

Understanding and Fighting Poverty – Amartya Sen’s Capability Approach and Related Theories

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Abstract

This article scrutinises the usefulness of Sen’s capability approach and other related theories for the understanding of poverty and the traceability of social-welfare interventions. In addition to the capability approach three macro level approaches are discussed: the welfare regime approach of Esping-Andersen, the social investment approach and a new resource theory. While the strength of the capability approach is the interpretation of worldwide data, and welfare regimes better explain the tangible function of welfare institutions, the social investment approach focuses on the meaning of human capital. Resource theory describes the welfare interventions by analysing their effects on equipping individuals with a broad range of resources. Two further approaches show the mode of operation of micro level interventions. Resource orientation and empowerment are social work techniques which improve the situation of disadvantaged people by emancipation. The article concludes that macro level and micro level considerations must be combined to understand, and then fight poverty.

Keywords: Poverty – poverty reduction – poverty alleviation – poverty eradication – fight against poverty – Amartya Sen – Capability Approach – Capability-Approach – Bourdieu – resource theory – resource based theory – resource-oriented theory – resource orientation – social investment theory – child-centred social investment theory – early childhood intervention

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