

## Chapter 7

# Generation of Theory

**Abstract** This chapter starts by recapitulating the research process, to facilitate the understanding of the contexts. Consequently, the development from categories towards theory is described in detail. This is done by first giving short descriptions of the already developed categories, by defining conflicts that are related to the categories and by interconnecting the single categories with each other. The last part of this chapter finally is illustrating the development of the theory by showing single parts from the resulting graphic. This leads the reader step by step to the complex illustration of the theory. The final part of this section refers to the meaning of education. It hence reflects the perspectives of children, parents, teachers and experts on education for children with disabilities. To complete this chapter, the author discusses the meaning of educational equity in relation to the developed theory.

“A grounded theory generally provides a comprehensive explanation of a process or scheme apparent in relation to particular phenomena” (Birks and Mills 2011, 12). Accordingly, the following generation of the theory is a very complex explanation of the process that was investigated. Hence, it was considered as helpful to use diagrams for supporting the elaboration of the theory.

The core category *feeling like a family* can be identified as facilitator for “developing a sense of belonging” through education. Thus, both types, *feeling like a family* from the teachers’ and parents’ perspectives and from the children’s perspectives, are supportive. Similarly, the conflicts that have been identified for each group can be regarded as barriers. They are barriers to developing a sense of belonging not only for the children – which is most obvious as their conflict is about developing a sense of belonging – but for all participants. In other words, there is no belonging together or *feeling like a family* between teachers and parents if the attitudes of parents haven’t changed or responsibility for their profession has not been taken on by teachers. *Feeling like a family* allows the participants to (re-)gain respect in the environment of the school. This can be considered as special as the environment of the school develops to be a new kind of community next to other communities (like the neighbourhood.) where parents can develop a feeling of belonging. The cultural and societal aspects that come into play here are first of all the value that the Ethiopian society attributes to the family and community in a broader sense

(Schiemer 2013). Without such significance, *feeling like a family* would not have the meaning it has received during this study. Furthermore, the fact that disability is connected with guilt and shame as well as with pity plays an important role especially regarding the conflicts that parents struggle with. Last but not least, religion is a major variable in this picture. As God and belief play important roles in the lives of the participants, this influence cannot be denied. Starting from believing in disability as a curse towards believing that God is responsible for the good things and bad things that happen, all the participants are influenced by their belief in one way or another.

The following figure illustrates the simplified model of the theory of “developing a sense of belonging”. It takes the already defined relations of *feeling like a family* amongst the participants as basis (Fig. 7.1).

What becomes visible in this figure is that “developing a sense of belonging” has different points of reference regarding children, parents and teachers: society, school as a community and the teaching profession. Hence, according to this model, children resolve their issue of exclusion by striving for a place in society. Parents strive to be included in a new community, to be accepted there. Last but not least, teachers adopt a clear commitment to their profession and get respect from parents.

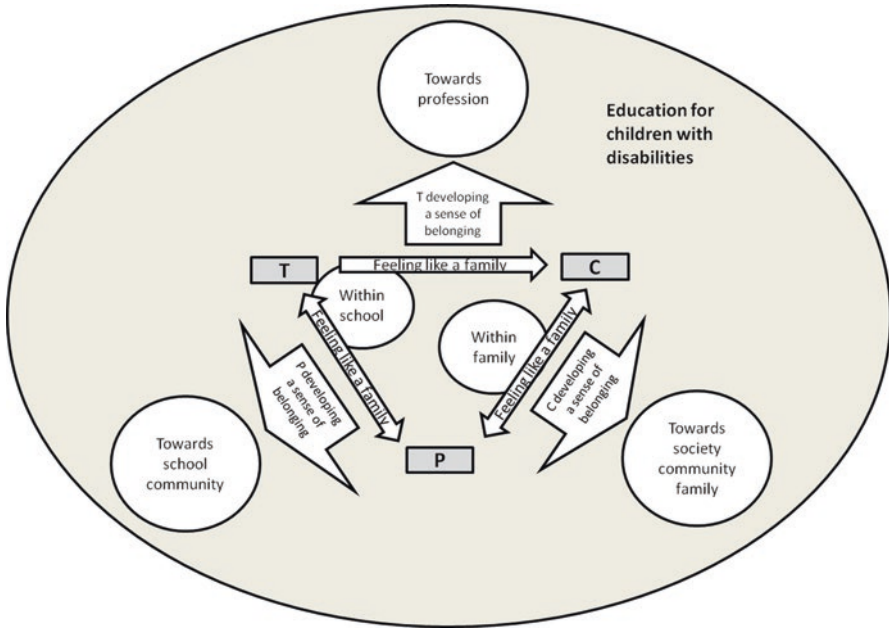
Furthermore, there is one aspect that teachers, parents and children with disabilities share: their reputation in society is usually low from a traditional cultural and/or societal perspective. The *feeling like a family* helps in all three cases to find a way out of this dilemma, although it does not resolve it. This is true especially for teachers but also for parents, as their status in society does not improve through their *feeling like a family*. Instead, it seems as if parents and teachers integrate themselves into a new community in an effort to gain respect and understanding and improve their well-being. Only children aim at being accepted in the society as such (in this model) by going through the process of receiving education and developing a new concept of self.<sup>1</sup>

