GRADUATE RESEARCH PROJECTS 2013- 2017

GENDER AND AGENCY

Elizabeth Ongera

Gender justice and higher education: exploring the experiences of women legal graduates in Kenya

Widening access to and participation in higher education, particularly for women, has become an urgent priority for the higher education sector across many countries. While this is important, we also need to consider whether widening women's access and participation in higher education will reduce inequalities by promoting equitable educational opportunities and freedoms for them to choose and lead reflexively valuable lives in and beyond higher education. We also need to consider the extent to which women are recognized, both subjectively and socially, as having equal claims on higher educational resources and outcomes. Using the capabilities approach as the analytical framework, and in-depth narrative interviews with selected ten women legal graduates in Kenya, this study examines women's experiences of accessing, participating and progressing through higher education. Located within feminist inquiry, the aim of the sudy is to understand what factors shape the construction of women's educational and professional aspirations and trajectories, as well as achievement of their well-being and agency. The study also seeks to understand how and to what extent processes, conditions and practices in and outside higher education reproduce or disrupt gender inequalities in women's lives. Findings illustrate that while higher education is open to all, women's opportunities and freedoms to make decisions and choose higher education, particularly whether to attend university and what courses to pursue, are influenced by various factors such as their families, schooling environment, wider socio- cultural, economic and political contexts, as well as individual women's traits and abilities. During this phase, women's agency is constrained since they have little influence on their educational and career decision-making processes. For those who manage to access higher education (and in this case law school), evidence from this study shows that, compared to men, a disproportionate majority of women students experience alienation and marginalization as a result of socially-entrenched gendered norms, stereotypes and practices, which in turn have a negative impact on women's well-being both as students and as aspiring legal professionals. However, there are few who are able to negotiate these gendered structures and pave their way to success, demonstrating agency. Results of post-university professional experiences demonstrate that while higher education provides opportunities for women to achieve their educational, professional and life aspirations, their training does not equip them well with the practical aspects that are necessary for the discharge of their professional duties. Further, there are persistent gendered practices, such as sexual harassment, which compromise their capability sets to discharge their professional duties effectively. All these experiences show the relationship between higher education, society and women's lives marked iv by gendered norms and stereotypes, and how women position themselves to act and make decisions about their lives. They illustrate how

factors in and outside higher education intersect to influence women's choices, actions and opportunities in life. Based on these empirical findings, the study makes recommendations about which capabilities need to be fostered, and what negative conversion factors should be eliminated, so as to promote more just and equitable higher education. The main suggestion being that higher educational policy planners (specifically law schools') should put in place interventions which promote and advance students', especially women, capabilities to (i) access equitable educational opportunities, (ii) actively participate in just, equitable and inclusive educational environment, and (iii) achieve their valued educational outcomes that enables them to choose and lead lives that are find meaningful and productive. This will not only promote individual women's wellbeing and agency, but also contribute to gender justice in law school and higher education in general, as well as social justice if higher education enhances graduates' capabilities to choose and contribute to public good and social transformation.

Nteboheng Mahlaha (M.Ed)

Exploring higher education capabilities of black women graduates towards personal and professional development

Student success does not cease to be important after students have graduated, but extends to how employable graduates are and what they can do with their lives. Even though more than half of students enrolled in South African higher education institutes are women, men still hold the majority of positions in the labour market. The number of black women enrolled in higher education institutions has more than doubled in the last 19 years, according to a 2014 report by Higher Education South Africa (HESA). However; this seems insufficient progress when compared with the national demographics. Of the total black population, only 3.2% have access to higher education. Local and international literature shows a significant number of policies that attempt to establish gender and racial equality. However, in most cases, black women in both higher education and the workplace are experiencing unfair treatment. Statistics are unable to bring insight into gender and racial inequalities in order to ensure the same quality of higher education for both men and women.

This study investigated the life trajectories of black woman graduates in South Africa, and how and if, in anyway, higher education has equipped them with the capabilities to succeed both professionally and personally. The life experiences of women in higher education and the workplace were investigated by the capabilities approach, which is a normative framework developed by Sen (1992) and Nussbaum (2003). This framework aids the understanding of what people want to do and be, which freedoms or capabilities enable them to pursue these doings and beings, and which factors prevent them from achieving their being and doings. Thus, this approach allowed me to move from statistical findings to insight into what a group of black women graduates' value to be and whether they have the freedom to achieve well-being.

