

HIGHER EDUCATION & HUMAN DEVELOPMENT SARCHI CHAIR RESEARCH GROUP (HEHD): COMPLETED PhD PROJECTS 2016-2025

ECOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Daizy Shoma NALWAMBA

The Role of Environmental Education in Fostering Agents of Environmental Sustainability in Zambia: A Capability Approach

As people and countries strive to develop, the burden on the environment increases, indicating the urgent need for environmental sustainability. This thesis posits that effectively advancing environmental sustainability necessitates an environmentally educated citizenry, both in terms of knowledge and skills required. To realise this, environmental education is crucial. However, three decades after the first intergovernmental conference on environmental education (Tbilisi, 1978), countries worldwide continue to grapple with adverse ecological consequences. In the context of Zambia, diverse anthropogenic activities amid a fast-growing population and its pursuit of economic growth continue to exacerbate environmental disruptions. In 2008, the University of Zambia introduced the environmental education (EE) program, which was the focus of this study. This exploration is underpinned by the relevance of establishing the nexus between higher education EE and environmental sustainability action. Therefore, this study is motivated by the urgency to explore higher education's contributions towards producing agential students and graduates for positive social and environmental change. Thirty-two (32) participants (4 lecturers, 12 students, 13 graduates and 3 environmental industry experts) were interviewed. The interview recordings were transcribed using Notta.ai and the data was analysed thematically. Empirical data reflects diverse meanings, values and conceptualizations ascribed to environmental sustainability and agency. Additionally, various capabilities emerged as having been acquired through EE, and required for environmental sustainability agency. Significantly, the emerging data shows both links and complexities between what is acquired by students and what is required in the context of Zambia and environmental sustainability. Fundamentally, empirical data further points to the grey areas between the linkages that exist among universities, environmental institutions and environmental action needs in Zambia. Focusing on the required capabilities for students and graduates to be agents for environmental sustainability, emerging data shows that various conversion factors (e.g curriculum, pedagogy, policy structures, context and individual based factors) influence the outcomes of EE and are unique yet similar for these individuals. These conversion factors point to the different aspects that shape students' and graduates' realities prior to, during and after their EE higher education experience. Therefore, drawing on the empirical findings, environmental literature and the capability approach, this study proposes a capability-based approach to environmental education for environmental sustainability agency. The study argues for an EE that prompts individual and collective efforts towards altruistic and biospheric values needed for actualising environmental sustainability. Notions of practicability, applicability and practicality of EE emerge as vital for advancing environmental sustainability. Thus, this study is relevant in rethinking the significance of why and how EE can and should be designed to address contextually relevant environmental issues; through skills and experiences that inherently transform and widen freedoms for individuals to thrive in and beyond the university walls towards sustainability. It further prompts for

contextually relevant practices and tools towards the applicability of what is learnt into responding, solving and curbing current and future environmental problems based on individual aspirations, unique socioeconomic and geographic contexts.

Chimwemwe Phiri

University community partnerships for climate change adaptation in Malawi: a human development perspective

Although higher education can play a catalytic role in the attainment of Sustainable Development Goal 13 (climate action), there is less attention given to the role of universities in achieving climate adaptation through partnerships with local communities. In the Malawian context, universities have been credited for partnering with local communities as a pathway towards designing context-specific climate adaptation strategies. For instance, five of the six universities in Malawi are recognised by the government as actively engaged in climate change mitigation and adaptation initiatives. However, despite these partnerships, there is a lack of evidence on what they look like in practice, what they can achieve, and whether they create an enabling environment for advancing strategies that are driven by local communities and that advance community well-being. Community well-being is conceptualised from a human development perspective as the ultimate goal of development, where communities can be or do what they value in order to flourish. Drawing from the human development paradigm, this study investigates how universities contribute to improving vulnerable communities' adaptation to climate change in Malawi through university-community partnerships. Data from this qualitatively-designed case study of Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources in Malawi was collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. University lecturers (10), support staff (2), third-year students (10), community members (18), policymakers (4) and climate change experts (2) participated in this study.

The findings show that university-community partnerships in Malawi, and in Africa more broadly, have the potential to positively influence how global development challenges such as climate change are defined, understood, and addressed in ways that are contextually sensitive. The findings also offer contrasting and critical views, suggesting that while partnerships can enhance sustainable community well-being, they seldom achieve this. This is because partnerships can stimulate innovative ideas for adaptation strategies and capacitate university and community members to broaden opportunities for generating income and to widen their skill set for addressing climate change, but they do not offer adequate space for bottom-up initiatives or allow for inclusive decision-making. These partnerships also tend to advance university interests at the expense of creating more equitable outcomes for local communities. Thus, the study considers what university-community partnerships might look like if they were to be more inclusive and equitable. It identifies four key dimensions of a human development-centred framework: 1) equitable relationships; 2) inclusive decision-making; 3) streamlining resource efficiency; and 4) sustainable community well-being. The study further makes a case for harnessing the role of bounded agency across the four dimensions, as structural and institutional arrangements can affect the interplay of individual motivations for undertaking interventions. Drawing from this framework, implications for the initiation and implementation of future university-community partnerships in sub-Saharan Africa are considered.

STUDENT TRAJECTORIES

Talita Calitz

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 and 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.

Fenella Somerville

Capabilities for Media Graduate Employability: the Case of Private Higher Education

Higher education in South Africa faces a challenge of increasing numbers of unemployed graduates. Increased access to higher education and private higher education, together with policy commitments to equal opportunities, have wielded a promise that higher education offers a better future for graduates. And yet, research on graduate destinations shows persistent inequalities in employment outcomes. Graduate employability is a rapidly growing field of research worldwide in the context of a global knowledge economy, drawing a direct link between education, employment and economic growth. South African studies on graduate employment have concentrated primarily on public universities, with a strong focus on the transition of final year students into the workplace. This study focuses on graduates from private higher education institutions who have been in the workplace for between one and five years. Using a human development and capability approach, the thesis confronts the human capital approach to employability. Using a mixed methods sequential exploratory design within a transformative paradigm the project explores the employment experiences of media graduates from three private higher education institutions in South Africa. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 21 media graduates, four key informants from the institutions, and six media employers, providing multiple perspectives to address the main research question: *how does private higher education contribute to enhancing equitable opportunities for media graduate employability and well-being?* Subsequently, an electronic survey was conducted with media graduates ($n=2,746$) to get an expanded understanding of what graduates value, and the factors that enable and/or constrain their participation in the workplace. Graduate employability is shaped by the capabilities developed in higher education, and mobilised in graduates' functionings in the labour market. Through the use of an enrolment-employment typology matrix, the findings show how the choices and opportunities of higher education intersect with personal biographies and social structures to be unequally realised in employment outcomes for different individuals. Nonetheless, there is variation in students' agency responses and the capabilities they are able to mobilise, shaped but not overly determined by their backgrounds. Consequently, shifts are needed in private higher education to develop significant capabilities more explicitly for graduates to develop the agility to navigate their way, and shape what they are able to do, be and become in the media industry.

