The Dialectical Relationship between Human Resource Development and the Realization of Social Justice within Social Security Systems: A Political Philosophy Perspective

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Abstract: **Human Resource Development (HRD) is of key importance to respond to the issues raised in financial instability, labor precarity, and the crisis of welfare states that have brought the reconsideration of social policy. The given research has the purpose of investigating the correlation between HRD and social justice with reference to the modern social security systems (SSS). Research focuses on two prevailing models, namely, (neo)liberal, so-called activation policies, in which HRD is identified as a market integration instrument, and the social investment model, which regards HRD as a mechanism of broadening human capacities. As a qualitative study using a documentary methodology, the research question of the study is how these models understand social justice. Overall, the main conclusions are that both models fail to talk about social justice in a complex way, particularly the recognition and representation of marginalized populations. Although the (neo)liberal approach facilitates employability, it introduces a punitive structure, and the social investment approach highlights the acquisition of skills, but overlooks the social inequalities in general. The paper ends with the prescription of a more democratic HRD pattern, buttressed by an unconditional social security floor, to make the social policy focus on human emancipation instead of coercive employability. Such a model would not be concerned with the profit agendas, but instead, the welfare of people would be highly valued, resulting in a fairer and balanced society. The suggested solution involves re-conceptualizing social policy whereby all people will have access to opportunities of personal and social development without being bound by the dictates of economic necessity.**

Keywords: **Human Resource Development (HRD), Social Justice, Social Security, Political Philosophy, Capabilities Approach, Decommodification**

I. INTRODUCTION

Globalization, the financialization of the economy, and the emergence of post-Fordist, precarious labor markets have led to the fundamental destabilization of traditional social structures. The new epoch of the so-called World Risk Society (Antonilli, 2022) has already made the traditional social contract of the 20th century an obsolete phenomenon. The planet is faced with a set of coinciding disasters of systemic financial instability, endemic unemployment and underemployment, the loss of long-term, stable career paths, and a sense of an overall lack of functional security (Alsawalqa, 2021). All these difficulties have caused an acute crisis of the classic welfare state, the paradigm of the outdated epoch of industrialization and homogenous and constant national groups.

In response to this crisis, social security systems (SSS) across the world are being radically reshaped. The underpinning logic of the post-war welfare state, with its emphasis on the passive protection of citizens from the forces of the market, is being aggressively dismantled. In its place, a new paradigm has appeared, one that attempts to "activate" citizens and "modernize" social protection. This new paradigm, which is also called the Social Investment State (Garritzmann et al., 2022), realizes that the best social security is not a passive safety net but more of a trampoline. The social expenditure is reconsidered within this model not as a drain on the economy, but as a productive factor. It is no longer aimed at ensuring citizens are not exposed to the market, but making them ready for the market. Such a preparatory twist has relocated the Human Resource Development (HRD) theory and practice, traditionally centered on organizational efficiency, corporate training, and employee performance, into the lauded and surprising role of a key instrument of social policy (Ziai, 2023). State-sponsored training programs, reskilling schemes, learning-for-life mandates, and digital "upskilling" platforms are no longer peripheral to the welfare state; these have become its new core.

The receipt of social benefits, from unemployment insurance to disability and social assistance, has become intrinsically associated with participation in, and compliance with, state-directed HRD activities.

This fusion of SSS (a public good, based on social rights) with HRD (a managerial tool, based on corporate efficiency) is not a simple technical "upgrade." It is the location for a profound ideological and political-philosophical paradox. This article argues that this integration has bestowed a deep dialectical tension that lies at the core of contemporary debates on social justice (Fig. 1).
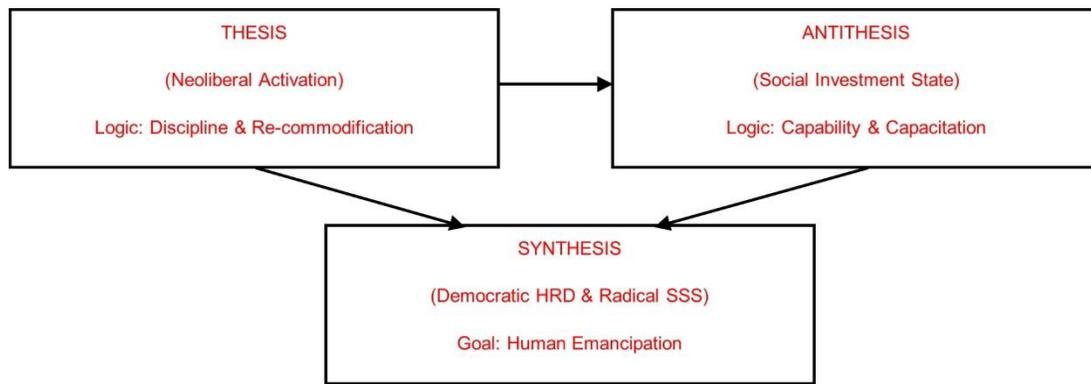
Fig. 1 The Dialectical Framework of HRD in Social Policy

The thesis in this dialectic is the (neo) liberal conception of HRD as a tool for the re-commodification. Neoliberalism and Activation, neoliberalism emphasizes the market, individualization of responsibility, and a reduced role for the state, but the state still needs to govern effectively. Activation policies are evidence of this: instead of providing services (like unemployment), the state "activates" individuals to find jobs themselves, to train themselves, and to take responsibility for themselves, viewing unemployment as an individual "fault," not a systemic one.

HRD as a Governance Tool: Thesis: HRD (training and skill development) is not only for enhancing capabilities but also for regulating behavior, thinking, and attitudes. Discipline Tool: Self-discipline: Employees learn and update their skills independently, becoming "entrepreneurs of the self. Sophisticated Monitoring: Organizations and managers track development progress, conduct continuous performance reviews, and create pressure for constant development. Goal: Optimize human capital for the market, making labor flexible, competitive, and serving economic interests.