The next step is a very complex one regarding the visual illustration of the theory. Therefore it was regarded as helpful to split the figure into parts representing the children’s, parents’ and teachers’ perspectives and only later merge the three dimensions.

The whole picture shows how *feeling like a family* leads towards solving the conflicts of children, parents and teachers by developing a sense of belonging. In this respect a differentiation is made between the basic conflict, which lies in the society (low reputation), and the main conflicts resulting from a closer look at the education for children with disabilities. In other words, the basic conflict is there already without the environment of the school (of course, teachers play a special role here, as they are seen as teachers only related to the school surrounding). However, the solutions for the main conflicts for the participants related to the area of research are connected to school with the exception of children, as their conflict is the same before receiving education and after having been accepted at school.

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<sup>1</sup>Of course, also parents and teachers aim at a change of their reputation in society. However, this is not of relevance at this point.



**Fig. 7.1** “Developing a sense of belonging” basic. T teachers, C children with disabilities, P parents of children with disabilities

Hence, the low reputation in society of all three groups of interviewees has different consequences within the environment of the school and education respectively (Fig. 7.2).

For children (C), their low reputation, discrimination and feelings of pity on the part of the society lead to the need to develop a new self-concept by receiving education to find their place in society (Fig. 7.3).

The parents’ (P) image of being cursed because of having a child with a disability leads to the need to change the attitude to disability in order to be able to obtain value and respect from the “new” community at school (Fig. 7.4).

The teachers’ (T) low reputation in society leads to the need of taking on responsibility and show commitment to be able to feel devoted to the profession and be valued accordingly by the parents. This indicates that the problem of a low societal reputation is not solved in the general society but in the school community only.

The following figure merges the three perspectives to make the interconnections between “feeling like a family” of the three participating groups clear (Fig. 7.5).

It is crucial to assert that in the cases of parents and teachers, solving the conflicts leads to a certain kind of well-being in the school environment, as they gain respect and understanding. For children it is about developing a whole new self-concept, which is a comparably bigger step and hence more meaningful for their life. To complete the picture of the theory of “developing a sense of belonging”, it is necessary to integrate the developed categories with their assigned keywords (in the black