Oliver Gore

Students' experiences of and perspectives on (dis)advantage: a case study at a South African university

This study explores the perceptions, understandings and experiences of (dis)advantage amongst students in higher education. The context is one where inequalities and inequity of outcomes in higher education persist, despite the South African government introducing policy that seeks to address the social injustices brought about by previous apartheid policies. Specifically, higher education policy has conceptualised inequalities under the concept of historic 'disadvantage'

that is primarily race-based. Nonetheless, various interventions that target increasing enrolment, student funding and student academic development etc. have not translated into equal student success and outcomes in higher education. Drawing from the capabilities approach, the study investigates the evidence of ‘well-being freedoms’ [capabilities], ‘well-being achievements’ [functionings], and agency in order to examine whether and to what extent higher education provides opportunities to all students to succeed. The normative position taken is that advantage occurs when students have wide freedoms (real opportunities) and agency to decide and to achieve the educational, economic and social goals of higher education, including academic success, economic opportunities, personal development, and preparation for good citizenship. It is argued that students with a wider capability set and agency to convert resources into educational achievements are advantaged, and the narrower the capability set, the more disadvantaged they are. A qualitative case study was conducted at one mid ranking research and teaching university in South Africa. 26 in-depth interviews were conducted with final year and honours students from the Faculties of Economics and Management Sciences, Education, The Humanities, and Natural and Agricultural Sciences. Additional interviews were conducted with seven key informants, who included four university staff members and three student representative council members. What emerged is that dimensions of advantage and disadvantage between black and white students are more complicated than one might expect. For example, low income black students have personal, navigational, resilience and aspirational resources that have enabled them to successfully complete their undergraduate studies although with lower degree grades compared to white students. They have commitments to relationships and the good lives of others, which is less evident among well-off students. Undoubtedly, however, material well-being is a key factor constraining educational well-being. The findings also demonstrate that the capability approach provides a robust framework for evaluating student (dis)advantage through its multidimensionality, which offers flexible spaces to establish how the different dimensions of (dis)advantage interact together. The original contribution of this study is the use of the capability approach in understanding students’ (dis)advantage in the South African context, and the development of capability-inspired dimensions of (dis)advantage. `

Kurauone Masungu

Social media activism: A case study of student voices and participation at a South African university

The study focuses on issues of social justice and its importance in the South African higher education space. Specifically the study considers the significance of the university as a transformative democratic space for the development and enhancement of students’ political capabilities. Using the vehicle of student activism, particularly but not only social media student activism, the research aimed to understand student perspectives and experiences for an account of the potential of such activism in the enhancement of valuable political freedoms and transformative change. Social media is both claimed to promote political participation and deliberations, and on the other hand, criticised as failing to influence real policy change. Work on social media student activism in South African higher education, has also highlighted the need for a theoretical explanation and analysis in the face of contested views. Drawing on recent events in South African higher education institutions, which saw a resurgence of student protests organised on social media and in-person, a qualitative case study was undertaken at the University of the Free State. Volunteer students from the SRC, activist organisers as leaders and student-participants were asked how they understand activism and its purposes, institutional staff members with knowledge of student governance were interviewed to obtain a university perspective. Unexpectedly, given the study’s initial focus on social media activism, findings

indicate the centrality and the potential rather of face-to-face activism to bring about transformational change within the university space, even though social media played an important role in informing and organising students. Importantly, evidence points towards an understanding of student activism as enhancing students' opportunities to raise their concerns and express their voices as a collective, and to form their political capabilities. These political capabilities emerged as a key focus for the interpretation of interview data. By political capabilities the study refers to freedoms to express one's political ideas and engage in protests, and these include the capability to participate, capability of dialogue, capability for practical reasoning, capability for voice, capability for emotional expression, capability for contextual knowledge and capability for physical wellbeing. Across the three groups of students a similar political capabilities set emerged as valuable, although formed in slightly different ways across the three groups. The expansion of political capabilities was found to enhance the development of a meta-capability to transform, dependent on the development of other capabilities. Moreover, political capabilities were collective capabilities, that is capabilities formed through interaction in and within a group. The study further considered the intersectionality of conversion factors and processes which work to enable or constrain political participation by students. Finally, the role played by agency in student activism is discussed. Working together, these factors of a political capabilities set, working collectively for transformation, conversion factors and agency shape higher education as a potentially transformative political space despite the obstacles, and which can contribute to more democracy and greater justice in the university.

Anesu Ruswa

Multi-dimensional student poverty at a South African university: a capabilities approach