This study was framed by the following research questions: 1) What contribution has higher education made to the capabilities and valued functionings of selected black women graduates regarding the professional and personal lives they have reason to value?2) How do gender and race enable or constrain black women graduates' capability for work, including their career development, over time? 3) Do black women graduates have the agency and freedom to achieve what they value both professionally and personally?

Although studies in feminist research have investigated the life histories of black women, not much work has been done on the capabilities of black women graduates. A feminist methodology was employed in this study, supported by life-history and narrative methods. These two methods focus mainly on how individuals choose to shape their own lives, whereas the life-history method enables an understanding of people's stories against the wider background of society, in this case, gender equality and social justice. All lives are different; thus, the life-history method draws on both the differences and the similarities of participants' experience. In this study, narratives of nine black women were drawn from to explore the experiences of black women in higher education and the labour market. The selected women had graduated from South African higher education institutions from various fields of study and socio-economic backgrounds. The capabilities approach allowed the analysis of each woman's narrative and the mapping of the similarities.

The capabilities of these women, as generated through higher education, included cross-cultural exposure; communication and interpersonal skills; knowledge, imagination and critical thinking; empowerment; respect, dignity and social consciousness; practical reasoning; lifelong learning; resilience and bodily integrity. The findings shed light, firstly, on how these women are acting as active agents in converting the capabilities into valued beings and doings beyond graduation and, secondly, on how race and gender proved to be both positive and negative social factors that influenced the women.

Owing to the fact that the study is embedded in gender issues and the capabilities approach, which are both concerned with the well-being and agency of women in higher education and the labour market, the research contributes to higher-education research concerned with empowering black women. Furthermore, the study can provide a knowledge base for gender empowerment and fill a significant research gap in South Africa.

Key words: higher education, workplace, capabilities approach, gender and race

Lifutso Ts'ephe (M.Ed)

The experiences of black women undertaking doctoral studies at a South African university

This dissertation builds on and contributes to work in the fields of higher education and the capabilities approach. Specifically, it investigates the educational biographies of a small number (n=7) of black women who were either in their final year of doctoral study

or had graduated recently at the time of the interviews. Although a number of studies have investigated women in academia, there has not been a strong focus on the experiences of black women in doctoral studies, and even less so on South African students. The available studies show that students leave doctoral programmes prematurely due to a number of reasons, for example, an inability to manage time effectively, financial constraints, demotivation and depression, and poor supervision. Pillay (2009) adds that the balancing of two lives, being a mother and an employee, generates further challenges. As part of its National Development Plan, South Africa's National Planning Commission aims to not only rapidly increase the number of doctoral graduates, but to also promote postgraduate education for marginalised groups within the next 15 years. In 2012, black women represented 2 294 (16.4%) of all doctoral enrolments in the country, which is a significant increase from the 468 (7.5%) who enrolled for doctoral studies in the year 2000.

The research draws conceptually on the capabilities approach, developed by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum. This framework was chosen because it is used mainly to evaluate and assess an individual's well-being, as well as the social arrangements that foster or hinder this well-being. The capabilities approach, therefore, includes issues such as the design of policies and proposals for social change within societies and relates the evaluation of the quality of life to the assessment of the capability to function; that is, to be and do in ways which are valued by an individual. A qualitative approach was adopted for the study as the most suitable method. A case study design allows the researcher to emphasise the experiences of the individual, as well as the social arrangements which help or hinder each individual's success. In-depth information regarding the participants' social experiences was also gathered.

The issue that was explored in this study was black women's experience of doctoral study – the highs, the lows, and the challenges. The assumption was that gender plays a significant role in shaping the educational lives of these women. In the study, gender is understood as the social organisation of the relations between the sexes, differentiating the social meaning that is attributed to sexual differences from the sexual differences themselves. Exploring these women's experiences revealed the developmental outcomes of doctoral education they value, the opportunities to reach these outcomes they appreciated, and the personal, social and environmental factors which influenced their ability to use the developmental opportunities. The findings from this study could lead to recommendations to higher education institutions with regard to increasing the enrolment and retention of this marginalised group. These recommendations could also contribute to improving policies which attract and retain more black women doctoral students in higher education.

