for democratic processes and is considering a school finance policy regarding how much to spend on schools might look at the list and identify overall educational goods (not specific types of goods) and childhood goods traded off against other goods, as the main educational goods and independent values to consider. If the policies involve the redistribution of funds across schools and students, then all three distributional values might be in play. Similarly, a decision maker considering a policy to increase the time spent on mathematics in schools by means of a reduction in recess and arts might look at the list of independent values to identify, within

educational goods, economic productivity and personal fulfillment as key values to consider along with childhood goods

Figure 1: Systematic Consideration of Values for Education Policy Decision-Making.



After identifying which values are in play, the next step is to understand how the policy choices are likely to affect the realization of those values. This is where researchers and this Handbook come in. Researchers need to identify the values in play and then bring data and research skills to provide insights into how these values are likely to be affected by policy choices. This Handbook summarizes research findings to shed light on how policies are likely to affect these values. The evidence is important, but it is also limited. Researchers have typically focused more on some outcomes than on others. Our hope is that a shared language for considering values will help not only policymakers consider values but also researchers identify the research that will best inform these considerations.

After identifying the values and bringing to bear the evidence, decision makers will often need to make difficult trade-offs. In a complex world, values are often in tension. This list of values does not provide help in choosing among them, but it can reduce the chance of ignoring what may ultimately be some key values and unintentionally underweighting them. Explicit and careful consideration of the tensions among valued outcomes can lead to better policy decisions.

By adopting a values-driven approach to education policy—one that is informed by evidence but grounded in a clear understanding of the capacities that contribute to human flourishing—policymakers can make more informed and equitable decisions that benefit both individuals and society as a whole. By providing evidence on the full set of values in play instead of just easily available measures, such as mathematics and reading scores, the researchers who provide evidence for policymaking can positively contribute to these considerations and to the selection of more effective policy approaches.

Endnotes and references

[1] For an in-depth discussion of the topics in this piece, see Brighouse, H., H. Ladd, S. Loeb, and A. Swift. 2018. *Educational Goods: Values, Evidence, and Decision-Making*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

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