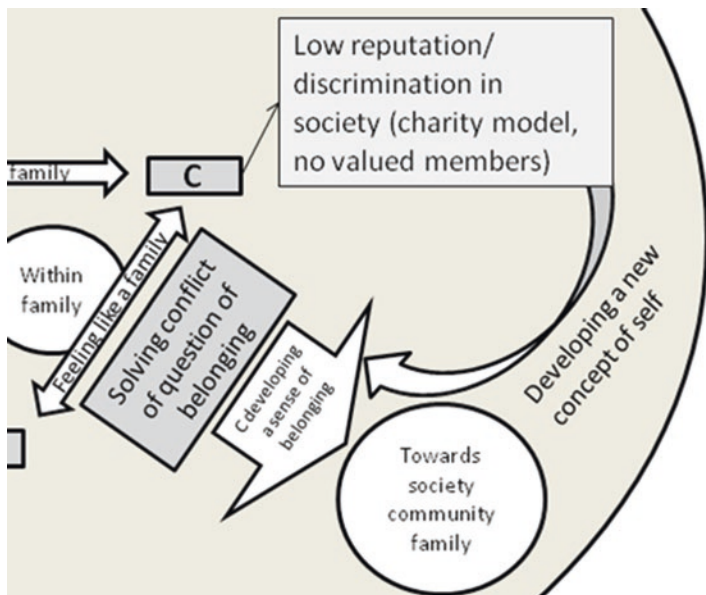
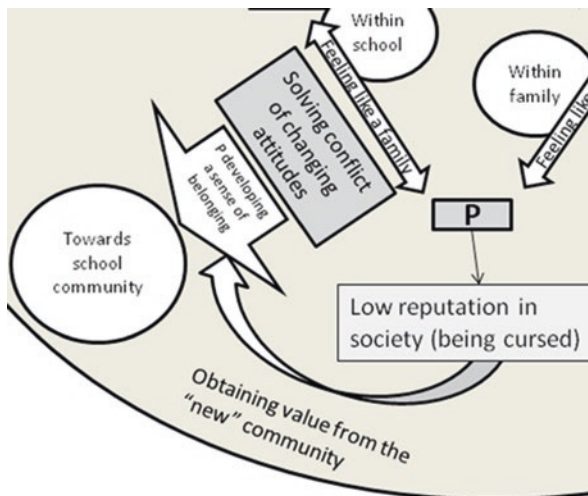


Fig. 7.2 “Developing a sense of belonging” children

Fig. 7.3 “Developing a sense of belonging” parents



boxes). Especially the keywords of the categories make the processes visible that lead to a sense of belonging (Fig. 7.6).

This last figure of “developing a sense of belonging” through *feeling like a family* shows the whole picture of the influence of education for children with disabilities in relation to the three groups of participants.