"Governance" (Foucault): This is a method of state governance that involves not only laws but also shaping the consciousness and behavior of citizens, making them voluntarily comply with rules (even without direct coercion). Neoliberal HRD does this: individuals believe that self-development is for success, but in reality, it serves a broader socio-economic goal, regulated by activating policies. For example, requiring employees to participate in digital skills training to enhance their capabilities, but simultaneously creating competitive pressure and performance evaluation based on acquiring these new skills. Policies support vocational training, but require a commitment to finding work in a high-demand industry, orienting personal development according to market needs. From this point of view, SSS calls for not protecting individuals from the market but actually for disciplining them for the market. HRD, in the form of "workfare" or conditional training, is in place to correct for individual "deficits," to subordinate social protection to the requirements of labor market flexibility, and to "responsibilize" the poor for their own precarity (Horn et al., 2023; Kutlay & Öniş,2023). Justice, in this frame, is reduced to the fairness of procedure in a competitive market.

The antithesis is the optimistic, HRD or "capability" view. HRD is seen as an investment in human capital, similar to investments in infrastructure or healthcare, with ripple effects. The competency perspective is about expanding human capabilities, such as cognitive abilities (Knowledge & Skills): providing specialized knowledge and soft skills (leadership, problem-solving). Capabilities: enabling workers to genuinely choose and pursue what is valued (e.g., good health, a voice in the community, respect). And especially, more substantive freedoms. Not just formal freedoms (those permitted by law), but substantive freedoms – the ability to realize those choices. For example, having the right to education (formal freedom) but lacking access to education (due to poverty, geographical location) means that freedom is not substantive. HRD enables workers to exercise those freedoms (such as freedom of speech, freedom of choice of work, and freedom of political participation). In this case, human resources development (HRD) is not seen as a tool of market discipline, but as a vehicle for human emancipation. A strong SSS provides the "protective security" and resource floor to help individuals strive for "valued functionings" (Leoni, 2025) HRD, in this model, is the development of those substantive capabilities - health, education, practical reason - that constitute a life of dignity. Social justice is therefore accomplished through the feedback loop of social security and human development.

This article addresses this critical gap in the literature where these two forces - social policy and HRD - collide. Management and HRD scholars have, with some notable exceptions, largely overlooked the co-optation of HRD by the state and instead focused on the corporate sphere (Collins & Callahan, 2023). Conversely, social policy analysis tends to regard "training" and "activation" as neutral policy variables, neglecting the profound, typically competing, philosophical assumptions embedded in the theoretical DNA of HRD (Ferragina & Magalini, 2023).

This study, therefore, intends to deconstruct this dialectic in the light of political philosophy. It clarifies the impacts of this fusion by highlighting the controversial relationship between HRD and social justice, by asking the central research question: How does the integration of Human Resource Development (HRD) into social security systems reconfigure, realize, or corrode the meaning of social justice,

and what underlying political philosophy dictates the outcome.

The paper has the following structure, Section 1 (Abstract) gives an overview of the study. In section 2 (Introduction), the research situation is presented. The literature review deals with theories of social security, HRD, and social justice (Section 3). The research design and methods of analysis are presented in section 4 (Methodology). Section 5 (Results) shows the results of comparison between HRD models. The analysis of these models and a more democratic approach are stated in Section 6 (Discussion). Section 7 (Conclusion) involves the summary of the findings and proposes the future research directions.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

To deconstruct this dialectic, this section makes an extensive documentary review of its three foundational pillars: the philosophy of the social security state, the disputed theories of Human Resource Development, and the competing conceptions of social justice that provide the normative criteria of evaluation.

2.1. Human Security and the Evolving Philosophy of the Social Security State

The modern political expression of the concept of human security, as discussed by (Alsawalqa,2021), is a welfare state of the 20th century. In his masterpiece on citizenship, (Esping-Andersen, 2024) laid the intellectual and moral foundations of this state. Esping-Andersen believed that citizenship was also an evolutionary position, that began with civil rights (18 th century), political rights (19 th century), and, lastly, social rights (20 th century). These social rights or right to education, health and a modicum of economic welfare and security were required to all the citizens in order to exercise their civil and political rights in full. The key tool of providing these social rights was the SSS. Building on this, Gosta (Yörük et al., 2022) provided the most potent political-economic analysis of this system with his concept of decommodification. The livelihood of a citizen in a capitalistic society depends on whether the citizen is able to sell his or her labor-power in the form of a commodity. The core function of the social-democratic welfare state, he argued, was to "de-commodify" citizens - to grant them a degree of autonomous survival (a pension, unemployment insurance, disability) irrespective of their immediate market value. A high level of decommodification was, therefore, the telos of a just social-democratic state. It was the material realization of Esping-Andersen's social rights.

This paradigm of decommodification was violently criticized since the 1970s. From the (neo)liberal right, thinkers such as (Benzecry et al., 2025) and later political players believed that the SSS was a market distortion that created inefficiencies. This critique was given a moralistic tone by thinkers such as Wilson (2022). who contended that the welfare state produced a "dependency culture" that trapped the poor in a cycle of "learned helplessness" and destroyed the personal responsibility essential to a free society. The (neo) liberal solution was to dismantle decommodification and re-assert the logic of the market, responsibilising the individual for his or her own risk and security.

The criticism was in some way co-opted by the Third Way or social-democratic lefts in the 1990s (Eldridge, 2024; Gilleard, 2020). These reformers recognized new realities of globalization and a so-called knowledge economy and argued that a model of decommodification which was passive indeed was obsolete. It was unprepared to address new social risks (e.g., the necessity to have childcare, the poverty of single-parent households, the necessity to reskill) and was based on a male-breadwinner, industrial model that was out of existence.