The thesis contributes to work in the conceptualisation and measurement of multidimensional student poverty in South Africa through exploring and measuring multidimensional student poverty at one South African university. Although a number of studies have examined student poverty in South Africa, very few have done so using a multidimensional theoretical approach backed by a socially just and reflexive methodology. The study weighed the merits of various approaches to multidimensional poverty and advocates for the human development approach, operationalised through the capabilities approach, as the most socially just theoretical lens through which student poverty can be conceptualised and measured. One of the main objectives of the study is to design a multidimensional student poverty index based on the understandings and experiences of students at a South African university. To that end, the study adopted and adapted the Alkire-Foster methodology, augmented with the Individual Deprivation Measure, thereby making a methodological contribution through the designing and implementation of a hybrid method. An exploratory sequential mixed methods inquiry was used in the data collection, data analysis and results theorisation phases of the research. Qualitative data was collected through iterative in-depth key informant interviews (three informants interviewed twice each) and four independent rounds of guided focus groups comprising thirty-two students (eight students in each of the three initial groups, and eight in the final follow-up focus group). Participatory methods were employed to determine dimensions of student poverty. Five broad dimensions and twenty-five indicators of student deprivations were identified from the data. The dimensions of deprivations identified are basic needs, resources, living arrangements, participation and personal wellbeing. The qualitative data was analysed using Nvivo software and the results informed the design of the survey questionnaire, which was administered online and by means of hard copies at a South African university using Evasys, which is an electronic survey management platform. Two thousand three hundred and six (2306) students completed the survey. STATA, R, MS-VBA, and SPSS statistical software was used to analyse the quantitative data. Over and above the results showing the incidence and intensity of student poverty, an

aggregate as well as sub-group decomposed multidimensional student poverty index and indices were presented. Multiple statistical and robustness tests were also carried out to test the validity of the index. The study shows that about 18% of the all students at the case study university are multidimensionally poor. More so, male students, students on the government-funded National Students Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), and off-campus students have the highest incidences of multidimensional poverty. The mixed methods and hybrid methodology advanced in this study offers more value than purely qualitative or quantitative techniques as it captures both the depth and breadth of student poverty. Beyond making a contribution to how multidimensional student poverty can be measured, the study makes a significant contribution to how student poverty is conceptualised and understood in general, thereby giving policy makers a different frame through which to find normative solutions to the challenge of student poverty.

Faith Mkwanzani

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.

Edward Mboyonga

The Role of Private Universities in Widening Access and Expanding Students' Capabilities in Zambia

Although many countries recognise the centrality of higher education in steering development, most higher education systems in sub-Saharan Africa grapple with inadequate funding and limited infrastructure in public universities to meet the social demand for university admissions. As a practical alternative to increase access, the private higher education sector has emerged and is now the fastest growing segment in the higher education systems of many African countries, Zambia included. Currently, Zambia has 53 private and 9 public universities. Despite the unprecedented growth in the number of private higher education institutions, there is a lack of scholarly data on the opportunities for access to private universities offered to Zambian students and how such opportunities may transform students' lives through acquisition of valued capabilities. In addressing this empirical gap, this research explored the role of private universities in widening access and expanding student capabilities by engaging views of university staff (14) and undergraduate students (28) from two case study institutions, as well as one official from the Higher Education Authority. Specifically, qualitative methods (semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, document reviews and observations) were used in generating data from multiple stakeholders and sources. Theoretically situated within the capability approach, the study argued for the rethinking of access to higher education beyond mere entry into universities (physical access) towards access to transformative knowledge (epistemological access) as a means to promote people's freedom to achieve well-being.

The findings show that private universities enhance opportunities for accessing higher education in Zambia by having flexible admission policies, providing financial support and low tuition fees, meeting students' differentiated demands in higher education and establishing satellite campuses in rural provinces. Having formal access opens up opportunities for students to engage with bodies of knowledge produced in universities, which can advance equitable access outcomes and opportunities through acquisition of valued capabilities. The study further identified six key capabilities and functionings valued by students in Zambian private universities. These six capabilities include epistemological access; epistemic contribution;

aspiration; recognition, respect and belonging; Ubuntu; and employability. The capabilities presented in this study are not fixed but can be opened up for further scrutiny and revision in future research. However, the study also showed that acquisitions of these capabilities are shaped by various factors within the learning institutions and beyond that constrain academic resource conversion into equal participation.

Andrew Nkhoma

Youths' aspirations and experiences of alternative higher education programmes in Malawi

In Malawi, less than 1% of secondary school graduates enrol in some form of tertiary education and, due to limited infrastructure and facilities in Malawian universities, up to 60% of eligible candidates may not be accepted into universities. Despite efforts to improve this situation, Malawi struggles to provide access to higher education and universities to its growing youth population. Scholars argue that alternative forms of higher education and training can help address this challenge, but there is a scarcity of empirical data on the nature, quality, operationalisation, and impact of alternative higher education pathways in Malawi. Employing the capabilities approach as a conceptual framework, this study critically explores the alternative higher education pathways offered through a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) in Malawi. The study investigates whether the knowledge and skills gained through the programmes offered by the NGO align with youth aspirations, prepare youth to live meaningful lives that they have a reason to value, and enhance their well-being. The research takes the form of a qualitative case study, drawing on the views of 24 youths (expressed in group interviews and individual in-depth interviews) and nine staff members (through semi-structured interviews) from a faith-based NGO that offers skills and vocational training to marginalised youth. The findings show that the programmes offered by the NGO can foster capability achievement if designed with the awareness of the conversion factors that constrain and enable youths' aspirations and capabilities for employability; access to post-school training; occupational knowledge; care for others, and bodily integrity. The findings also reveal the complexities and limitations of the educational interventions offered by the faith-based NGO, thus demonstrating the importance and challenges of providing diverse pathways to skills development and capability formation in the higher education space, particularly in contexts where access to mainstream institutions such as universities is limited and provides few opportunities for aspiration and well-being achievement among marginalised youth.

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 study 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 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.

Sophia Matenda

The role of technical and vocational education and training in women's empowerment: a capabilities perspective

The Department of Higher Education and Training in South Africa has conceptualised Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) as transformative and developmental in addressing unemployment, inequality and poverty (DHET, 2012). Priority has been placed on increasing access to this form of post-school education and more women have been enrolled in the predominantly male fields such as engineering studies. It is therefore vital from a social justice perspective to analyse whether engineering education is able to enhance the opportunities and freedoms that women students have reason to value. The study uses the capability approach for analysis to understand the experiences of women students in and through TVET education. The study acknowledges the importance of the economic and monetary benefits of education but argues that this is not sufficient. Such an analysis will lead to an

understanding of the constraints and facilitators for the women students as they experience TVET education. The study is a qualitative feminist study. Information was gathered through in-depth interviews with 14 women students studying engineering at a TVET college, four lecturers at the same institution and the Principal.