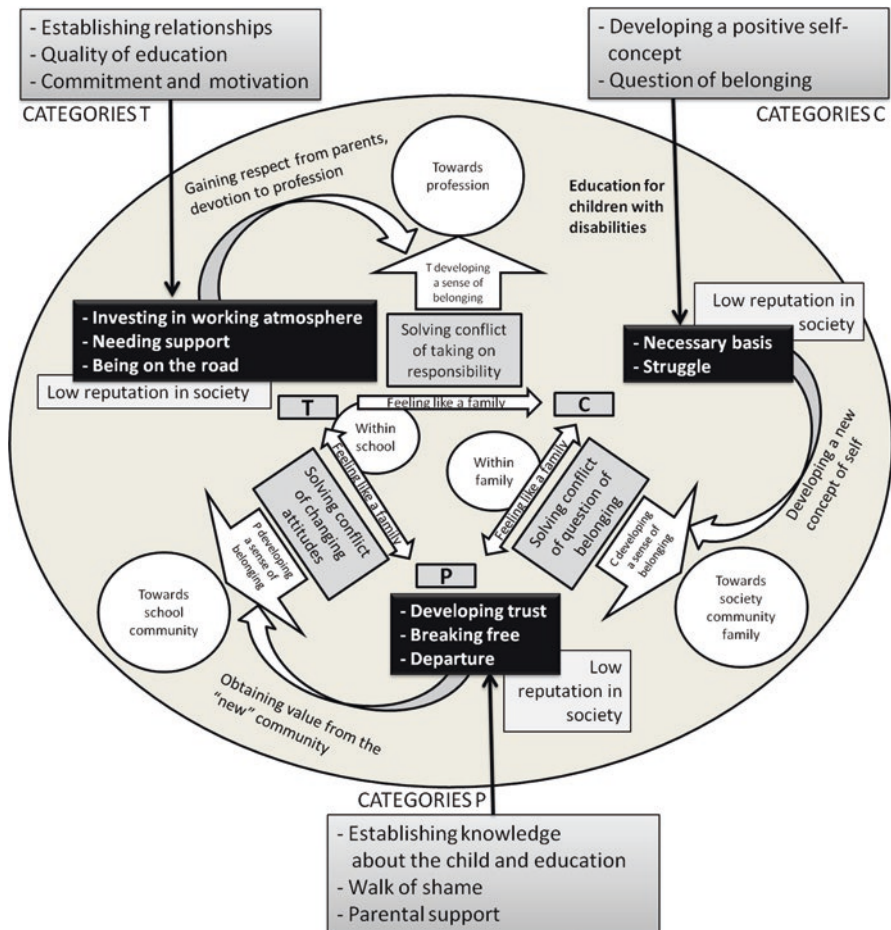


Fig. 7.6 “Developing a sense of belonging” complex

This<sup>2</sup> means that by receiving education children get input for the necessary basis that is developing a *positive* self-concept. In addition to their struggle with the question of belonging, this can finally lead to a *new* concept of self which possibly supports the growth of a sense of belonging towards society. The problem of developing a sense of belonging towards society is not solved within the school environment. However, positive attitudes towards the future are strengthened.

Parents develop trust by establishing knowledge about the child and education; they break free from old convictions by leaving negative attitudes and shame behind. These developments finally lead to enhanced parental support and involvement in school-related issues. Thereby parents obtain value and support from teachers (the

<sup>2</sup>In the following explanation of the figure, categories, and other items etc. are not, like in the text, in italics or quotation marks so as to enable fluent reading.



new community) and consequently develop a sense of belonging towards the school community. The conflict of having negative attitudes towards the child with a disability and not seeing their potential is solved. The problem of a low reputation in society, which is due to the widespread understanding of disability as a curse, can only be solved temporarily and as a substitution within the school community.

By developing relationships, teachers invest in their working atmosphere. They communicate aspects where they need support to improve the quality of education. The commitment and motivation that were enhanced by the feeling like a family lead towards “being on the road”, which indicates that teachers are committed and motivated to invest in the education of the children. Thus, they are on the road of educationally supporting children with disabilities. The problem of a low reputation in society in general is not solved. However, parents of children with disabilities (as a part of society) highly value the teachers. The conflict of taking on responsibility in their teaching profession, meaning the responsibility to provide children with disabilities with quality education, was solved by developing a sense of belonging towards the teaching profession, supported by the feeling like a family.

What is still missing in this picture is the perspective of the experts. In the chapter on the input of the experts, it became clear that an *atmosphere of departure* regarding developments towards inclusive education and changes in societal attitudes towards people with disabilities seems to prevail amongst most of them. An atmosphere of departure could already be observed in the interviews of parents and teachers on a different level, because for parents it signifies the opening up of possibilities for their child through education and for teachers it indicates a different attitude towards their profession and hence more engagement. Experts take up a more distanced stance from outside the school. Hence, the *atmosphere of departure* means a general change in society (e.g. attitudes). However, also these changes in society are related to possibilities for children with disabilities (e.g. inclusive education). The differences between these “atmospheres of departure” are due to their points of reference towards the participants’ micro-systems on the one hand (parents, teachers → children/school) and macro-systems on the other hand (experts → society). It is interesting that this atmosphere could be observed in the children’s micro- as well as macro-systems. It appears as if the positive developments regarding attitudes and other relevant aspects towards children with disabilities dominate. Yet it has to be stated that these developments could only be observed to a relatively small extent compared to the still often negative attitudes towards people with disabilities in general.

The atmosphere of departure did not receive a place in the latest picture of the model of “developing a sense of belonging”. It only becomes visible through the keywords “departure” related to the parents’ category *parental support* and “being on the road” related to the teachers’ category *commitment and motivation*. Looking at the *atmosphere of departure* from the experts’ perspectives, it becomes clear that there are more barriers and facilitators which influence the situation of children with disabilities. However, in the interviews, positive developments are highlighted more often. In other words, from the experts’ perspectives, changes in attitudes and other positive developments towards an environment that is conducive for children with

disabilities were observed. Additionally, hopes were also expressed concerning a change in society.