Keywords: Gender, Race, Capabilities Approach, Doctoral Students, Academic Mothers

ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION

Faith Mkwananzi (M.SocSci)

Challenges for vulnerable young people in accessing higher education: A case study of Orange Farm Informal Settlement, South Africa

This study outlines the challenges for vulnerable young people in accessing higher education, based on a case study conducted at Orange Farm informal settlement. Statistics show that student enrolment in higher education (HE) institutions has dramatically increased over the past years, from 473 000 (CHE, 1999) in 1993 to 938 201 in 2011, a clear indication that HE is increasingly addressing issues of access. Despite these positive trends, which should greatly benefit previously marginalised communities, there are still marginalised groups in our society which we know little about. This study seeks to build wider awareness of one such group, vulnerable young people.

One way of highlighting what is needed by vulnerable young people to access HE is through the capabilities approach (CA). The CA addresses issues of aspirations, agency and conversion factors, and has been used to analyse the situation of deprived people and create policies that give them access to the necessary resources and the ability to make choices (Alkire, 2002). In approaching vulnerability, Misztal's (2011) three types of vulnerabilities, namely dependence on others, unpredictability and irreversibility will be used.

Since this study is concerned with individual attitudes, perceptions and opinions rather than statistics, the researcher adopted a qualitative approach. The primary data collection strategy was face-to-face interviews with selected young people living in care and with their caregivers. Two graduates were also interviewed to determine whether they experienced similar challenges than those faced by young people today. Participants were selected using purposive sampling. The findings from the data revealed little difference between the challenges that the young people are faced with currently and those experienced by graduates in the past.

Faith Mkwananzi (PhD)

Exploring the lives and educational aspirations of marginalised migrant youth: A case study in Johannesburg, South Africa

As the migration phenomenon gains momentum, South Africa processes high volumes of refugee applications, particularly from neighbouring countries. One of the largest groups migrating is that of youths, in search of alternative livelihoods and opportunities in education and employment. In pursuit of these opportunities, challenges such as obtaining official documentation as well as resistance, intolerance and animosity from local residents are faced. Consequently, many unanswered questions remain on how the experiences of migrant youth influence their aspirations and desire for educational continuation or achievement. Although there are a number of studies on educational aspirations of migrant youth, most of these have focused on the Global North; there

has not been an in-depth focus on individual educational aspirations of youth in the South-to-South migration context. Thus, this thesis seeks to provide additional insight into South-to-South mobility and marginalised migrant youths' educational aspirations. Through exploring the educational aspirations and developmental opportunities available to this group of youths, I argue that the capabilities approach (CA) provides a comprehensive framework, which incorporates diverse and complex challenges of migration, cutting across and beyond social, political, cultural and economic contexts. The use of the CA in this study not only acknowledges the complex nature of migration, but also demonstrates that human mobility, in addition to being a capability on its own, is an integral part of human development. This is illustrated by an assessment of available opportunities for migrant youth to expand their choices, as well as their capacity to improve other dimensions of their lives, such as an opportunity for education.

The study adopts an interpretivist paradigm, which draws on concepts that are important in understanding people's actions and behaviours, such as *agency*, *opportunities*, and *being* and *doing* in seeking to answer the following questions: (i) what are the everyday experiences of marginalised migrant youth in Johannesburg, South Africa? (ii) What educational aspirations do the marginalised migrant youth have? (iii) Which capabilities and functionings do they value? (iv) What advocacy strategies do the participants suggest be put in place to support their educational aspirations? Data was collected using in-depth narrative interviews with 26 migrant youth who had accessed refugee services at the Central Methodist Church in Johannesburg. After preliminary open coding of individual interviews, a focus group was conducted to discuss some of the issues that emerged from individual interviews. Additional interviews were conducted with representatives from the refugee centre and Albert Street School respectively in order to gain detailed insight into migrant experiences.

