

Miratho Matrix:
a multi-dimensional higher
education capability set
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*MATRIX
PROCESSS*

In/equalities in society (secondary data)

Poverty, inequality, unemployment, social immobility, colonialism&apartheid



Higher education specific in/equalities (secondary data)

Barriers and opportunities



Normative theorizing + Empirical conversion factors (epistemic inclusion level)

Students' life story data and survey reveals opportunity and constraint conditions



Higher Education Capability Set & Miratho Matrix
(epistemic inclusion level)



Achievement of key functionings as 'learning outcomes': a rich and 'lifeworthy' university transcript
(epistemic inclusion level)



More spaces for debate/epistemic inclusion on the Miratho Matrix and Capability Set

Conversion factors

- Conversion factors (national, provincial, district, our data) constitute the conditions shaping opportunities and obstacles for students, influencing their values and their agentic possibilities as carriers of personal biographies and negotiating conditions in higher education.
- If the opportunity to develop capabilities and exercise valued functionings is uneven, we look to wider arrangements to understand what is unjust and needs to be changed to enable wellbeing in each life.
- South Africa is a country with high poverty, high inequality and low social mobility. There are significant gaps in income, wealth and intergenerational endowments.
- Family and community poverty have a spatial dimension and remain concentrated in previously disadvantaged areas, such as the former rural homelands.
- Material poverty represents a major obstacle in its effects on student chances and equality in opportunities and outcomes. (Our hardship tables: Acute, Intermediate, Limited, year on year)

Producing a Matrix and HE Capability Set

- Not technical exercise but values-based
- A synthesising and holistic approach (Byskov 2018) which combined: 1) normative assumptions; with, 2) procedural methods from an empirical-deliberative process.
- **Normative:** capabilitarian theory and extended it when we found gaps which did not address our specific concerns (eg drew on Fricker's epistemic justice),
- **Empirical:** deliberative process to judge which capabilities mattered most based on in-depth life-history data (246 interviews over 4 years); participatory research project; workshops with students; meetings with other stakeholders; process is iterative and incomplete.

Identifying capability domains and key functionings: dialectic of theorising and data

- Initially three: epistemic, social and material
- August 2019: six domains
- Expanded the six to eight domains
- Material domain now a conversion factor rather than a capability,
- Mapped Nvivo codes against the eight domains; analysed the synopses of the 58 students; survey. Corresponding functionings a core set of learning outcomes (both cognitive and non-cognitive) which take account both of process and the achievement and which are complex and demanding; they should not be reduced to a checklist.

DOMAIN	DESCRIPTION (EQUALITY OF WHAT?)
Epistemic contribution	Equality in gaining degree knowledge, being able to reason, understand, apply, share, discuss and examine knowledge critically alone and with others; having a transformational relationship with university undergraduate knowledge; access to technology for learning; voice (academic, political, social).
Ubuntu	Equality in understanding that a person's well-being is connected to the well-being of other people; intrinsically valuing relationships
Practical reason	Equality in deliberating about, reflecting on and forming a view of what it would be best to do in specific situations and for a good life. Deliberating about ends and valuing a certain kind of life, being a certain kind of person. Planning purposively towards this; in aspiring, independence, and confidence in making life decisions.
Navigation	Equality in the ability and confidence to manoeuvre into (access) and through university and to adapt to succeed academically; resilience; support from others; motivation to succeed; fortitude.
Narrative	Equality in telling one's own higher education story, with confidence.
Emotional balance	Equality in developing and achieving emotional balance (able to deal with challenges and stress, able to be happy) in higher education experiences and learning.
Inclusion and participation	Equality in being respected, recognized and participating fully in teaching and learning, the wider university, and his/her community; having good relationships/friendships
Future work/ study	Equality in preparation to find a graduate level job in the public or private sector, self-employment or further study.