And, then, the time will come when they are not pushed aside because of their disability. Because these people are really confident, you know. Even regarding formation, these children with disability – most are the best among the school, the best performing students – so why not at the workplace? Why not in the community where they live and work? So this is the world which I would look forward to seeing. And I'm sure it will come. (Temesgen, expert and teacher)

It is evident that this situation – an inclusive society with equal chances for everyone – does not exist yet and hence still is one to work towards. In general, it can be concluded that the *atmosphere of departure* is an additional category that mainly facilitates the education of children with disabilities. On the other hand, if the *atmosphere of departure* is confined, it means stagnation of the process of inclusion which consists mainly in changing attitudes and raising awareness. The following illustration concentrates in particular on the situation of children in this context (Fig. 7.7).

This figure shows that developments within the school community like *feeling like a family* are not enough to support children with disabilities in reaching their goal of defining their place in society. Instead, processes taking place in society as a whole have to be regarded as well. This means that not only developments in the children's micro-system but also in their macro-system need to receive attention, as the final goal of "developing a sense of belonging" for the children is positioned there. Hence, the children's process of "developing a sense of belonging" has its starting point within the school community as it is there where education takes place to create more opportunities for children with disabilities in the future.

When we talk about social exclusion of the disabled persons we are acknowledging that there is inequality in opportunities within society between those who are active participants and those who are forced towards the fringes (participation/exclusion). We are also affirming that, both for the persons concerned and society itself, this is a process of change and not a set of fixed and static situations. (Michailakis 1997, 18)

The process of "developing a sense of belonging" can only succeed in the wider society depending on variables like societal attitudes and awareness, which are addressed in the *atmosphere of departure*. Within this picture, education for children with disabilities serves as a facilitator that can achieve equal opportunities for all up to a certain level.

## The Meaning of Education and Educational Equity

Related to the *atmosphere of departure*, *feeling like a family*, change of attitudes and further major aspects that have already been examined, education of children with disabilities is the main aspect of this book. The meaning of education was already discussed for each group of interviewees in the chapters on the categories. These serve as a basis for the following elaboration, as with this part I aim to combine the different aspects and discuss them in relation to the theory of "developing a sense of