Findings from this study show that while the South African government has been supporting the TVET sector through increased funding and improved infrastructure as well as staff training, TVET still needs to be embraced as a viable post-school system by many South Africans. From the sample of women participants in this study, none of them initially wanted to enrol at a TVET college. They ended up opting for TVET due to several constraints such as poor passes, inability to afford university education and some had dropped out of university for various reasons. An examination of the experiences of women students revealed various challenges as well. These range from sexist comments from lecturers, feelings of alienation, sexual harassment, too much workload and inability to actively participate in the learning environment. All these are the conversion factors that end up affecting the conversion of resources into valued functionings for the women students. Evidence from this study therefore points to more constraints that characterise the experiences of women students studying engineering at a TVET college. Informed by the capabilities approach, I came up with a list of eight capabilities valued by the women students studying engineering at a TVET college. From the conversion factors, that affect the well-being of students, the study recommends TVET education that fosters various capabilities for women engineering students. This way, both students' well-being and women's empowerment might be promoted through TVET education. Findings from this study will help in the understanding of women students' experiences at a TVET college and may assist in the promotion of multidimensional education to foster the lives that women students have reason to value. By so doing, women's empowerment through TVET education can be promoted.

Thandi Lewin

Early career women academics: A case study of working lives in a gendered institution

This study was informed by my interest in a set of inter-related policy concerns about the academic profession in South Africa. Academic staff in South African universities remain predominantly white and male at senior levels, the pace of demographic change has been slow, and not enough young people are choosing academic careers and being retained in academic jobs. Women, and black women in particular, are significantly under-represented in the professoriate. The imperatives for change in South African higher education in the post-apartheid era have been linked both to social justice demands for a more equitable, representative and transformed system, as well as global pressures for more accountable, productive and competitive universities. Despite progressive policy frameworks, South African universities retain highly gendered and racialised institutional cultures, which create constraints for academic staff in building academic careers. However, policy has limitations, and deeper exploration is needed to understand gender inequity. There is a dearth of research on the working lives of academics in the South African academy, in particular on the experiences of early career academics and women in the early career.

This study explored the working lives of a small group of early career academic women in one faculty at one institution through narrative research, informed by the following research questions: 1) How does gender impact on academic working lives, career development choices and professional identities of selected early career academic women? 2) How do early career academic women understand, experience and mediate gendered institutional environments and how does this affect their professional functioning and agency? 3) What does this reveal

about why gender inequalities persist in universities?

This study used a combination of feminist theorisation about organisations and the capability approach as a framework for analysis. Institutions are gendered in multi-dimensional ways and this impacts profoundly on academic lives and career trajectories. Gendered institutions affect the everyday experiences of academic women. Gender is implicated in the way institutions are structured and how they operate. Job structures, expectations and workloads are gendered. Gendered everyday interactions (which can be both overt and invisible) and individuals' own gendered socialisation, influence how women navigate academic working lives. All these factors affect how early career academic women form professional academic identities and what kinds of career trajectories they follow. While academic careers emerge as multi-dimensional, systems of recognition are relatively one-dimensional. Experiences are diverse – some academics are able to successfully navigate institutions and achieve well-being- while others struggle to achieve a sense of stability. The capability approach offered a normative social justice framing of the data, allowing for an exploration of individual experiences. It highlighted valued aspects of working lives, explored constraints and enabling factors, and ultimately arrived at a set of contextual and multi-dimensional valued capability dimensions. From the narratives and engagement with other capability sets, five capability dimensions emerged, based on the valued and aspirational functionings of the nine participants:

- navigation: to be able to navigate academic life successfully;
- recognition: to be able to be recognised and valued for one's academic work;
- autonomy: to be able to achieve professional autonomy;
- affiliation: to be able to participate in social and professional networks; and
- aspiration: to be able to aspire to a professional academic career.

The usefulness of these five dimensions is that they provide a way of understanding what kinds of careers early career academic women want, and therefore suggest ways in which institutions can reduce institutional barriers and enhance opportunities for career development and well-being.

Monique Kwachou

Cameroonian women's empowerment through higher education: an African-feminist and Capability Approach

The concerted efforts of scholars, development agents and governments have established the idea that education is both intrinsically and instrumentally good, life-changing, has direct returns, and is particularly empowering for women. The cumulation of these ideas has resulted in the development of societal assumptions that an educated woman is an empowered woman, and the more educated a woman is, the more empowered she will be. In Cameroon this assumption has bred some antagonism directed at 'over-educated' women on account of their presumed empowerment. The commonplace use of the Pidgin-English phrase 'too much book' or French-slang epithet 'long crayon' are often directed at higher-educated women to suggest their being educated is to their detriment. These expressions demonstrate the belief that a certain level of education is deemed sufficiently empowering for women in Cameroon and they risk becoming "too much" if they proceed further. In this way, education for women in Cameroon is seen as acceptable and adding value up to graduate level, at which point it succumbs to a law of diminishing returns.

Thus the widespread assumption of higher education being sufficiently empowering for Cameroonian women generates two problems: 1) it promotes the limitation of young women's aspirations and, 2) advances an incomplete informational basis for government (and public) judgement of higher education as a response to Cameroonian women's oppressions.

In response to this problematic assumption of women's empowerment through higher education and the corresponding fear of higher-educated Cameroonian women, this study offers a two-pronged approach. It presents both a theoretical and empirical re-conceptualization of empowerment for women in the Cameroonian context, from which assessments are made as to whether the women of whom empowered is assumed can consider themselves and be considered as empowered based on their higher education. The theoretical re-conceptualization of empowerment here is effected by an original Capabilitarian application- the African-feminist Capability Approach- developed in the course of the research to address inadequacies in existing frames for the conceptualization and investigation of empowerment in African contexts. The empirical re-conceptualization is the product of engaging the sample of 20 Cameroonian women graduate students in individual life-story interviews and a participatory analysis workshop befitting of a participatory narrative inquiry. The data - which is presented and analysed sequentially by way of narrative analysis and analysis-of-narratives - suggests that the assumption of Cameroonian women's empowerment through higher education is a misconception as the higher education offered to these women lacks the capacity to adequately address the empowerment needs of these women in the face of their multivariate oppressions. The study's findings point to: the conditionality of higher education's potential for women's empowerment; the need for examining intersections in evaluations of African women's empowerment; and the ways that Cameroon's higher education can be improved to better enable the plural aspects of empowerment which Cameroonian women have reason to value.