This synthesis is the "Social Investment State" (Garritzmann et al., 2022). The new paradigm that is currently the prevailing dogma in most countries of the OECD and in the EU policy suggests that SSS is supposed to be a trampoline rather than a safety net (Ferragina & Magalini, 2023). It is not protecting the market, but preparing to participate in it. Social expenditure regarding childcare (training future labor), health, and, most importantly, education and training are redefined as one of the productive factors that strain the people, improve the human capital, and increase the national productivity. This philosophical shift from protection to preparation creates the institutional and ideological "docking point" for Human Resource Development to enter the central domain of social policy. The core mechanism of this new state is "activation" – a concept that serves as the battleground of the dialectic.

2.2. Human Resource Development: A Contested Terrain

The second pillar, Human Resource Development (HRD), does not represent a neutral and technical field. It is a "contested terrain" (Abiwu & Martins, 2025), a field rent with internal contradictions about its purpose, methods, and ultimate beneficiary. Its philosophical roots are complex, but for the purposes of this paper, they may be reduced to three major traditions.

First, the Managerial-Scientific tradition, which is the DNA of the field. This begins with 'scientific management', which viewed the worker as part of a machine to be optimized for efficiency. This gave rise to the Human Relations school (e.g., the Hawthorne studies), which recognized the social and psychological needs of the worker, but mainly as a way to get him to be more productive and compliant.

This tradition was given its authoritative economic terminology by means of the Human Capital Theory (HCT) (Wen et al., 2022; Antonilli, 2022). HCT views people as rational agents who possess a "stock" of "human capital" (knowledge, skills, health). Education and training are "investments" that augment this stock, which yield a return in the form of greater productivity and so higher wages in the

future. In HCT, the individual is the ultimate unit of analysis, and their value is their market-productive value. This paradigm, the lingua franca of world institutions (the World Bank, OECD), and the default, unquestioned ideology that the Social Investment State comes to when it wants to be involved in, is an invitation to invest in its citizens (Swanson, 2022).

Second, the tradition of Humanistic. This more humane side to HRD considers development as an end in itself, prioritizing the well-being of the employees, personal cultivation, self-actualization and involvement. Although sometimes absorbed by the managerial tradition (a happy worker is a productive worker), this tradition holds onto the emphasis on the human and not the resource and offers a philosophical point of departure of a more person-centred view of learning and development. Third, the Critical HRD (CHRD) tradition. This more recent and radical school frontally attacks the mainstream. The critics of mainstream HRD include the fact that it perpetuates power structures, inequality, and exploitation (CHRD scholars (Collins and Callahan 2023); they argue that it is complicit with managerialism. CHRD has objectives of reclaiming the human in human resource development by explicitly anticipating the concerns of social justice, workplace democratization, sustainability and emancipation. It asks the critical question, "Development for what? And in whose interest?" This critical school gives the necessary theoretical leverage to analyse the state's use of HRD not as a neutral tool, but as a site of political and ideological struggle.

When the "Social Investment State" espouses "HRD," more often than not it is the HCT model instead of the critical model. This choice has profound consequences to justice.

2.3. Social Justice: Competing Philosophical Conceptions

The "justice" this new SSS-HRD nexus strives to attain is the final and most fought-over pillar. The "justice" of a policy is not a self-evident, technical result, but a judgment that is absolutely dependent upon which philosophical arena one uses as a basis. The literature offers three dominant conceptions with different unit of analysis.

First, Distributive Justice, articulated most famously by (Dural, 2025) For Dural justice is "fairness" in the distribution of "primary goods"-the fundamental rights, liberties, opportunities, income, and wealth that anyone rational person would want. A just SSS-HRD policy, according to Dural "Difference Principle," would be one structured to bring about the "greatest benefit to the least-advantaged" members of society. This is a robust framework, but one that is often criticized as being "resource-fetishist." It focuses on how goods are distributed (e.g. an SSS payment, a "slot" in a training program) but does not focus on what people can do or be with those goods.

Second, the Capabilities Approach (CA), developed by (Leoni, 2025). This framework offers a profound criticism of the distributive model. Leoni argues that the genuine measure of justice is not resources (such as income) or utility (such as happiness), but capabilities - the substantive freedoms that a person has to accomplish "functionings" (beings and doings) that they have reason to value. "Functionings" are what a person can be (e.g., well-nourished, healthy, educated) or do (e.g., participate in community life, work in a meaningful way, move freely). A person's "capability" is the set of all possible functionings they can choose from.The CA's great insight is the "conversion factor." Two people with the same "resource" (e.g., a $500 SSS payment) may have vastly different capabilities, based on "personal conversion factors" (e.g., one is disabled, one is healthy), "social conversion factors" (e.g., one faces racial discrimination, one does not), or "environmental conversion factors" (e.g., one lives in a remote area, one has public transport). A just SSS-HRD policy, from a CA perspective, is one that actually expands the capabilities – the fundamental, substantive freedoms – of all citizens, especially the most disadvantaged, to live a life they have reason to value.

Third, Tri-Dimensional Justice, articulated by (Macdonald, 2023). Fraser argues that justice is more complex than just distribution or capability. She posits that justice has three co-equal, irreducible dimensions, all of which must be satisfied:

i) Distribution (the "What"): The equitable distribution of material resources. This aligns with Dural.

ii) Recognition (the "Who"): The "social status" and cultural validation of all members of society. A policy can be distributively "fair" but at the same time cause "misrecognition" – stigma, stereotyping, disrespect – to be affixed to its recipients (e.g. by framing them as "lazy" or "deficient"). The same criticism is followed by (Seran, & Situmorang, 2024) who believes in the struggle for recognition as one of the major factors leading to social conflict.

iii) The Political aspect of justice: Representation (the "How"). This is concerning who determines the rules of justice, who is to be given a seat at the table and whose voice will be listened to. A policy may be distributively and recognitively good (e.g., a "generous" SSS-HRD program) but be a form of injustice when it comes at the top-down, depriving the beneficiaries of any agency in its formulation, regulations or objectives.