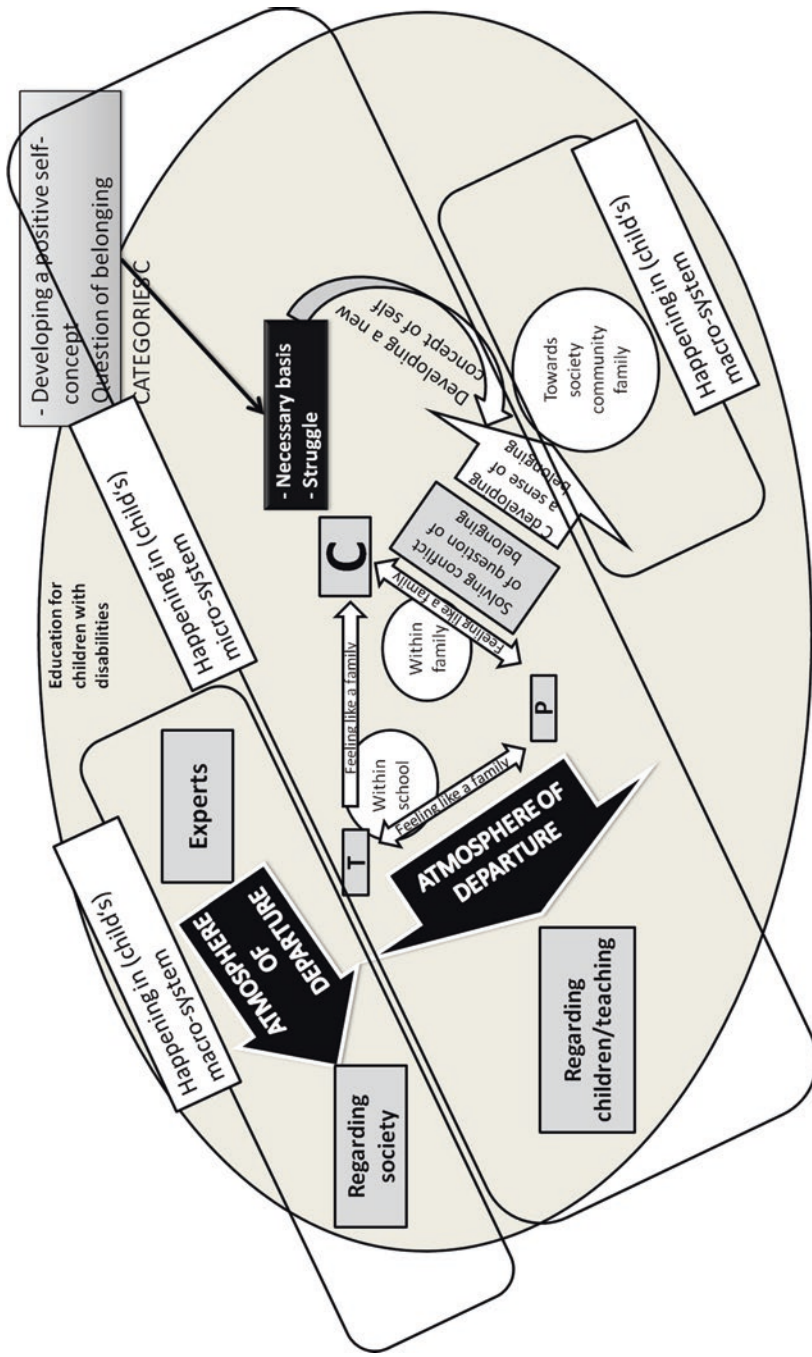


Fig. 7.7 Atmosphere of departure in relation to "developing a sense of belonging".

belonging”. Furthermore, it explores in which ways education for children with disabilities can be seen as a facilitator or, more interestingly, can have negative consequences. Additionally, it reflects questions about educational equity.

Education seems to provide an encouraging impulse for children regarding the development of a positive self-concept as well as their future perspectives. In this way, a **reevaluation** of their person can take place in their surroundings.

Parents of children with disabilities feel that education for their children takes away some of their worries and burdens. It relieves them of their hopelessness regarding the future of their child with a disability and provides them with **new perspectives**.

Teachers are also aware of the importance of education for children with disabilities and their future. In the study, in cases where children with disabilities were outstanding students, the teachers highlighted their achievements. Very few teachers also addressed unsatisfactory performance of students with disabilities and their difficulties in following the lesson.

“Since Embaye is disabled, what I think is difficult for him might be participating actively during the sport period. When I teach him physical exercise during sport period, he might not do it like others” (Kadhi, teacher). However, they seemed to understand that education opens up **possibilities** (e.g. finding a job) on a theoretical basis, but that in real life, children will face **difficulties** in making use of them (e.g. regarding the problematic situation on the labour market in general).

Throughout the interviews, I perceived that a lot of **hopes and expectations** were put into the education of children with disabilities, especially by the parents and children themselves. Future expectations could be identified of children in good positions as a result of their education.

I plan many things for the future. I want to check if she is passing the grades appropriately. If that is so she can reach a very nice position. (Meseret, mother)

I ask Bizuie [a teacher], I ask her to promise me to make him a real person. I ask Ato T. [a teacher] if he can read and write. (Fatima, mother)

Education is not only promising in terms of influencing the future of the children in a positive way; it is also expected to convert the child with a disability into “a real person” in the view of this grandmother. In other words, education is perceived as **supporting integration in society**. Being a “real” person can be interpreted as “fitting” into society by being able to contribute to this community.

Although education takes place at school, it also contributes to the well-being of the children with disabilities and their parents at home. It eases worries and supports a positive attitude towards the child’s future. When it comes to reaping the benefits, however, **disappointments** are most likely to arise. The high rate of unemployment in Ethiopia, especially in the urban areas (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs 2013, 21f, Serneels 2004), also worsens the situation of persons with disabilities. “The marginalisation and powerlessness experienced by disabled people living in isolated rural areas and urban slums across Africa, Asia and Latin America are often overlooked. Here, as everywhere, disabled people are disproportionately unemployed, underemployed and underpaid” (Barnes and Sheldon 2010, 775). When we see this in

the light of “developing a sense of belonging” through *feeling like a family* (being able to support the family), it becomes clear that it might be a precarious process for the children to develop a positive self-concept and a sense of belonging. This is the case when the time comes for them to leave school and they find themselves labelled as disabled in the context of higher education or on the labour market. Positive experiences and success stories certainly exist. Nevertheless, it is known that the quality of education in governmental schools is relatively low compared to private and public schools, and accordingly low is the students’ knowledge. Furthermore, the high dropout rates in primary schools must be considered (Zehle 2008). Especially children with disabilities in many cases do not reach higher grades due to a lack of support.