DOMAIN	FUNCTIONING (LEARNING OUTCOME) [INDICATORS?]
Epistemic contribution	Being an epistemic contributor
Ubuntu	Connected to and concerned for the wellbeing of others
Practical reason	Planning a (good) life
Navigation	Navigating university/society's culture and systems
Narrative	Telling one's own higher education story
Emotional balance	Able to deal with academic and life challenges
Inclusion and participation	Being a respected and participating member of the university/ society
Future work/ study	Employable/qualified for further study

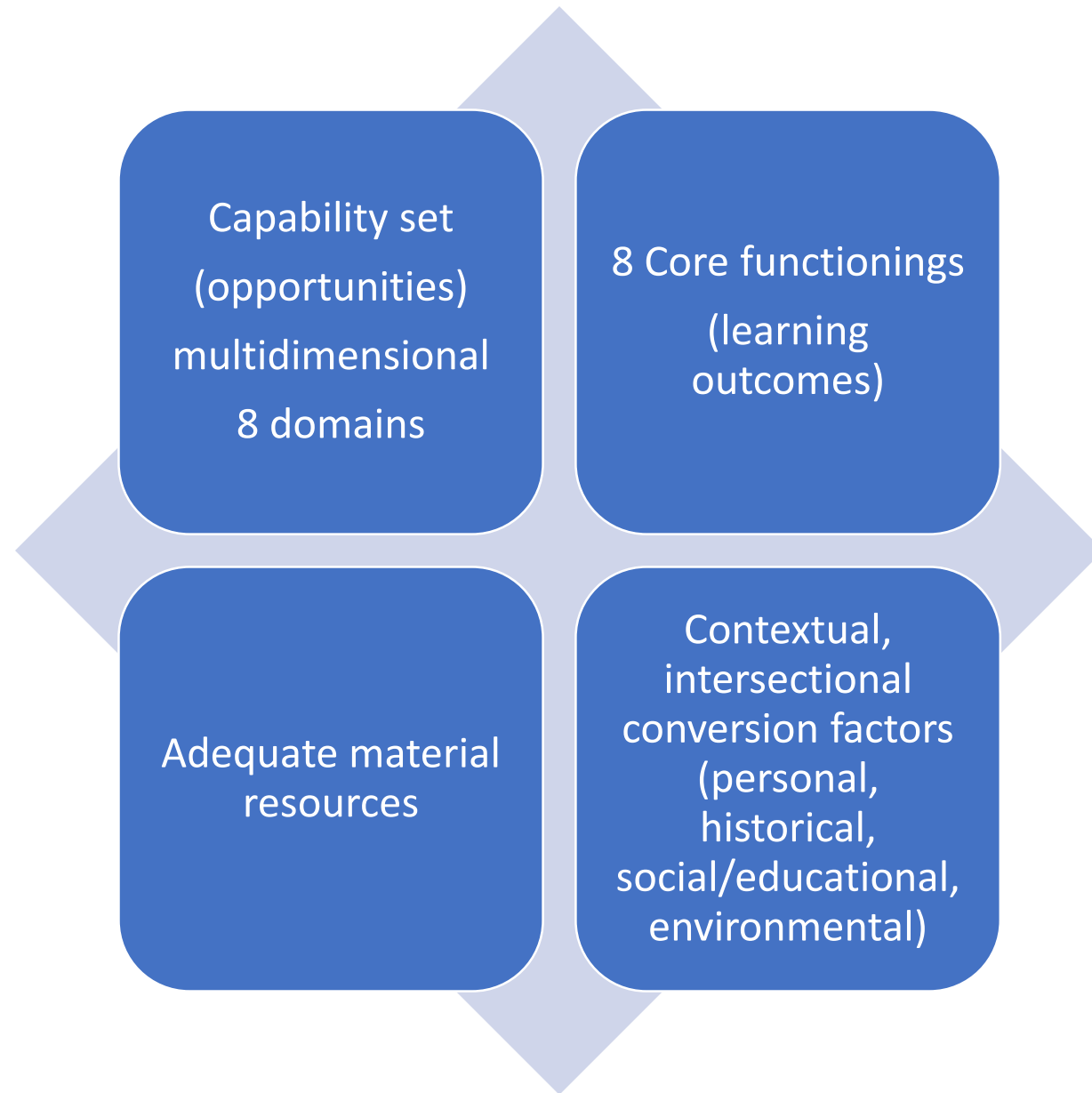
Epistemic contribution domain(architectonic for HE)

- Fricker: the right to be a credible knower and teller in education and society. Being able to participate fully in acquiring, sharing and co-producing knowledge materials; having a political voice.
- Central to a critical and decolonial approach, to an ecology of legitimate knowledges, and to engaged and inclusive pedagogies. Exclusion from or having only a thin capability has real consequences
- But, low-income especially rural students prejudicially judged as inarticulate or less intelligent ('testimonial injustice')
- Often the capability emerged from what students would have liked from their university education but did not get or did not get most of the time.
- Over time most students shifted from valuing 'being given information so that we pass' (Tintswalo, Country) to wanting classes which were more challenging and interactive. Although the emphasis was still on what the lecturer knows, the importance of being a knower and teller began to emerge - albeit faintly and unevenly.
- Political voice fostered through the #FeesMustFall protests of 2016 and 2017 even though few were active.