Fig. 2 The Tri-Dimensional Justice Framework, adapted from (Macdonald, 2023), offers the most comprehensive and critical framework for the analysis.It enables us to assess the SSS-HRD nexus not only based on what it delivers (distribution/capability) but instead on how it builds the citizen (recognition) and whether it empowers them (representation).
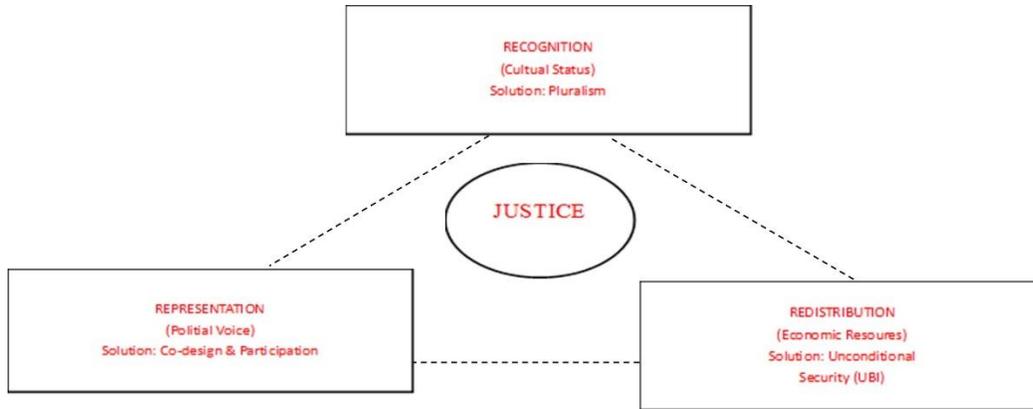
Fig. 2 The Three Dimensions of Justice: Recognition, Redistribution, and Representation

III. METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study adopts a "reflection article" format and is based on a revisión documental (documentary review) as a methodological approach to collect, combine, and synthesize previously published related studies, core literatures, and philosophical texts. Guided by the principles of critical social theory and political philosophy, data (key concepts, theoretical models, and policy frameworks) were analyzed through deductive reasoning and dialectical critique. The methodology deconstructs the key components of the SSS, HRD, and social justice, and then analyzes the "thesis" and "antithesis" of their integration, before proceeding to a critical "synthesis" in the discussion. The goal is not empirical generalization but theoretical clarification and normative critique.
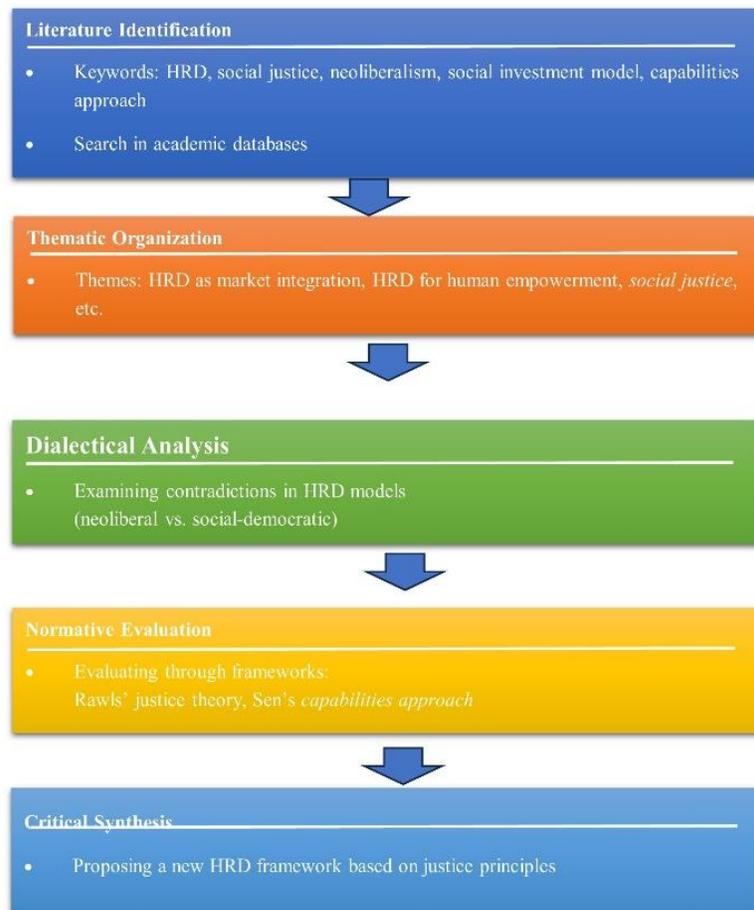

Fig. 3 Methodological Framework for Analyzing HRD and Social Justice

This Fig. 3 shows that there are five steps taken in the methodology of the study. It starts with Literature Identification which involves the consideration of relevant key words and academic databases. It then proceeds to

thematic organization where the literature is sorted into thematic areas like: HRD as market integration, HRD as human empowerment, and social justice. The third step is Dialectical Analysis which explores contradictions within the models of HRD, that is neoliberal and social-democratic. The next and third stage is the Normative Evaluation in which frameworks such as the justice theory by Rawls and capabilities approach by Sen are utilized. The last step Critical Synthesis suggests a new framework of HRD which is grounded on principles of justice providing more inclusive and democratic approach to HRD.

This research adopts a qualitative, systematic approach to analyze the intersection of Human Resource Development (HRD) and social justice. The methodology follows a well-defined sequence: literature identification, thematic organization, dialectical analysis, normative evaluation, and critical synthesis. Each phase is explained in greater detail below:

3.1. Literature Identification

The initial step of the methodology is the process of identifying and selecting the academic literature that is relevant. The method forms the basis of the research hence the analysis will be based on existing knowledge. In order to be able to spot literature, extensive searches in various academic databases such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, and Scopus were conducted. The search was aimed on the literature that relates to HRD, social security systems, and social justice. The results were filtered down using specific keywords like Human Resource Development and social justice, neoliberalism in HRD, social investment model and social protection policies.

Inclusion criteria were used to select the literature and included:

- Appeal to the HRD and social justice frames.
- Pay attention to the recent models of HRD, such as neoliberal and social-democratic models.
- The last 20 years of peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and policy reports.
- Following the collection of the literature, it narrowed down the selection process as it targeted significant theoretical
- literature and influential works that focus on the connection between HRD and social justice.