Oliver Mutanga

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. I argue 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 capabilities 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?
5. What implications can be drawn for disability policy to enhance social justice in higher education?

As a result of the historical trajectories that still influence the present-day state of SAHE, two universities with different historical and cultural backgrounds were selected. UFS is a historically-advantaged urban-based white Afrikaans university. It has gone through the processes of major transformation in recent years. By contrast, UniVen is a historically-disadvantaged rural-based university. It was established under apartheid policy to serve the African black community. Officially, it reports the highest number of disabled students in SAHE.

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 in this qualitative study 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. In order to get a comprehensive understanding of relevant issues, I spent a day with one participant at each university, in their setting from residence to the classes. I was able to determine how the students interact with their peers, what happens in classrooms and in their places of residence. Furthermore, some 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) 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, some 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

Ndakaitei Manase

Narratives of capability formation for students with learning disabilities at a South African university

Students with learning disabilities who undertake academic tasks without support have a high risk of failing and dropping out of university. Universities, internationally and in South Africa aim to create equal opportunities for students with disabilities by offering disability support. The common disability support available to students with learning disabilities is adjusted assessment conditions which are generally recognised to be instrumental in promoting academic performance since learning disabilities can affect the ability of a student to successfully complete his or her studies. These adjusted assessment conditions have proved to have a positive effect on students' academic trajectories as students progress well in their studies because the adjusted environment enables them to demonstrate their abilities fully. The Social Model of Disability that emphasises the removal of barriers to students' university engagements informs university responses to disabilities. This study argues that even though these adjustments to assessments enable students to articulate assessments well or expand students' capabilities, they pathologise students with learning disabilities. They sustain students' condition of disability where students' academic success can depend on special arrangements. Besides, understanding disability services as *support* for students to perform well academically can perpetuate inflexible university systems and forces students with disabilities to conform and contend with normalised learning and assessment systems and conditions that disadvantage them.

The study further argues that framing disability response actions within the Social Model of Disability constitutes an overly narrow approach if these actions only serve the purpose of enabling students with learning disabilities to succeed academically through good grades. Adjusted assessment conditions that the Social Model recognises, also do not prepare students to function well in a system with no adjustments. The Capability Approach that I use to complement the Social Model of Disability regards each student as a subject of justice and encourages practical opportunities (capabilities) that contribute to students' wellbeing (that is not limited to academic performance). Learning arrangements from a Capability Approach perspective would encourage the transformation of the education system to be inclusive for all and discourage separate adjusted conditions for students with learning disabilities. The Capability Approach encourages a university to expand students' capability sets or to avail a range of opportunities to function well towards the achievement of what they have reason to value in and through university education. This study therefore explores ways in which a university can contribute to the formation of students' capabilities, drawing from the narratives of fifteen students with learning disabilities at the University of the Free State. Students' narratives are complemented by semi-structured interviews conducted with five support staff, eight lecturers, and the review of ten university policy documents aligned to disabilities and teaching and learning. Nine capabilities were deductively identified from students' narratives. Five of these (capability to display full potential, capability for confidence, capability to aspire, capability for care, imagination and empathy, and capability for emotional integrity) are associated with disability services and four (capability for professional and self-knowledge,

capability for economic opportunities, capability for resilience and capability for affiliation) with experiencing university in general. The capabilities illustrate how university arrangements affect the academic engagements of students with learning disabilities. The study concludes that even though the adjusted assessment conditions pathologise students with learning disabilities, they simultaneously enhance students' capabilities.

Carmen Martinez-Vargas

Democratic Capabilities Research: an undergraduate experience to advance socially just higher education in South Africa

Universities are complex institutions that need to be in constant questioning and iteration to improve and serve the larger society. Nevertheless, the latest protests in the South African higher education institutions are a sign of challenging times. Protests have recognised the perpetuation of inequalities and the need to decolonise institutions. Furthermore, this debate has been ongoing within academia for decades, looking for ways to confront the colonial issues, especially in the area of knowledge production, investigating how knowledge is produced and distributed within the dominant system. Many of these concerns are related to European-Western domination over other ways of producing knowledge, jeopardising the wide range of knowledge systems in the world. This highlights the substantial importance of scrutinising how we create knowledge as scholars and how we can advance towards social justice by overcoming these persistent challenges, especially within higher education institutions in the Global South.

Participatory methods, methodologies, and research processes are part of this internal intellectual project within higher education institutions trying to challenge the persistence of colonial issues. This field has developed into a fruitful and legitimate research area awash with a diversity of theoretical and practical insights, not only related to decolonisation and knowledge democratisation, but also focusing on action and participation. Nevertheless, the result has been a very diverse field that pervasively embraces various theoretical and practical perspectives, often contradictory, leading to theoretical and practical inconsistencies, incongruences and contradictions.

To take up this challenge, the Capabilities Approach proposes a theoretical space to reflect and reconsider epistemological, methodological and operational issues, providing a solid people-centred theoretical frame. Moreover, participatory methods, methodologies, and research processes, have been drawing on capabilities lenses in multiple development and educational interventions. Nonetheless, this capabilities research area is still under-researched and is far from having reached its full potential. Scholars within the capabilities sphere have not yet achieved a consensual proposal such as a participatory capabilities-based research. Thus, the research questions that guided this study were: How can a participatory capabilities-based research project be conceptualised and implemented in the light of the CA and participatory approaches towards socially just higher education, given the academic gap between both fields and incongruences within participatory approaches? Which opportunities, challenges and lessons with regard to social justice and capabilities expansion emerge from a participatory capabilities-based case study with undergraduate students in South Africa towards socially-just higher education? Which capabilities do these undergraduate students have reason to value and why? Which of these capabilities are being expanded through the involvement in a participatory capabilities-based case study experience?

This project innovatively conceptualises and applies this participatory capabilities-based research as 'Democratic Capabilities Research' (DCR). It outlines DCR as a reflexive and

pedagogical space to advance more just practices, especially in the context of hierarchical knowledge practices in universities in the South, and the marginalisation of youth voices in knowledge production. The ambition is to both generate democratic and inclusive knowledge creation and advance social justice, through the theorisation and empirical exploration of a DCR case study in South Africa.