Ubuntu domain

- Already a well-developed functioning so the issue is the freedom and opportunity to 'do' ubuntu with new groups and university ethos which values ubuntu (tricky under neoliberal, individualising conditions).
- Ubuntu - each person exists because others do, and that interaction between people necessarily involves mutuality and cooperation, to the extent that others' lives and wellbeing are inextricably linked to the person's own life and wellbeing. To be is necessarily to be in relation to others', to be both free and dependent on others (Mudimbe 1988: 1), and 'to prize communal relationships with others' (Hoffman and Metz 2017: 157).
- Central to the transformative and decolonial university project.
- Sabelo (Rural) - people help you when you have nothing, so when you have something you must help others. Bonani (Provincial) : 'when you isolate yourself you die slowly'.] Bongeka (Provincial) 'if you do not plan on helping other people in some way or another, you're not yet successful'.
- Students 'pick each other up' during their struggles so that helping each other helps achieves their wellbeing and agency goals.

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FUNCTIONING	UNIVERSITY CONDITIONS/MEANS TO (WHAT HAPPENS DURING UNIVERSITY EDUCATION EXPERIENCES)
Epistemic contributor	Quality of curriculum design (including attention to ecology of knowledges), teaching and learning and assessment practices that build confidence, inclusion and civic participation, which foster dialogic and inclusive epistemic culture and environment.
Planning one's life	Ethos and processes which encourage aspirations, decision-making and future (good) life planning in teaching and learning but also extra-curricular opportunities and activities.
Navigating university culture and systems	All university actors (academic and administrative) foster supportive ethos, awareness of who the students are and where they come from, support for funding applications. Make accessible information about all university services.
Employable/qualified for further study	Careers service accessible and known to all, careers fairs, links to employers, build social capital networks of all students. Enable achievement and information about funding to enable further study. Problematize prestige and reputation structures in national fora
Connected to and concerned for the wellbeing of others	University ethos, mission and vision embodied in everyday activities workings (teaching and learning, research, community engagement, administration). Valuing indigenous cosmovisions.
Telling one's own higher education story	Recognise and value students' linguistic and narrative capital and value this in university ethos and teaching and learning; genuine listening to all students
Being a respected and participating member of the university	Inclusive and welcoming orientation attentive to diversity of students, inclusive and hospitable pedagogical arrangements, university culture that welcomes and values diversity, enabling all students to take up extra-curricula opportunities through information and encouragement.
Emotionally balanced at university, not stressed or worried	Wellbeing services; staff training in awareness of and empathy for emotional challenges students' face.

In summary.

- The capability set proposed has emerged from theory, from student voices, and from dialogue. We think it robust enough to merit further debate and consideration by universities in relation to a quality higher education. However, it is the Matrix as a whole that needs to ground such discussions.
- Following Sen, we have proposed a richer informational basis for making judgements about student success in South African universities. We seek to include student voices and their lives in this work and to propose judgements grounded in capabilities and functionings. Sen (1990: 111) calls this 'the territory of justice'.

(Some) Policy and practice implications

- Sufficient material resources are necessary get into university and flourish while there;
- The benefits of a university education should be rich and multi-dimensional so that they can result in functionings in all areas of life including paid work and future study; and,
- The inequalities and exclusion of the labour market, and pathways to further study must be addressed by wider economic and social policies and economic transformation for higher education outcomes to be meaningful and more just.
- Universities have a responsibility – if for no other reason - as recipients of public funding – but also as the space of student aspirations and effort - to transform in relation to the needs of the mostly black working class (rural and urban) students they have and to put in place the conditions of possibility at all levels for all students to flourish.