3.2. Thematic Organization

At this step, the literature was grouped into themes to give the analysis its clarity and structure. The themes emanated by the literature were:

- HRD as a Market Integration Tool: Neoliberal perceptions of HRD as a means of improving employability and inclusion of people to workplaces. This involves the involvement of HRD in the policies of activation.

- HRD to Human Empowerment: The social investment strategy, which promotes HRD as a way of increasing human capacities, autonomy, and inequalities.

- Social Justice: Various definitions of social justice, such as distributive justice, recognition and representation as would be argued by theorists such as Tahzib and Nancy Fraser.

Intersectionality in Social Protection: How HRD assists in reducing or intensifying inequalities by gender, race and class in social security systems.

The themes resonated with research questions and objectives, which served as the help in concentrating the further examination. This thematic arrangement has led the categorization of the different theories and models as well as works that have been conducted and made it easy to map out the field.

3.3. Dialectical Analysis

Dialectical analysis was the third methodology stage. The conflict and contradictions between various models of HRD were studied through this approach, in particular, the neoliberal and the social-democratic perspective. The dialectical approach makes it possible to scrutinize critical in these models and their consequences in social justice.

The analysis focused on:

- Neoliberal HRD: The concept of HRD as a method of re-commodifying labour, where individual responsibility, employability and market-oriented outcomes are focused upon. This has got the aspect of activation policies, which make people self-activate, and be responsible in their own participation in the labor mark.

- Social-Democratic HRD: The second viewpoint, and the one that considers HRD as the avenue of increasing human capabilities and diminishing social inequalities. It is a social security-focused, welfare-focused, and empowerment-oriented model, which also focuses on skill development.

- One way to understand why an instructor should approach market-driven aspect of neoliberal HRD with a dialectical approach is that the elements of social justice focus on equity, representation, and recognition. It also analysed the way in which these models can or cannot deal with the issues of unemployment, social protection and individual autonomy.

3.4. Normative Evaluation

The normative evaluation stage entailed the evaluation of the ethical aspects of the HRD models that were found in the

literature. This analysis was grounded on primary normative constructs including:

- Tahzib Theory of Justice: The principles of justice as fairness in particular, where emphasis is put on reallocating

resources and opportunities to help the poorest members of the society.

Amartya Sen Capabilities Approach: This is a perspective that assesses social justice in terms of increasing the

capabilities of people to lead a valuable life, whereby emphasis is put on granting people opportunities to acquire education, health, and access economic and political opportunities.

The normative evaluation was to determine the extent to which each HRD model is consistent or even inconsistent

with these theories of justice, especially with regard to:

- Distributive Justice: The distribution of resources (e.g., training, employment opportunities, social protection)

    through the society and the disadvantage of the marginalized groups.

- Recognition and Representation: Do HRD policies consider the needs of marginalized communities and do they

- offer them a chance to participate in the decision-making processes?

- Equality of Opportunity: How much the HRD policies allow people to access resources and support, which will

    enable them to meet their expectations, despite their socio-economic background.

- The normative assessment gave an ethical model to determine the effectiveness and equity of HRD policies towards

    the achievement of social justice objectives.

3.5. Critical Synthesis

The critical synthesis is the last phase of the methodology and the results of the dialectical analysis and normative assessment are synthesized in order to suggest a new framework of HRD that is more consistent with social justice. This synthesis questions the notion of neoliberal and social-democratic models of HRD, requiring a more democratic perspective on HRD and systems of social security.

The synthesis involves:

• Rebranding HRD: Suggesting a new model of HRD that places human well-being and empowerment in the forefront

of the agenda instead of market-driven goals. That model would combine social protection and lifelong learning opportunities as well as participatory governance mechanisms.

• Policy Recommendations: Proposing HRD policy changes that will resolve the contradictions found in the dialectic analysis, and pushing to develop a social security floor that will ensure everyone has a threshold level of economic security.

Future Research Proposal: Expressing the areas of the future research, especially developing more inclusive and equitable models of HRD that consider the social and economic needs of the marginalized populations.

IV. RESULTS

The analysis of the literature based on the dialectical framework identifies two definite, conflicting, and dominant "results." These are not merely different policies, but two distinct and ideologically coherent worlds of the SSS-

HRD nexus. The "thesis" and "antithesis" of the central contradiction are represented by the (neo)liberal, disciplinary model and the social-democratic, emancipatory model.

4.1. Result 1: The Thesis – HRD as Disciplinary Re-commodification and Governmentality

The first, and arguably dominant, "result" in practice is the "thesis" of (neo)liberal "activation." The logic of coercive conditionality has permeated the welfare systems of the world, most evidently on the workfare states (Horn et al., 2023) of Anglo-American countries, but its logic.

Under this model, the SSS-HRD relationship is not established based on synergy but rather on an integrative approach that is punitive and top-down. Coercive conditionality is the primary process of this model. Participation in, and absolute adherence to, mandatory measures of so-called activation, is strictly preconditioned by access to the SSS - the very livelihood, including unemployment benefits or social assistance. This essentially reverses the (Esping-Andersen, 2024) idea of social rights and (Yörük et al., 2022) logic of decommodification. The "social right" to security is emptied of substance and converted into a precarious, conditional right, subordinate to the requirement to demonstrate "employability" and "job-seeking behaviour." This is an active, state-managed process of re-commodification, intended to bring the individual back into the labor market, regardless of the quality of that labor market, as the sole arbiter of his or her survival and social worth. The ultimate tool of this coercion is the "sanction," or

withholding of benefits, which holds the threat of destitution as the state's primary policy tool.

Politically, this model has its pillars that are two strong and intertwined, namely: The (neo)liberal state as the one that adopts the language of Human Capital Theory (HCT) (Sultana et al., 2022) as its central ideology. The unemployed person is re-constructed systematically no longer as a citizen with rights, but as an impaired unit of human capital. Their joblessness is built as an individual failure a skills deficit, motivation deficit, mental toughness, or plasticity. The structural, macroeconomic, or political causes of unemployment (e.g., de-industrialization, financial crises, anti-union policies) are rendered invisible.