Therefore, the methodology used for this research was a case study of a DCR participatory research project. This case study not only investigates the application of a DCR project but also its production throughout the project as a research outcome. The case study was developed and implemented at a previously historically advantaged Afrikaans-speaking research and teaching university in South Africa. A group of twelve volunteer undergraduate students worked as co-researchers with the doctoral research fellow over one academic year. In the process, they challenged persistent institutional hierarchies and their marginal position in university structures of knowledge production. Multiple data sources were collected over the year (2017), including individual interviews at three different stages of the DCR project, personal journals produced by each of the co-researchers and the researcher, and participant observation over the nine DCR workshops. In undertaking the case study, the project also confronted the dilemma around legitimate knowledge and legitimate forms of knowledge production. Thus, the study had to deal with the tensions of non-ideal research settings, and between producing a doctoral study and the actual practices of DCR, and how these 'legs' of the research both go together, yet are separate.

The study shows that a participatory capabilities-based conceptualisation of a participatory research can challenge and resolve some of the actual limitations within the broad family of participatory approaches. Thus, the study presents five foundational principles for DCR to guide participatory practices. Furthermore, the study reveals that capabilities are rich sources of information to design and evaluate participatory projects such as DCR. However, the capabilities chosen to guide us should be valued capabilities by the participants and not generic capabilities lists, such as Nussbaum's central capabilities. The findings show that valued capabilities are dynamic, latent and contextual and therefore we have good reasons to explore these specificities in order to orient our DCR participatory practice in the direction of the lives the participants have reasons to value.

Additionally, the findings highlight the impact of using individual valued capabilities as evaluative frames. Presenting two student cases from among the twelve participants, the data shows that getting to know the participants before our participatory practices, understanding the way they enjoy their capabilities before the project commences, can enhance the way we assess our DCR practice by exploring functionings among their valued capabilities. In this way, the evaluative space is expanded and avoids previous paternalist frames directing our practices towards the lives the participants want to lead. Moreover, as DCR goes beyond capabilities expansion and achievement, the theorisation of DCR is presented and revised after the empirical data has been analysed in order to review the five initial principles guiding us in our capabilities-based participatory practice.

The significance of this study is based on an unexplored research area linking capabilities with participatory research practices. Furthermore, the study intentionally uses an open-ended perspective of the CA that highlights its potential as a grassroots approach to provide an original and locally related research alternative in the form of DCR, towards a more just, decolonial and democratic way of knowledge creation within Global South higher education institutions.

CURRICULUM & PEDAGOGIES - CLASSROOM, CAMPUS & COMMUNITY SPACES

Judith Sikala

An analysis of Education 5.0 policy to advance human development: A case study of one Zimbabwean public university

This study aims to critically analyse the Education 5.0 policy as a mechanism for advancing or constraining human development among students and staff in teaching and learning at one Zimbabwean public university. Education 5.0 policy was introduced in Zimbabwean higher education in 2019 to boost graduate employment opportunities (entrepreneurship) to alleviate poverty for national economic development. Education 5.0 policy strongly emphasises innovation and industrialisation in universities, producing goods and services, focusing on science and technology but with minimal emphasis on education in a broader and more holistic sense. This approach has generated debate from HE scholars, who have provided a more expansive interpretation of the value of HE, which moves beyond the economic dimensions to include values such as well-being, participation, equity, empowerment, sustainability, and efficiency (see Boni & Walker, 2016, 2013). Based on these debates, further research needs to be done to understand the policy's potential to constrain or enhance students' and staff's capabilities in teaching and learning. Nevertheless, the study acknowledges the importance of knowledge and skills for students to enhance their economic well-being. At the same time, the study evaluates whether or how the economic growth aspect prioritised in the policy is achieved for students' future access to decent livelihoods, a precursor for human development.

The secondary objectives of the study are to:

- *analyse how the Education 5.0 policy constrains/enables opportunities and freedoms for human development among students and staff in teaching and learning at one Zimbabwean university.*
- *examine how the economic outcomes emphasised in Ed5.0 policy are taken up in teaching and learning at one Zimbabwean university for students' future access to decent livelihoods.*
- *assess the conversion factors and processes that enable or constrain the advancement of the five human development values and students' and staff's freedoms in Ed5.0 policy implementation at one Zimbabwean university.*
- *conceptualise a 21st-century human development-focused university in a context such as Zimbabwe.*

The study employed the qualitative approach. I interviewed 58 participants (6 key informants, 11 lecturers, and 41 final year students [21 interviews and 20 for three focus group discussions], which I purposively sampled from three selected distinct university faculties (Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences and Engineering and Geosciences). Education 5.0 policy documents were also analysed to set the scene to understand students' and staff's voices on the public good role of higher education in Zimbabwe as argued in the problem statement.

Findings suggest that although the Education 5.0 policy has the potential to boost employment opportunities in Zimbabwe, there is little progress in implementing the policy due to a lack of financial, human, technological, and material resources exacerbated by the country's economic limitations. Students and staff feel there is a disconnect between lived experiences and policy expectations. For example, students and lecturers had no experience producing goods, yet practical innovative [ideas] and industrialisation expertise formed part of their teaching and learning expectations. Some students and staff value the Education 5.0 policy as having the potential to create future economic outcomes for their decent livelihoods. However, those from the Arts and Social Science disciplines do not see the benefits associated with the policy. As evidenced in the empirical findings, emphasis must be placed on holistic teaching and learning processes that promote economic, political and social freedoms rather than emphasising one dimension only. This is particularly important, considering a 21st-century human development-focused university that should go beyond innovation and industrialisation to promote students' social and political freedoms and opportunities for critical citizenship.

Moffat Machiwenyika

Student and staff perceptions of decolonisation at two South African universities: a capabilities analysis

Although the topic of decolonisation, as a concept and as a process, has been widely debated in the media and in academic circles around the world, it remains a highly contested issue, due to its complexity. In South Africa, it has been adopted widely in higher education transformation discourses, but there is no consensus on its meaning, or on how it can be implemented and measured. A central question asked in this study was why and how individuals would value decolonisation, and what we can learn if we ask staff members and students about the concept and its connection with their aspirations for the future of higher education in Africa. Through a qualitative design, a non-representative sample of 44 participants (university students and staff members) from two diverse universities in South Africa (one historically disadvantaged, the other historically advantaged) were interviewed. The data were coded and analysed thematically using Amartya Sen's capability approach as an interpretive framework.