Two key findings emerged from this study. Firstly, resources to achieve educational aspirations for migrant youth remain constrained in all key dimensions: political, social, and economic. With these constraints, opportunities for accessing higher education also become limited. As such, these narratives on educational aspirations have also shown that a gap in the literature on marginalised migrants and education extends to other dimensions. These include issues of access, experiences within higher education institutions, as well as achievement in higher education for the few migrant youth that have opportunities to progress further in education. Secondly, aspirations are complex and multidimensional, as is the environment that shapes them. Such complexity requires an in-depth and comprehensive analysis, as a simplistic understanding may overlook the lived realities of marginalised groups. Thus, I provide a new conceptualisation of aspirations intersecting along the axes of agency and structural conversion factors. Based on this conceptualisation I present an argument for four types of aspirations, namely *resigned, powerful, persistent* and *frustrated* aspirations. This construction of aspirations provides a different way of thinking about aspirations formation in contexts of marginalisation, disadvantage and vulnerability experienced by migrant youth in the study, as well as others living in similar environments. Furthermore, the thesis presents the intersectionality of conversion factors in the migrant youths' lives and how this intersectionality influences their educational aspirations.

MEASURING CAPABILITIES

Anesu Ruswa (MSc)

The Capability Approach and Measurement: Operationalizing Capability Indicators in Higher Education

The thesis contributes to work in the field of operational measurement of Human Capabilities. Although a number of studies have examined the challenges posed in the measurement of Human Capabilities, there has not been a focus on the empirical merits of the methods and methodologies followed in identification and measurement of valuable capabilities especially in the Higher Education context. To this end, this study provides insights into the identification of valuable student capabilities through an exposition of the methods which can be followed to create and measure robust indicators of student capabilities. A quantitative inquiry determines which Human capabilities students in Higher Education institutions have reason to value and the results of this process are compared to a theoretical student capabilities literature. The thesis advocates for a human development approach over a human capital approach in evaluating the wellbeing of students. The study is significant in that it aids policy and decision makers in Higher Education to identify what students value and thus be in a position to fashion curricula, programmes and policies in a way which best benefits the subjects. To achieve the above mentioned goal, the thesis draws substantially on the work of Paul Anand, Amartya Sen, Flavio Comim, Enrica Chiappero Martinetti, Ingrid Robeyns, Melanie Walker and Sabina Alkire, among others, who have researched and advanced in the field of operational measurement of human capabilities in the Higher Education environment

CURRICULUM AND PEDAGOGIES

Tendayi Marovah (PhD)

Citizenship education and human capabilities formation: A case study in two Zimbabwean teachers' colleges

This study considers the role of higher education, specifically teacher education colleges in Zimbabwe, in citizenship formation, which has focused on the history, development and implementation of citizenship education. It interrogates the conceptualisation of citizenship, its aims and content; the models of citizenship education that are taught; and the type of citizen sought. The study uses the capability approach as a conceptual framework to analyse citizenship formation and evaluate its significance in the operationalisation of the National and Strategic Studies curriculum, as a form of citizenship education taught in Zimbabwe's teacher colleges. The analysis and evaluation focuses on policy processes and practices, curriculum and pedagogical practices and institutional arrangements under which the formation of citizens' capabilities is experienced in the National and Strategic Studies curriculum. It

addresses a gap – the limited consideration of higher education's role in securing the human capabilities essential for critical democratic citizenship that promotes human development.

The study uses an interpretative qualitative research design of two college case studies to explore the role of National and Strategic Studies. The case study institutions are two rural primary school teacher training colleges, one government-run called Charity Teachers' College, and a church-run institution called Good Hope Teachers' College (pseudonyms adopted for the study). In addition to focus group discussions conducted at each college with students, in-depth semi-structured interviews with mid-level policy stakeholders, lecturers and students were also used to gather empirical data. Lecture observations and an analysis of documents that include syllabi, ministerial reports and students' records (coursework files) were also carried out in an effort to understand the institutional arrangements and pedagogical practices that uphold or inhibit the cultivation of human capabilities at each college. The study analyses, from the perspective of three participant categories (mid-level policy stakeholders, lecturers and students), how citizenship is understood, plays itself out in National and Strategic Studies, and the extent to which it fosters critical citizenship.