The state-mandated HRD that follows from this diagnosis is, consequently, not designed for genuine human development. It is a "corrective" intervention. These programs are overwhelmingly "low-road," short-term, and de-contextualized. These include "job-search" workshops, classes on writing CVs, and basic, non-transferable skills programs.The goal is not to expand human potential or provide the "high-road" skills needed for a new career, but to fix the individual "deficit" as quickly as possible and align the person with the immediate, often precarious, demands of the local labor market. The function of this "HRD" is to "make people employable" for the gig economy, zero-hours contracts, and minimum-wage service jobs. It is about labor market attachment at any cost, not human flourishing.

Disciplinary Governmentality: This model is one of the principal technologies of (neo)liberal governance. Drawing on (Rhodes-Phillips, 2025) work on discipline, this SSS-HRD apparatus is a modern 'workhouse', a social-scale disciplinary machine, one that moves beyond the prison walls. The entire system - with its constant monitoring, mandatory "job-search diaries" and weekly check-ins with case managers, and the ever-present threat of "sanctions" - is not designed to empower, but to govern.

As (Kutlay & Öniş, 2023) argued, this is a tool for "governing the soul." It is a technology about "making up," as it were, a new kind of subject: the "active," "responsible," "entrepreneurial" self. Through this coercive process, the beneficiary is taught to internalize precarity and view substructural poverty as an individual, technical issue (such as a "skill gap" or a "bad attitude") that needs to be addressed through personal effort. The HRD, in this sense, becomes a psychological intervention; it is very common now for such programs to involve mandatory training in "positive thinking" or "psychological resilience," effectively re-engineering the "soul" of the citizen to be content with precariousness without protest.

Into this disciplinary framework innovative technologies are inserted not to emancipate, but to control. This is a central finding. The rise of "algorithmic welfare" (Mañero, 2020) has given rise to a "digital panopticon." In this system, human caseworkers are replaced with automated "risk-scoring" algorithms, which profile, sort, and "nudge" the unemployed into interventions and predict their "risk" of non-compliance. These algorithms, as (Sinclair, 2023) argues, are "weapons of math destruction"--that is, not neutral tools, but encoded expressions of (neo)liberal, market-centric biases that create feedback loops of poverty. Furthermore, "personalized" or "gamified" e-learning platforms, are not used for authentic learning, but for imposing compliance (Rajendran et al., 2025). The state is now able to monitor a beneficiary's every click, quantifying "time on task" as a proxy for his or her "willingness to work". This technology is not a tool for teaching, it is a tool for monitoring, surveillance, and data-driven punishment.

The "justice deficit" of this thesis is, therefore, profound. It doesn't work in any of three dimensions according to (Macdonald, 2023):

Distribution: It "solves" unemployment by creating a class of the "working poor", by disciplining beneficiaries into accepting low wage, precarious and non-unionised jobs, actively increasing in-work poverty.

Recognition: It inflicts massive "misrecognition." By making unemployment about an individual deficit, it stigmatizes benefits, removes the dignity of beneficiaries, and turns beneficiaries into the "takers," "shirkers," or "moral hazards" (Seran & Situmorang, 2024). Representation: Beneficiaries have zero "say" when it comes to the design of this system. The individuals are the objects of policy, rather than its subjects; voices are excluded from the "frame" of justic. The first result is the dominance of the "thesis" of the neoliberal activation, prevalent in Anglo-American "workfare" states in which the relation between Social Security Systems (SSS) and Human Resource Development (HRD) is conditioned by coercive conditionality. In this model, access to basic survival support is held strictly conditional to compliance with mandatory training and job-seeking behaviours, thereby in fact converting unemployment into a "deficit" of the individual, rather than a structural problem for the economy. The state uses Human Capital Theory as an ideology to enforce training for short-term and low-quality that is targeted to immediate labor market attachment, no matter the quality of the job. Innovative technologies are part of this system not to help learning, but as a "digital panopticon" to control behavior and automate the punishment of non-compliance through algorithmic risk-scoring.

Overall, this model is ultimately a failure of social justice in every dimension. It works as a disciplinary mechanism of governmentality, which "re-commodifies" citizens, forcing them into their precarious workings and stigmatizing them as "deficient" or "lazy". By making beneficiaries absent from the design of the system and by reducing justice to procedural market fairness, the thesis model generates a "working poor" class and actively generates a "justice deficit" based on misrecognition and misrepresentation.

4.2. Result 1: The Antithesis - HRD as Capability Expansion and Social Investment

The "antithesis" to this grim model is the much more optimistic, social-democratic perspective of the "Social Investment State" (Garritzmann et al., 2022). Often (although not perfectly) correlated with Nordic welfare models, where there is a virtuous running cycle between SSS & HRD. This model, as analyzed by (Kongshøj, 2023). solves the paradox with high decommodification and high employment by demonstrating that they are mutually reinforcing.

The logic in this case is of synergy and emancipation. A robust, universal and generally unconditional SSS (generous unemployment benefits, public healthcare, universal childcare, pensions) is the secure foundation upon which ambitious, high quality and, in general, voluntary HRD policies (lifelong learning, public universities, reskilling sabbaticals) can be built. The SSS component provides "protective security", which lowers the existential anxiety of market volatility. This security provides citizens with the confidence and absolute freedom (the "capability") to take risks, the ability to leave a bad job to retrain, to start a new enterprise, or to take time out for care. This security floor solves an important "conversion factor" problem: A person cannot convert a "capability" (a skill) into a "functioning" (a good job) if they are scared to death of starving, being evicted or having their debts paid by the state. This model, or at least the ideal version of it, places the philosophical foundation entirely in the hands of Amartya Sen's Capabilities Approach (CA) rather than Sultana's HCT. This is not a semantic difference, it is a fundamental reorientation of the purpose of the state.