The findings indicate six capabilities and functionings that are valued by students and staff:

- The capability to participate in decolonisation processes;
- The capability to decolonise through competent and confident use of language;
- The capability to participate in dialogue and public deliberation that facilitates decolonisation;
- The capability for recognition, respect, inclusion, and belonging in decolonised institutions; and
- The capability for decolonisation through epistemic contribution and engagement in local and global bodies of knowledge.

The capability approach was adopted because it provides an expansive vocabulary and conceptual tools for exploring the inequalities individuals experience in relation to their positionalities in the world, and within institutions; because it encourages questions about the effective freedoms and opportunities that individuals value in higher education settings, for themselves and for others. By foregrounding a capabilities analysis of descriptions and experiences of decolonisation, a new way of operationalising the way to transform universities is proposed, focusing on human development – the enhancement of individuals' well-being, and

valued freedoms. The study, therefore, makes a novel contribution to literature and the debate on decolonisation, both conceptually and empirically.

Tendayi Marovah

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.

Patience Mukwambo

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.

Ntimi Mtawa

Exploring the Role of Service-learning in Human Development: Perspectives of Staff, Students and Community Members

Higher education institutions (HEIs) and particularly universities are increasingly being linked to debates about development. This perspective is dominated by two schools of thought. On the one hand, universities are positioned as drivers of individuals' and nations' economic development. On the other hand, apart from an economic focus, there is an emerging discourse that calls upon universities to advance broader human development. The study is premised on two arguments. One, the overemphasis on economic imperatives of universities undermines and neglects their social values related to human development. Two, in the scholarly works focusing on universities and human development, more work focusing on specific and concrete strategies that can enable universities to promote such notions of development is needed. This study builds on and contributes to the universities and human development debate by arguing that service-learning (SL) has great potential and some challenges to enable universities to promote human development.

Traditionally, SL is positioned as a mechanism through which universities could achieve both educational and social purposes. These purposes include, among other things, enhancing

pedagogical practices, fostering citizenship capacities, advancing social justice and developing civic-minded graduates. Generally, these purposes frame SL as a potential contributor to human development within and beyond universities' boundaries. However, in spite of these potentials, SL is understudied and often its values are assessed in relation to students' academic credentials and personal development, with less attention to benefits for communities. In response to these gaps in universities and human development perspectives and the SL field, the study explores the role of SL in human development from the perspectives of university lecturers, students and external community members. The study is guided by a central research question that focuses on the contribution of SL to human development.

The study is situated within the interpretivist paradigms, in which qualitative methods are employed to explore the perspectives of staff, students and community members on SL. The study collected qualitative data using document analysis, in-depth interviews, focus groups and observations.

The study integrated the Human Development (HD) and Capability Approach (CA) advanced by Mahbub ul Haq, Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, and the notions of Participatory Parity, Transformative and Affirmative remedies of Nancy Fraser, as conceptual and theoretical frameworks. Both HD and CA were used to analyse and theorise the role of SL in enhancing capabilities and promoting human development. Based on these frameworks, I argue that SL can enhance capabilities and promote human development values. However, to do this, its design and implementation ought to be foregrounded in procedural principles for human development such as agency, empowerment, participation and sustainability.

The outcomes of the analysis is a CA- and HD-informed framework for SL, in which I propose capabilities and HD values as a response to SL design and implementation in the direction of human development. The dominant capabilities suggested by students, community members and lecturers include *multi-layered affiliation, narrative imagination, local citizenship, critical thinking/reflection, learning, knowledge and skills, capacity to aspire, public good-related professional capabilities, and citizenship capacities formation*.

The human development values and related processes include *inclusive and active participation, a sense of empowerment and agency, enhanced sustainability, diversity literacy, space for deliberation, participatory parity, and reasoning, and advancing partial (remediable) justice*. However, promoting these HD values and related processes in and through SL faces a number of conundrums and tensions.

HD and CA frame SL into two spectrums. At one end, they conceptualise SL as a strategy through which universities can advance public good and human development of the communities in which they are located. At the other, HD and CA enable us to interrogate the unexamined discourses of power and privilege, which act as barriers to transformative potentials of SL. I conclude the theorisation of the study with a proposed expansive SL framework that could enable the modification and improvement of SL in the interest of promoting social justice in a grassroots and empowering fashion.

Bothwell Manyonga

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.

Mikateko Mathebula

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

Most literature on higher education and engineering education in particular, is based on data gathered from the global North, written from global North perspectives. Comparatively few studies focus on normative accounts of education for sustainable development based on data from developing countries, and written from global South perspectives. While there is value in exploring views from different contexts separately, what is original and significant about the work

of this thesis is the examination of these perspectives together, combining a normative approach with original empirical work, and recognising that they are different outlooks on the same issue: how engineering education in universities contributes to sustainable human development. Instead of dichotomising global North/South perspectives, the thesis combines the views of individuals whose teaching and learning, higher education and/or professional careers in engineering have taken place in the global North (Germany) and global South (South Africa) for its empirical base. Specifically, the viewpoints of 18 masters students and 10 lecturers from engineering faculties at Universität Bremen (Germany) and the University of Cape Town (South Africa), as well as 10 engineering employers from both countries, were explored using qualitative methods (semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions). The research questions addressed in this thesis relate to how engineering education in universities enlarges the capabilities of engineering graduates, so that they might become agents of sustainable human development.

The perspectives, often surprisingly similar across the two countries, offer contrasting and critical views on the assumption that society is in pursuit of an agenda for ‘sustainability’ that is valuable for all, and of future engineers’ roles in determining such an agenda. The findings also show that the participants perceive degrees of ambiguity about the extent to which engineers are educated to use their skills, knowledge, and effective power as professionals who contribute to solving human development and sustainability challenges in a just way. That is, in a way that explicitly prioritises poverty reduction and advances social justice. Reflecting on these perspectives from Germany and South Africa, the thesis considers what justice-based, capability-inspired engineering education might look like, if it is to enhance future engineers’ opportunities to use their agency to practice public-good engineering for human development.

