



Miratho* Project Webinar

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UNIVERSITY OF THE
FREE STATE
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE
VRYSTAAT
YUNIBESITHI YA
FREISTATA



UFS·UV

CENTRE FOR RESEARCH ON HIGHER
EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT (CRHED)
NAVORSINGSENTRUM VIR HOËR
ONDERWYS EN ONTWIKKELING (NSHO)



The University of
Nottingham



RISA

Research and Innovation
Support and Advancement



Economic
and Social
Research Council



UKaid
from the British people

Research jointly supported by the ESRC and FCDO

Achieved higher education 'learning outcomes' for rural and township youth 2016-20 ESRC-DfID & NRF

- How do low-income young people from rural and townships schools access, participate in, and succeed in higher education, and then move into work? What are the enabling and constraining factors (social, economic, environmental, personal)? How can a capabilities analysis problematise opportunities, obstacles and outcomes and advance our understanding of what is needed for justice? How can we understand the project as a contribution to decolonial methods, practices and thinking?
- Multi-methods: secondary data sets, documents, original survey, four waves of life history interviews (n=65) across students at five universities (2 rural, 3 urban), participatory photovoice project.
- **Miratho are informal bridges constructed by communities during times of floods to get from one village to another, or to get to school. This Tshivenda word symbolises the determination to access education and also, working with others to succeed. When communities build Miratho, opportunities are created for students to access education opportunities.*

Core features of the capability approach

A normative evaluation of wellbeing that links material, mental, and social well-being to the economic, social, political and cultural dimensions of life (Crocker and Robeyns 2009).

Major tenets

- Capabilities- **real opportunities or freedoms** for people to do what they value and be the kind of person they want to be
- Functionings- 'the practical realisation of one's chosen way of life' (Walker 2006: 128), **beings and doings**
- Agency- an agent who **acts and brings about change**, and whose achievements can be judged in terms of her own values and objectives' (Sen 1999a: 19)
- Conversion factors- the **degree/freedom** to which a person can convert a capability into a functioning.
 - material- for example, funding/money
 - non-material- for example, social, personal, environmental

Participatory photovoice as a decolonizing methodology

Miratho video will be played

Participatory photovoice as a decolonizing methodology

- Traditional methods used in higher education research (e.g. interviews, questionnaires) may carry and represent the residual cultural presence of colonisation (Maldonado-Torres, 2007) particularly in terms of maintaining top-down, expert vs lay person or researcher vs research subject dichotomies that mirror power inequalities.
- In contrast to traditional methods, participatory research can address misrecognition, to enable more people who are stereotyped as lacking epistemic material to contribute to shared knowledge. In our project it allowed us to acknowledge low-income students from rural and township areas in South Africa as legitimate producers of higher education knowledge; knowledge based on how they experienced, understood, learnt, and talked about exclusions and inclusions at university.
- Individual photo-stories were produced at three four-day workshops in Free State, Limpopo and Gauteng: basic photography training, discussion on theme of exclusion and inclusion; storyboards on which they could base their photographs and narratives; photograph taking (with digital cameras); presented these for feedback, followed by further photograph taking; students curated and captioned their stories, including a title;
- Together we produced: a book of photo stories for each province and a collective photo book (translated into four indigenous languages). We also held an exhibition and student panel (one student from each of the four universities) at UFS, and two process videos.

The Bitter Truth of Success

A collective photo story

The Unknown.



The excitement of going to university! Then, journeying to a completely unfamiliar place. We do not know what to expect. What will the University be like? What will learning be like? What will it mean to be a university student?

Imali!



Lack of money hinders everything. It stops us from pursuing dreams of a bright future.

Live or Leave.



Financial challenges makes us feel we are being shut out, all doors are locked to us.

Worries and Compromise.



Lack of money means lack of choice and we must opt for poor and cramped living conditions sharing with two, three, four other students, cooking in a small room - just to have a roof over our heads. We do not always have enough to eat or money for transport.

Obstacles in our University Path.



So, our process of learning is hindered.

Academic Failure.



Education is our key to a successful life. It is broken.

The Struggle is Real.



Depression follows isolation, money worries, poor academic performance, and thinking negatively.

Then, Adaptation.



The quicker the better. Being introspective and overcoming the differences and being able to fit in as a university student.