In relation to *feeling like a family* and the property “duties and responsibilities”, it might be disillusioning and create a feeling of **having failed** when a child is eventually not able to support the family despite all his/her efforts at school. The question is if there is a better or different way than education to reach this goal.<sup>3</sup> The following figure illustrates the meaning of education for “developing a sense of belonging” (Fig. 7.8).

The figure illustrates that education opens up possibilities for positive developments as well as for negative developments regarding the child’s development of a sense of belonging and consequently also the formation of a positive concept of self. This is the case because perceived success and failure have an impact on the child’s self-concept and sense of belonging. Therefore, the items can be identified as either barriers or facilitators for “developing a sense of belonging”. Looking at education from such an angle, it turns out to be an environmental factor by itself that influences the children’s life.

As an environmental factor, education has the role of opening up possibilities for children with disabilities. In the light of the capability approach, education is a capability that provides equal opportunities for every child. As a capability, education has the power to lead to certain functionings that are valued by an individual. The important aspect here, according to Amartya Sen, is that equal opportunities should exist, no matter to which functionings they will lead eventually. In other

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<sup>3</sup>“Education is frequently presented as a means of overcoming poverty and a necessary route to social inclusion. It also has a role to play in promoting the ideals of peace, freedom and justice (UNESCO 1996; ii). Yet the export of Western type schooling and skills often prove exclusionary or less than relevant to local needs (Miles 1996). The emphasis on specific skills such as literacy and numeracy, for example, may lead to the labelling of some children as ‘educationally backward’ or with ‘learning difficulties’ resulting in their marginalisation even in contexts where these skills are not vital to an individual’s life chances (Ingstad 2001).” (Barnes & Sheldon 2010, 775)

Tekeste Negash advocates non-formal education as a better solution than formal education for many Ethiopians, as it focuses on practical skills that are relevant for the majority population rather than skills achieved by formal education. “I argue that the current and planned expansion of the formal education sector cannot be defended either on moral or on developmental grounds. Inevitably, the expansion of formal education would mean the use of scarce resources (collected from the rural areas) for the benefit of school children in the urban areas. The great majority of school children and adults would fall outside the sphere of the Ministry of Education, since most of the expansion of formal education is bound to take place in the urban and semiurban areas of the country (Fig. 7.8)” (Tekeste 1996, 6).