This model, or at least its ideal form, shifts the philosophical grounding entirely from Sultana's HCT to Amartya Sen's Capabilities Approach (CA). This is not a semantic difference; it is a fundamental reorientation of the purpose of the state.

From Human Capital to Human Capability. The HCT model (Result 1) asks: "How can this person be made more valuable to the market?" The CA model asks: " "What does this person have reason to value, and how can their freedom be expanded to achieve it?" This marks the shift from a purely instrumental view of the human to an intrinsic one.The goal is not just to create a "productive worker" (a means for the economy), but to expand the "substantive freedoms" of the citizen (an end in itself).

In this framework, HRD is not a narrow, employer-led training program. It is a broad, humanistic public education system that builds "central capabilities" (Leoni, 2025). such as practical reason, health, bodily integrity, affiliation, imagination, and the ability to participate in community life. Of course, this includes "job skills," but it is not reducibleto them. The "HRD" of this model is the public library, the community college, the arts center, and the university, all funded as public goods.

Development as Freedom. As argues, the "instrumental" role of HRD (making one employable) is secondary to its "constitutive" role (being educated is, in itself, a core part of a free and dignified life). The SSS provides the security, and the HRD provides the capability – together, they create "development as freedom." This model is not afraid of an educated, critically-thinking populace; its legitimacy depends on it.

In this model, innovative technologies for teaching and learning are framed as a powerful emancipatory force. This is the direct counterpoint to the "digital panopticon" of the thesis. The state's role is to leverage technology as a digital public good to expand capabilities. These are state-funded access to high-quality online university courses (MOOCs) to all citizens, the creation of open-source software and creative commons platforms that open up knowledge, the reimagination of public libraries as 3D printers, coding bootcamp, and media lab digital agoras. Crucially, this model uses technology to reduce the "conversion factor" problem. It would deploy AI-powered accessibility tools to make learning available to citizens with disabilities. It would fund state-subsidized, high-speed internet as a public utility to reach remote and rural communities. It would develop AI-powered tutors (e.g., in language, math, or science) that are designed for genuine, personalized learning, not for surveillance. The goal, in sharp contrast to the thesis, is the "democratization of the means of capability development."

This model is obviously more superior in terms of justice. It also agrees with a Duralian "difference principle" in the sense of focusing the most significant investment on the least advantaged so as to develop their capabilities on the ground floor. And it will provide deep appreciation (Seran & Situmorang, 2024). by treating beneficiaries not as "deficient objects" to be fixed, but as citizens worthy of investment – as agents in their own lives. TABLE I provides a comparative summary of these two dominant models.

TABLE I COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE TWO SSS-HRD MODELS

Dimension	Thesis: Neoliberal Activation	Antithesis: Social Investment
Philosophical Basis	Human Capital Theory (Becker)	Capabilities Approach (Sen, Leoni)
View of the Subject	The "Deficient" Individual (needs fixing)	The "Capable" Citizen (needs resources)
Role of SSS	Conditional, Residual Safety Net	Generous, Enabling Security Floor
Role of HRD	Mandatory, corrective, narrow "employability"	Voluntary, expansive, broad "flourishing"
Primary Goal	Re-commodification (Market Attachment)	De-commodification (Human Emancipation)
Justice Outcome	Procedural Fairness (Market)	Substantive Freedom (Capability)

Source: Compiled by the authors from theoretical frameworks.

The second result shows the "antithesis," known as the Social Investment State, based on the understanding that SSS and HRD were mutual reinforcing tools for human emancipation and not market discipline. Grounded in the Capabilities Approach that Amartya Sen pioneered, this model ensures a generous, unconditional floor of security that gives citizens the power to take risks and to participate in voluntary, high-quality education. Unlike the thesis, this approach moves us away from focusing on "human capital" (instrumental value to the market), to concentrate on "human capability" (intrinsic value to the individual) by using public resources to create substantive freedoms and "central capabilities" such as critical thinking and community participation.

Briefly, this model reorients the purpose of state towards "development as freedom," utilizing technology as a "digital public good" to democratize access to knowledge and as a means of removing barriers for the disabled and rural communities. By setting the beneficiaries of the training as capable citizens to invest in, rather than objects to be fixed, the antithesis provides a better framework for justice that is compatible with Duralian fairness and legitimizes the human dignity of the learner as shown in TABLE (I).

V. DISCUSSION

The analysis in Section 4 identifies a stark dialectical conflict between the neoliberal "workfare" model (thesis) and the social-democratic "social investment" model (antithesis). While the social investment model appears to offer a straightforward solution to social justice issues in modern social security systems, a deeper critical analysis, applying the full force of (Macdonald, 2023) tri-dimensional critique, reveals that the antithesis is not a stable or complete solution. The social investment model, although superior to the neoliberal model, fails to resolve the issues of productivism and technocracy, particularly in terms of recognition and representation.

5.1. The Productivist Bias and the Failure of Recognition

The Social Investment state has a fundamental flaw: its productivist bias (Ferragina & Magalini, 2023). Although it takes the humanistic terms of the Capabilities Approach, its explanation is highly economistic. The model encourages the social investment not as a human dignity action but as the way to develop more competitive economy and reduce the costs in the future (Garritzmann et al., 2022). The end result of this ROI-based reasoning is that human beings become market commodities, which is the fundamental idea in the Human Capital Theory (Antonilli, 2022). The focus on productivity in this model does not give real recognition (Seran & Situmorang, 2024; Macdonald, 2023). It undermines citizens who are not up to the market-driven model, and this produces a stratification of citizenship (Araujo et al., 2025). An example is the full-time caregivers who are primarily women who are forced to enter the labor force whilst the carework they provide is not appreciated. Likewise, the severely disabled are termed as non-return-on-investment costs and the older unemployed are not included

in retraining programs on the basis of ROI calculations. Such contradictions indicate the inability of the model to appreciate non-market contributions, and individuals who cannot be activated.