The Bowl of Fruit.



Any student can take a piece of fruit. It makes a difference to have the care, support of lecturers and a relationship with them.

Friendship



Team work and friends walking together leads to good results, delivering goals so we can settle and progress effectively in this unfamiliar environment.

Thriving through Difficulty.



Though we face ongoing obstacles, we manage to grow regardless of the environment that is not favorable to students like us.

Light at the End.



Our determination and hard work, the support of others, and our family's hopes will bring us into light from darkness.

Charter for an inclusive university

In addition to creating a collective story, students also drafted a charter for an inclusive university drawing on their stories. The charter presents five key points for how a university can be made more inclusive through changes in-

1. **Outreach and access:** Forge good relationships with schools in rural areas, that is take the university to the schools and districts. Develop a range of creative information and inductive programs. University induction programs should include food and accommodation for those who require.
2. **Student welfare:** Establish a food programme (e.g. reasonably priced cafeterias on all university campuses where low income students can afford to eat nutritious meals twice a day). Set up a wellness centre, and ensure students feel comfortable in accessing the services, especially around mental health. Supply reliable and accessible information and assistance in applying for financial aid. Provide safe, reliable transport for off-campus students.

Charter for an inclusive university

3. **Inclusive teaching:** Good, clear lecturing by experienced/ trained and caring lecturers. Training for lecturers in using teaching ICT platforms effectively. Using English for all lecturing, combined with inclusive language use in classes (e.g. small group discussions). Include students who register late through pod-casts, handouts, catch-up tutorials etc.
4. **Access to ICT:** Provide alternative digital platforms for more effective and inclusive communication between lecturers and students. Offer free and timely workshops on computer competence and on using the internet effectively for research and study purposes. Enable reasonable access to computers for learning for all students. Provide internet services for off-campus students - e.g. make deals with internet providers for cheaper data provision.
5. **Teaching space:** Address overcrowded lecture halls because they hinder the process.

Participatory photovoice as a decolonizing methodology

- Disrupting power and knowledge asymmetries through participatory research methods like photovoice is symbolic of de-linking from coloniality (Mignolo, 2007) as it allows for more equal participation between those who have power (researchers) and those who have less of it (research participants).
- This has decolonial value in the South African context where knowledge is produced in ways that silence marginal identities and voices (Behari-Leak and Mokou, 2019) and reinforce inequalities in higher education that already linger in wider society due to coloniality and the legacies of apartheid.
- It can also disrupt the value hierarchies that have pushed African and indigenous worldviews to the margins of the university (Calitz, 2018) and so avoid testimonial injustice by encouraging us to recognise as credible knowers and trusted testifiers, people who have typically been excluded from making epistemic contributions.

What students value about participating in
photovoice

Miratho video will be played

Participatory photovoice as a decolonizing methodology

- Drawing from their student testimonies, we identified three dimensions of narrative capability and functioning that correspond with being able to give and receive epistemic resources and to enhance an epistemic capability: (1) self-recognition, (2) mutual recognition and relationships, and (3) creative and critical skills.
- We see the simultaneous expansion of these capabilities as foundational to more epistemic justice, and symbolic of a decolonial ethic even under non-ideal conditions.

Capability-based learning outcomes

Capability Domain	Key Functioning
Epistemic contribution ('architectonic')	Being an epistemic contributor
Practical reason	Planning a good life
Navigation	Navigating university/society's culture and systems
Future work/study	Employable
Ubuntu	Connected to and concerned for the well-being of others
Narrative	Telling one's own story
Inclusion and participation	Being a respected and participating member of the university/society
Emotional balance	Deals with the stress and worry of challenges

To learn more

1. **The Miratho Project Final Conference:** Opportunities, Obstacles and Outcomes: exploring the experiences, achievement and capability sets of low-income youth at five universities in South Africa.

Wednesday 2 June, 10.00am- 3.00 PM, Garden Court Hotel, near ORT, Johannesburg. To book your place please contact Mrs Lucretia Smith (smithl3@ufs.ac.za) before 28 May

2. **Our book:** Walker M., McLean M., Mathebula M. and Mukwambo, P. (forthcoming, late 2021) *Low-income students, human development and higher education in South Africa: Opportunities, obstacles and outcomes*. Stellenbosch: African Minds)