Findings from the study demonstrate a lack of connection between human development values, policy processes and practices, in the designing and operationalisation of the National and Strategic Studies curriculum. There is also a lack of Sen's instrumental freedoms necessary for the advancement of democratic values and citizens' capabilities in institutional structures and the wider society. Nonetheless, against the context of restricted democratic space, the exercise of individual agency by lecturers and students is evident in curriculum and pedagogical practices. Finally, a model for a citizenship education curriculum integrating human development and capability approach with Ubuntu is advanced in order to foster critical democratic citizenship formation through the National and Strategic Studies curriculum.

Mikateko Höppener (PhD)

Perspectives on engineering education in universities and its contribution to sustainable human development in Germany and South Africa

This thesis explores the relationship between universities and the public good from a human development viewpoint, with a specific focus on engineering education and its relation to 'sustainable development'. The thesis makes an original conceptual and empirical contribution to our thinking about engineering education in both global South and global North contexts. It explores, describes and combines the diverse perspectives of engineering students, lecturers, and employers from Germany and South Africa and carefully balances this qualitative data with theory to consider what engineering education in universities might look like, if it is to provide students with effective skills, knowledge and power to advance social justice through orienting their agency towards eradicating poverty. The thesis thus offers a normative critique of engineering education outcomes based on Amartya Sen's capability approach and

points to multidimensional freedoms and functionings - particularly those of the poor - as proxies of quality in engineering education and socially just engineering outcomes.

Talita (ML) Calitz (PhD)

A capabilities approach to student experiences of pedagogy, power and well-being at a South African university

Persistent educational, economic and social inequalities in South Africa perpetuate patterns of unequal access and participation for a significant number of university students. In particular, many first-generation, working-class and African students are positioned precariously within institutions, and have fewer opportunities to convert academic resources into successful outcomes. In response to these structural constraints, the study investigates undergraduate student experiences of pedagogical and institutional arrangements at a historically advantaged South African university. The study is guided by the following research question: *Given the structural inequalities within universities, how could pedagogical and institutional arrangements enable first-generation students to convert available resources into the capability for equal participation?* The research problem is informed by the assumption that having access to higher education does not mean that individuals have the freedom to participate in an equitable way, or to achieve the same outcomes. The research problem informed the design of four research questions:

1. *How do structural conditions at school, in the family, and the community enable and constrain the conversion of resources into capabilities for equal participation?*
2. *How do pedagogical and institutional arrangements at university constrain the conversion of resources into capabilities for equal participation?*
3. *How do pedagogical and institutional arrangements at university enable the conversion of resources into capabilities for equal participation?*
4. *How could student experiences be used as evidence to inform the design of capability praxis for equal participation?*

The study is situated within a transformative paradigm, where qualitative methods are applied to track the experiences of eight undergraduate university students over a period of two years. I collected qualitative data using a number of narrative research tools, including in-depth interviews, focus groups and digital stories. Another aspect of data collection was involving students as co-researchers in the study, in order to draw on student voices to shed light on the complexities underlying unequal participation.

The theoretical framework used to conduct the research integrated Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum's capability approach with critical social theory. The capability approach is a multidimensional approach that I used to evaluate the comparative opportunities for participation available to the research participants. The capability approach offers an egalitarian evaluation of the individual consequences of inequality, while retaining a focus on the agency and resources that students bring to higher education. Based on this framework, I make the argument that unequal participation

is a remediable injustice that can be partially addressed by creating enabling arrangements for capability development.

The outcome of the data analysis is a capability-informed praxis, in which I propose and defend six capabilities as a pedagogical response to inequalities identified in the student data. These capabilities are listed below:

1. *Practical reason*

2. *Critical literacies*

3. *Student research*

4. *Deliberative participation*

5. *Critical affiliation*

6. *Values for the public good*

The capability-informed praxis conceptualized equal participation on a spectrum where on the one end, equality is defined as access to the resources and opportunities needed to achieve valued outcomes aligned with student capabilities, agency and aspirations. On the other end of the spectrum, unequal participation refers to students who are vulnerable to drop out, face resource scarcity, and do not have sustained access to pedagogical or institutional arrangements that enable them to convert available resources into equal participation. I conclude the study with *recommendations* that could expand opportunities for equal participation for undergraduate students at the university.