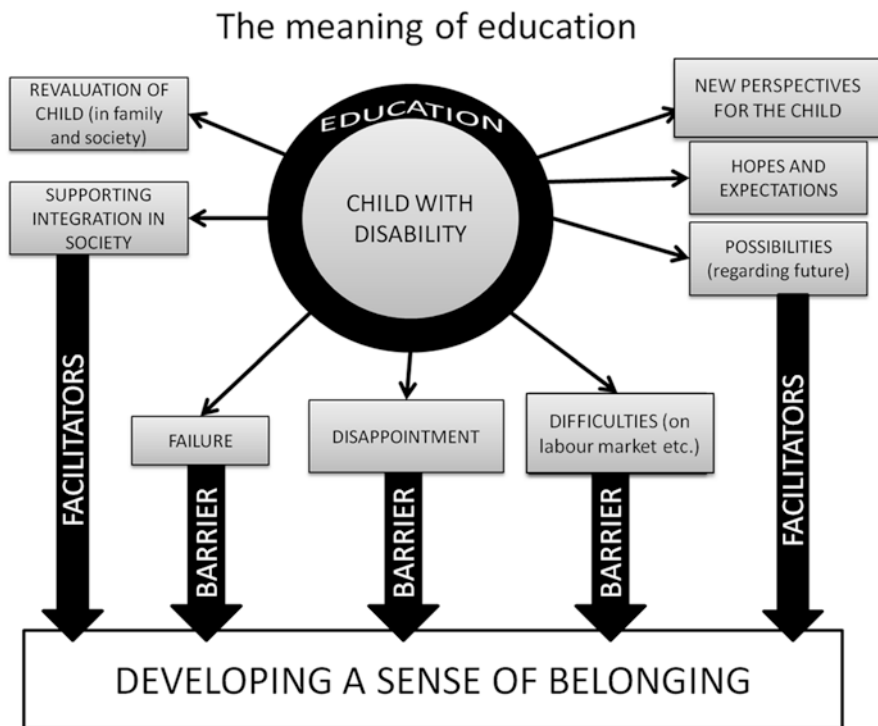


Fig. 7.8 The meaning of education

words, it is about “whether the wider freedoms that people have are enhanced” (Walker 2010, 161).

This indicates that educational equity and quality education are the most important aspects if we want to reach a level where children with disabilities have equal chances and possibilities in their lives like their peers. From this perspective, inclusive education is the best possibility for improving educational equity. When implemented in its classical form, inclusive education should support the different and diverse needs of *all* the students in the classroom. The Salamanca Framework of Action states:

The fundamental principle of the inclusive school is that all children should learn together, wherever possible, regardless of any difficulties or differences they may have. Inclusive schools must recognize and respond to the diverse needs of their students, accommodating both different styles and rates of learning and ensuring quality education to all through appropriate curricula, organizational arrangements, teaching strategies, resource use and partnerships with their communities. There should be a continuum of support and services to match the continuum of special needs encountered in every school. (UNESCO 1994, 11f.)

It is thus essential that inclusive education should not be used to “integrate” special needs students in regular school settings but to serve *all* learners by embracing and benefitting from their diversity (see Ainscow 2007).

It is of major importance to mention that inclusive education will not work according to one general plan in all cultural environments. There are mechanisms that have different effects in different milieus; tensions emerge because of political decisions regarding education that encourage competition rather than supporting inclusion. All these factors have to be looked at on the background of the particular culture and society. Additionally, especially in the context of this book, the aspect of poverty and other exclusionary burdens plays a central role. Looking at the inclusive (or integrative) practices that could be observed in the schools as well as the concept of “developing a sense of belonging”, it becomes clear that inclusive education represents a unique possibility as well as a strategy for moving towards equity in education. Approaching human diversity as something normal and given in any context, inclusive schools are able to offer a “sense of belonging” and comparable future possibilities to every child. Speaking about equity in education in the context of social justice, the capability approach offers valuable reference points. “In evaluating justice and education we would ask if all students enjoy an expansion in the capabilities that they value. Are they all equally free to achieve?” (Walker 2010, 161). The above-mentioned difference between achieved functionings and real opportunities is highlighted again: “This distinction between capability and functioning is important because it asks us to look beneath outcomes to consider what freedom a person had to choose and achieve valued functionings” (Walker 2010, 161).

When relating this to the outcomes of the study, it becomes clear that quality education can enhance the opportunities which children with disabilities have in life. Their possibilities to find a job in the capital are better after having attended school. However, the quality of their education is essential for their future. Usually, children with disabilities have a background of poverty. Consequently, the schools which they attend are governmental schools which mostly have low quality regarding general education. This leads to the conclusion that their education might not lead to the same freedoms which other children gain by receiving quality education in private schools. Equity in education is not reached by the mere possibility of attending *any* school. Providing inclusive schooling for all, however, can lead towards educational equity and more social justice.

This last sentence finally guides us towards the meaning of inclusive schooling for an inclusive society. Having children with disabilities in school has effects on the whole family and therefore also on the community. This is the case because the children go to school like other children. They are given the possibilities to learn like other children. In a society in which education leads to better job opportunities and hence more participation, education clearly contributes to a more inclusive society (in contrast to rural communities, for instance). Once an Ethiopian friend told me that he was invited for an interview at a newspaper, but as soon as they saw that he was in a wheelchair, they said they would not be able to employ him.

Children who attend school together with children with disabilities can experience equity and equality and take this experience with them their whole life. Children are tomorrow’s adults and will shape and form the daily lives of our societies. If they learn that inclusion is nothing special, it can become a reality also outside school as they might become future employers – with and without disabilities.

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