Precious Mseba

Social work education and professional wellbeing in South Africa: a capability approach

Social work education is important in addressing questions of social and human development. As an academic field of study and a profession, social work is widely understood to be a discipline that promotes social change, development, empowerment and liberation of disadvantaged people. Consequently, social work education focuses on the attainment of knowledge and competencies to accomplish these goals. However, recent studies across various contexts have shown that social workers’ wellbeing achievement or lack of it affects their ability to contribute towards sustainable social, economic and human development. This is even more marked in a context like South Africa where social workers often function with very few resources and in contexts of extreme poverty. Using the capability approach, this qualitative study critically examines how social work education can enhance the achievement of professional wellbeing. It draws from interviews with eight practising social workers, ten final-year social work students and seven lecturers from a university in South Africa. It investigates how they understand professional wellbeing, its connection to their ability to effectively perform their work, and how it can be promoted through social work education.

The findings suggest that professional wellbeing is plural and integral to effective public interventions. Social workers define professional wellbeing in terms of the following functionings: effective helping, professional growth, personal growth as well as material achievements. The findings also show that various structural, organisational and personal factors influence the extent to which social workers can achieve these functionings. Factors such as the country’s extreme and persistent poverty and inequality levels, resource constraints

and lack of supportive supervision, among others, limit the achievement of the above-mentioned functionings by social workers.

The study identified the following capabilities as key for sustainable professional livelihoods: affiliation; adaptation; self-care; work-life balance; reflexivity; knowledge and skills; and values and principles. It discusses what is being done by one university's department of social work in advancing professional wellbeing, primarily focusing on the valued functionings. The thesis also stresses the need for an education which goes beyond addressing questions of employability and human capital to fostering human development. It highlights the importance of moving beyond viewing social workers as a means to social development, to seeing them as ends of development whose wellbeing ought to be advanced in and through education. The study recommends human development and social justice approaches to social work education. A socially just social work education, in this study, is one that seeks to advance the learners' valued functionings, capabilities and agency. This study suggests that in order to advance social workers' valued lives, social work education ought to, among other things, adopt interactive learning and teaching approaches. The findings of this study might help educationists and policymakers to formulate policies that are sensitive to professional wellbeing and can lead to sustainable benefits for both public service providers and users.

PUBLIC GOOD & (DECOLONIAL) DEVELOPMENT

Martino Mazinga

The role of public universities in fostering graduates' capabilities for rural development in Malawi

Literature indicates that higher education supports income growth, enlightens graduates with a breadth of knowledge and technical skills, expands people's choices, and increases individuals' skills necessary for economic and social development. Thus, higher education institutions such as universities have an important role in preparing graduates, who would in turn contribute to the development of others. However, few studies have focused on analysing graduates' preparation for rural development despite rural poverty remaining a global challenge. This study proposes a framework that would enable universities to prepare graduates with capabilities for rural human development. Rural human development is conceptualised from the capability approach as enhancing rural people's opportunities and choices for living a life that they have reason to value. Data for this qualitatively designed case study was collected in Malawi through semi-structured interviews, document reviews, and focus group discussions. Interviews were conducted with deans, lecturers, and students from the four public universities, and employers and graduates from the rural development sector. The study's guiding question focuses on how universities can foster graduates' capabilities for rural development in the context of pervasive rural poverty and rurality. Emerging perceptions of universities' roles in rural development re-affirm the ongoing calls for universities' contextual relevance. The findings show that universities can foster graduates' capabilities for rural social change through rural sensitive curricula and pedagogies that would stimulate or expand graduates' agency and aspirations for rural development. The study re-imagines a different kind of university that is oriented towards promoting rural human development in its preparation of graduates. The proposed multi-layered framework of graduate preparation is contextually-oriented, capability-based, and recognises conversion factors in graduate preparation. The study findings push graduate preparation beyond the dominant views of enhancing employability attributes, to re-imagine a university education that fosters graduate capabilities which enhance and harness their agency and aspirations for rural social change.

Bertha Kibona

Globally, there has been growing recognition of the value and importance of higher education (HE) to individuals, families, and nations. The evidence of this can be seen in the rapid expansion of higher education institutions (HEIs), increased enrolment, the ongoing linking of HE to issues of development, as well as investment directed towards the sector. However, the increasing realisation of the value of HE seems to be aimed predominantly at economic competitiveness and opportunities. This focus has been criticised by some scholars, policymakers, and commentators who argue that HE should also be valued for its potential to advance the non-economic elements that are essential for individual and national flourishing. This argument is premised on the broader idea of HE contributing to human development and/or the public good. Yet, relatively few studies have explored the perspectives of students and graduates on the value of HE, with even less focus on Tanzania. Using human development and the capability approach as analytical framework, this study explores how HE can enhance valued capabilities and promote the well-being of both an individual and the broader society.

The study is situated within the pragmatism paradigm in which mixed methods were employed to explore the perspectives of students and graduates. Data was collected through survey questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis from two universities. Data was analysed thematically and statistically. Bearing in mind the socio-economic climate of Tanzania as a developing country, findings from the study indicate that instrumental economic perspectives primarily influence Tanzanian HE. However, there are instances of concern about human development and the public good, especially from the valuable beings and doings mentioned by participants, which involved both economic and social values. Nonetheless, while universities enhanced some of the values, there are persistent factors, including socio-economic background, gender, public policy and teaching and learning that constrained students' or graduates' valuable beings and doings.

Based on the empirical findings, the study argues that the conceptualisation and operationalisation of the role of HE needs to be broadened. To fully appreciate the role of HE in human development and the public good, universities need to expand the valued human capabilities by addressing the conversion factors that have constraining effects. This includes: (1) Equitable access to university, including gender equity and students from disadvantaged backgrounds; (2) Updating the curriculum to provide economic opportunities to students and produce whole persons (graduates) for a flourishing economy and meaningful life for all; and (3) Equitable and inclusive education environments for students to participate and achieve their goals. This will not only promote the economic benefits of HE but also contribute to social justice and enhance students' and graduates' capabilities to choose and contribute to the public good and social transformation.