Key terms: higher education, equal participation, human development, the capability approach, social justice, critical pedagogy, qualitative methodology.

Bothwell Manyonga (PhD)

Sociology curriculum, pedagogy and capabilities formation: A case study in two South African universities

The study addresses how the sociology curriculum and pedagogy interact to enhance or impede students' capabilities and more broadly, human development. More specifically, the research focuses on how curriculum knowledge acquired by undergraduate sociology students, contributes to enhancing their capabilities to live and to act in society. The context is one where universities are under pressure to better align the relevance of their curriculum to the needs of the labour market, with less focus on expansive aims and outcomes to contribute to both economic advancement and human wellbeing. While the South African government has invested in the expansion of higher education enrolments and programmes for academic support, there is a need to interrogate how universities enhance or impede individual and social well-being. Sociology has been considered because there is a growing concern

internationally and nationally about the weakening and a deepening disregard of the humanities and social sciences within the academy.

Based on sociology departments at two South African universities, the research investigates three levels: i) curriculum level to examine what sociology knowledge is selected and why, as well as what valued doings and beings are considered important; ii) pedagogy level to explore how sociology knowledge is transmitted and how (if at all) the process expands capabilities and functionings; and iii) outcomes level to consider what students say they have become as a result of studying sociology. The study draws on perceptions from empirical data collected through semi-structured interviews with students (12) and lecturers (12) at each university, as well as relevant documents.

The findings suggest that sociology is a subject taken by diverse students across axes of race, gender and schooling backgrounds. Although, the students have different bundles of 'resources', the development of the curriculum fails to account for these differences but largely treats them as a homogeneous group. In this conceptualisation, there is little or no attempt to consider the personal conversion factors that shape each student's freedom to achieve, as well as understand the choices and values that convert these freedoms into actual achievements. Regarding valued capabilities, students and lecturers value capabilities such as knowledge and critical thinking, with the students' having an un/expected emphasis on capabilities such as economic security, the opportunity to experience good teaching, autonomy and voice and recognition, respect and belonging, which they did not always experience. These capabilities intersect and are multidimensional, thus students need all of them to achieve wellbeing as they reinforce and support each other. Subsequently, agency rests on the platform of these capabilities. Thus, equipping graduates with more capabilities, more wellbeing and more agency means higher education is more just rather than less just. The thesis concludes by proposing a capability inspired curriculum model for human well-being. The model suggests grounds for re-thinking policy orientations to sociology curriculum developers, particularly on how Capabilities Approach and Human Capital Theory can complement each other in higher education and curriculum development.

DISABILITIES

Oliver Mutanga (PhD)

Experiences of disabled students at two South African universities: a capabilities approach

Using the capabilities approach, this thesis examines how disabled students experience higher education at two South African universities: University of the Free State (UFS) and University of Venda (UniVen). Located within the equity and inclusive agenda, the study seeks to exert influence over higher education policies and practices. South Africa prioritises equity issues. It is among the few countries in the world (156 as of 2015) to have signed and ratified one of the most acclaimed conventions on disability, the 2008 Convention on the Rights of Persons with

Disabilities (CRPD). However, there is no legislation (in 2015) that specifically looks at disability issues in South African higher education (SAHE) and data on disabled students is thin. The study argues that the capabilities approach is important in framing our understanding of disability issues in higher education. It also provides an analytical framework to measure progress towards social justice. The approach acknowledges the interplay between individual bodies and various conversion factors in the concept and construction of disabilities. This thesis advances knowledge in higher education and disability disciplines by outlining the complexities in disabled students' lives at the two universities. This study sought to answer the following questions. 1. How do disabled students experience their studies and interact with higher education? 2. How do lecturers and Disability Unit staff understand disability and the experiences of disabled students? 3. What are the differences and similarities concerning university policies and other supporting arrangements for disabled students at the University of the Free State and University of Venda? 4. How does the capabilities approach account for the experiences of disabled students in higher education? ii 5. What implications can be drawn for disability policy to enhance social justice in higher education?