5.2. Democratic Deficit and Representation Failure

The loss of recognition is even increased by a democratic deficit (Macdonald, 2023), which affects neoliberal and social investment models. The beneficiaries, which include caregivers, unemployed persons as well as individuals with disabilities, are not involved in the policy designs in both systems. Expert and technocrats make decisions regarding what capabilities are valuable, especially to the people who are the subject of their decision. An example is that HRD curriculum is determined by employers and bureaucrats at the state level depending on the labor market requirements and not the personal interests of individuals. The result of this is epistemic injustice (Foucault), in which other types of knowledge and ambitions are rejected.

In addition, the term of activation has a minimal definition of getting individuals ready to work formally and paid without considering other primary activities such as caring or serving the community. This narrows down the justice as the only activity that is taken into the justice sphere is market activity and other quality human work is considered a state of inactivity and has to be repaired.

5.3. Technocratic Character of the Two Models

The neoliberal and the social investment models are both technocratic in nature. The models make the main issues of the worth of work and societal priorities depolitical. They avoid the underlying question of justice by recasting such problems as skills gaps and labor market fit as technical problems. Even in the state of the Social Investment, HRD is used as the instrument of molding people in line with the requirements of the market rather than supporting their overall human potential.

This technocratic reason is applied to technology being used in HRD, including AI tutors and state-sponsored MOOCs. These technologies are framed as "emancipatory," but without democratic representation in their design, they can turn into digital panopticons, nudging individuals into predefined, market-approved tracks. The technology, while appearing innovative, may become a tool for reinforcing inequality by prioritizing employability over human flourishing (Mañero, 2020).

5.4. Synthesis: A True Solution

The analysis shows that both models—the neoliberal (thesis) and the social investment (antithesis)—fail to address the core issues of recognition and representation. An actual synthesis must, therefore, deal with such failures. The only way out is a more participatory form of democracy where:

1. Unconditional Social Security: The genuine development as freedom will only come by ensuring that basic survival is provided without obligatory "activation." The Universal Basic Income (UBI) or Universal Basic Services (UBS) would unlink survival and market productivity (Rodrigues et al., 2025).

2. Democratic HRD: When survival is unconditional, HRD is able to be a voluntary and public resource, that is co-created with communities. Strategies such as democratic participation, community care, and ecological sustainability of this model would be given first preference as opposed to market alignment. It is the people and communities who would influence the curriculum rather than employers or those technocrats occurring within the state.

TABLE II EVALUATION OF SSS-HRD MODELS VIA FRASER'S DIMENSIONS OF JUSTICE

Dimension of Justice	(Neo) Liberal Thesis (Result 1)	Social Investment Antithesis (Result 2)	Critical Synthesis (Proposed)
Redistribution (Economic)	Negative: Creates "working poor," increases precarity.	Positive: Reduces poverty, but contingent on "activation" logic.	Transformative: Unconditional security (UBI/UBS) decouples survival from market utility.
Recognition (Cultural)	Negative: Stigmatizes the poor as "deficient" and "lazy."	Mixed: Values the "productive" citizen; misrecognizes caregivers, disabled, & non-market roles.	Transformative: Values all forms of contribution (care, art, community) equally.
Representation (Political)	Negative: Authoritarian technocracy; beneficiaries are objects of control.	Mixed: Benevolent technocracy; beneficiaries are "clients" not partners.	Transformative: Radical democracy; beneficiaries co-design HRD & tech.

Source: The authors prepared the sources on the basis of theoretical frameworks.

The argument is a critique of the neoliberal and social investment models, which is technocratic and top-down as opposed to democratic. The neoliberal framework is called authoritarian technocracy, whereas the social investment one is referred to as a benevolent technocracy. They both do not answer some key political questions concerning what and how one should value in society, and de-politicize them by making them technical problems of efficiency and the alignment of the labor market (see TABLE II). On the micro-level, even a seemingly generous HRD system creates inequality because of the necessities of cultural capital and digital literacy, which favors the educated and privileged and leaves the marginalized groups behind. The criticism is also applied to the technology used in the HRD, which could be an AI tutor or an MOOC, which, unless designed democratically, might turn into a well-intentioned digital panopticon that strengthens market-related values and enhances inequality, as (Mañero, 2020).

The social investment model is unstable synthesis, and, finally, the more humanistic of those is neoliberalism. It does not touch the productivist bias and the technocratic power structure, which should be overcome to an equitable HRD and social security system. A practical synthesis has to deal with the failures of recognition and representation.

VI. CONCLUSION

This paper has explored the connection between Human Resource Development (HRD) and social justice, considering the conflicts between the neoliberal model of activating via neoliberalism, and the social-democratic model of social investment. It is possible to propose that the significant findings indicate that both models, despite their attempt to undefinedly improve social situation, come to the point of not addressing the entire range of social justice, especially regarding recognition and representation. The neoliberal model of activation values more the integration of the market, and HRD is perceived as a means of improving employability and the responsibility of the individual. This model, nevertheless, continues to further inequalities by portraying unemployment as a personal vice and ignoring the larger structural factors that influence the poor groups in society. Conversely, the social investment model, which advocates HRD as a productivist bias does not eliminate a productivist bias. It supports investment in HRD on economic gains so that the non-market contribution, as in care giving and community work, is undermined. It also does not present a really democratic process, since in most cases the beneficiaries of HRD policies are not consulted in decision-making. These findings have policy implications, which include the need to approach the paradigm of HRD and social policy differently. To begin with, the social security system needs to be unconditional (e.g. Universal Basic Income) so that survival is not directly tied to market engagement. This would enable HRD to turn into a voluntary activity and be interested in real human development, instead of economic utility. Second, it needs to be democratic HRD whereby individuals and communities jointly form the learning and development processes. This would transform HRD as an instrument of market conformity to the instrument of human thriving and democratic engagement. Finally, a fair HRD and social security system should be based on the human dignity, equality and free will to achieve the various life objectives and not just exclusive to market needs.

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