Purposive sampling was employed to recruit participants into the study. Participants included fourteen disabled students from various disability categories, four lecturers and three Disability Unit (DU) staff. Students were recruited from the DU by telephone after being provided with a list of registered disabled students. The DU staff were approached directly and recruited to the study. Lecturers were recruited through their respective Heads of Departments. An information sheet was provided to every participant; this was accompanied by a conversation with each participant before they signed the consent form. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, field observations and institutional document analysis. In-depth interviews with disabled students, lecturers and the DU staff focused on their experiences with disability issues and their perceptions of the needs of disabled students. Field observations were also incorporated into the study in order to expand my understanding of the experiences of disabled students at the two universities. University policy documents (e.g. disability policies, assessment policies and residence policies) were reviewed in order to understand how the two higher education institutions (HEIs) iii purport to address issues and then the results of the review were juxtaposed with what was gathered from the other mentioned data collection methods.

Data were analysed thematically with the help of NVivo software and five key findings emerged from the students' data. Findings from this study highlight the complexities around the adoption of an identity as a disabled person by these students. Understanding disability within a given social and cultural context is important, as interpretations of what is disability are influenced by context. The study also found that, as a result of the current thinking around disability, practices and non-actions in higher education perpetuate injustices towards disabled students, although their intended goals are to create opportunities for all students. Another finding from the study is that, in most cases, the challenges faced by disabled students in higher education are not the same and they respond to these challenges differently. It was further found that regardless of these challenges, disabled students have the capacity to aspire and they showed educational resilience. The last finding from the students highlights that disabled students, just like other students, know what they value in higher education. Participating students identified key valued freedoms and

opportunities that are needed to access and succeed in higher education. Eleven key valued freedoms and opportunities were extrapolated, and I argue that these are needed for the formulation of socially just disability-inclusive policies. Interviews with university staff show a lack of awareness among lecturers on disability matters due to lack of training and at times this is compounded by their socio-cultural backgrounds and job expectations from their universities. On the other hand, DU staff showed an appreciation of disability matters. However, their efforts at times are compromised by arrangements within the university linked to lack of national and university policy guidelines. The thesis ends by suggesting some key points for SAHE to consider for an inclusive-disability policy framework.

QUALITY

Patience Mukwambo (PhD)

Quality as human development: a case study of teaching and learning in Zimbabwean universities

The study contributes to work in conceptualising quality in higher education teaching and learning. Most studies focusing on quality have been from a human capital standpoint, with little examination of quality from a human development perspective, and even less focusing on the Zimbabwean context. This analytical focus on human development through the capabilities approach therefore diverges from the current emphasis on human capital. The thesis examines factors influencing the definition and conceptualisation of quality of teaching and learning in a developing country context, highlighting gaps that a human development perspective can add. Assuming that their presence are indicative of quality, I use two ideal-theoretical human development indicators namely, critical being and the capability for work. These I argue, are aspirational capabilities in the Zimbabwean context and important in higher education because of their fostering of public-good graduates concerned with human wellbeing beyond the instrumental value of education. Data for this study was collected in three phases through policy document review, observations and in-depth interviews with purposively sampled participants. Phase one comprised document review and three interviews with participants from Zimbabwe's higher education quality assurance body, Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education. Phase two involved telephone interviews with quality assurance representatives from eight universities. Phase three was an in-depth examination of two case studies through interviews with the university representative, two deans, four lecturers and two focus group discussions with students from each "best case" department as identified by the university representative. Data was analysed thematically. Findings from the study highlight the complex interactions of contextual factors and national policy which inform and affect practice. Overall, and understandably considering the socio-political and economic climate, Zimbabwean higher education is largely influenced by human capital concerns, although there are instances of concern with human development. There is also a disjuncture between quality as policy and quality as practice with macro and meso policy makers conceptualising quality as an evaluative tool and lecturers largely interpreting it as the teaching and learning process. The results facilitate a discussion on the potential of a stronger human development influence on ideas of quality in different higher education

contexts. While critical being stood as an indicator for quality, due to the prevailing socio-political economy in Zimbabwe, there was a need to revise the capability for work. Providing a global Southern interpretation of quality, the thesis argues that the conceptualisation and operationalization of quality needs to be broadened to foster human development in order to fully appreciate the role of higher education in development.