

Miratho Research Project 2016-2020

PAG meeting Johannesburg, 30 May 2019

Melanie Walker & Mikateko Höppener (UFS)

T: +27(0)51 401 9111 | info@ufs.ac.za | www.ufs.ac.za

 UFSUV |  UFSweb |  UFSweb |  ufsuv

Inspiring excellence. Transforming lives.
Inspireer uitnemendheid. Verander lewens

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



Goals

Global SDG 4: 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all'. Relevant targets (aspirational): 4.3 Equal access to technical/vocational and higher education; 4.4 Relevant skills for decent work; 4.5 Gender equality and inclusion; 4.7 Education for sustainable development and global citizenship [content of education target]

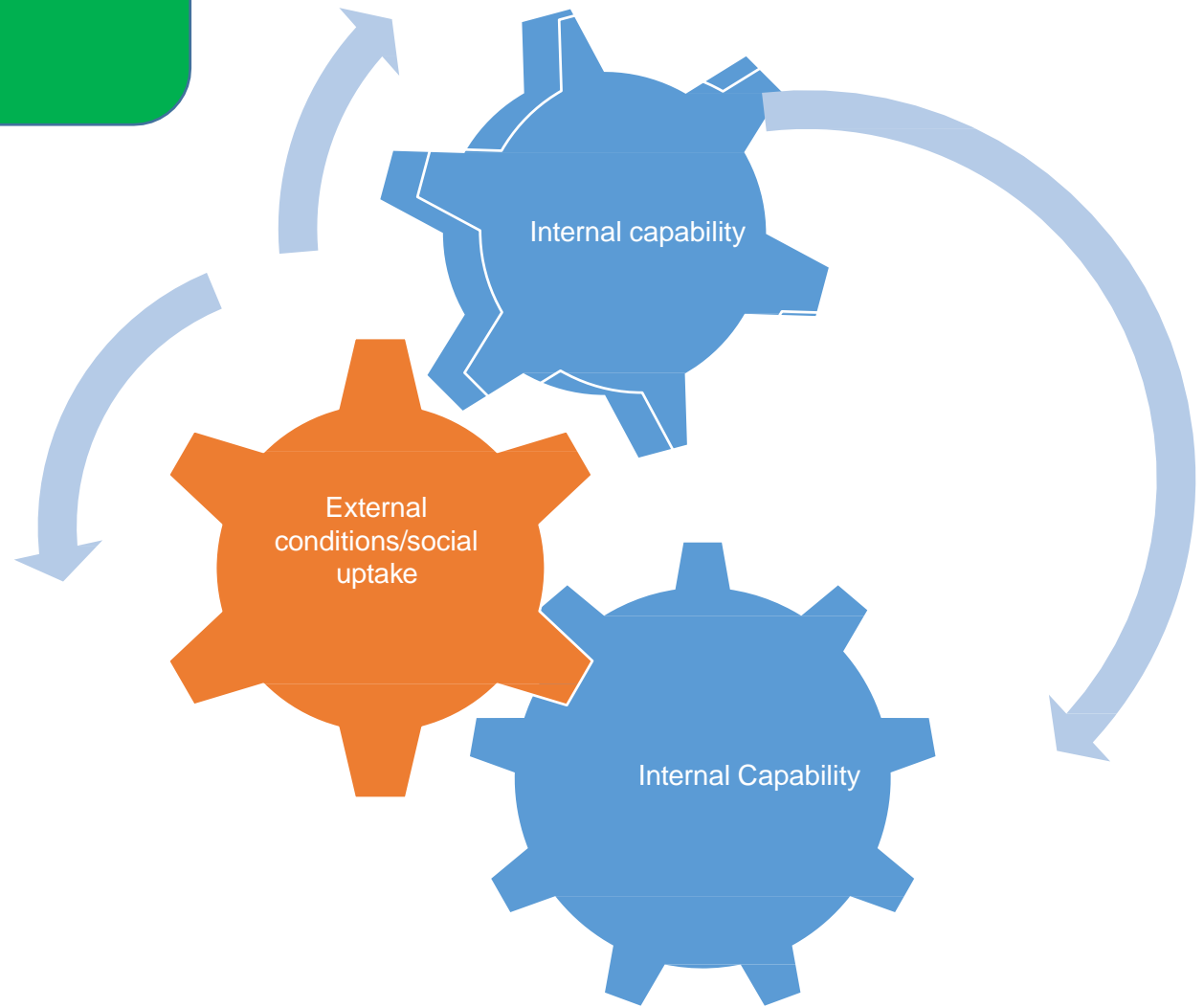
National: DHET 2016, 'all students entering the system [should] have a reasonable chance of success and access to powerful knowledge and practices that will enable them to enter the productive economy and improve their life chances and that of their families'.

Conceptual: Multidimensional 'combined capabilities' [The inequality which should bother all decent human beings is the unequal **capability to function fully as a human being**, the unequal capability to choose a life of dignity and well-being [as a student in higher education]– under prevailing conditions of human technology and human knowledge'. (Goran Therborn)]

‘combined capabilities’

- **Capabilities** conceptual framework, (Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum) in which the focus is on **agency and well-being**. The key concepts are ‘capability’ meaning freedom and opportunity to be and do what people value and ‘functioning’ meaning the actual doings and beings that people choose.
- Persons are social beings, shaped by and involved in structures, processes and relationships in their society -‘combined capabilities’ are of special concern: ‘internal capabilities’ are ‘developed states of the person him/herself that are, so far as the person herself is concerned, sufficient conditions for the exercise of the requisite functions’ (Nussbaum). internal capability + supportive uptake conditions = a capability can be operationalized
- Thus only CC are full capabilities, providing us with effective freedom, with the real opportunities to do or be something. **It is combined capabilities that matter for assessments of justice and for students having the freedoms to shape their own lives.**
- ‘**Bounded agency**’. complements CA/combined capabilities: socially situated agency influenced but not determined by the environment, emphasizing internal frames of reference, as well as external conditions (Evans). Agentic beliefs about the future.

GOAL: Multi dimensional combined capabilities



Achieved HE ‘learning outcomes’ for rural and township youth

- 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 education enablers? What do ‘achieved learning outcomes’ mean from a capability approach perspective?
- Team: Melanie Walker (UFS), Mikateko Hoppener (UFS), Patience Mukwambo (UFS), Ann-Marie Bathmaker (Birmingham), Monica McLean (Nottingham), with Thusanani Foundation (youth-led NGO)
- Research assistants: Anesu Ruswa (UFS, survey), Carmen Martinez (UFS, photovoice), Melissa Lucas (UFS, videos)

Sketching a line of travel towards wellbeing and agency

- Five university case sites: Country, City, Metropolitan, Rural and Provincial- a mix of HWU, HBU, urban, rural.
- Longitudinal, multi-method
- **Capabilities and Conversion** factors intersect to shape opportunities and outcomes; can point to reproductive role of education. They point to intersectional structural and process inequalities, and where redress is demanded in the direction of more justice. Inequalities may compound each other so that equal provision may not be sufficient
- Rather than conceptualising achieved learning outcomes narrowly or in a value-free way as graduate attributes or sets of skills and competencies, our project connects outcomes to social justice by seeing university education as producing graduates whose well-being and agency challenges injustices and uneven opportunities.

Data collected so far

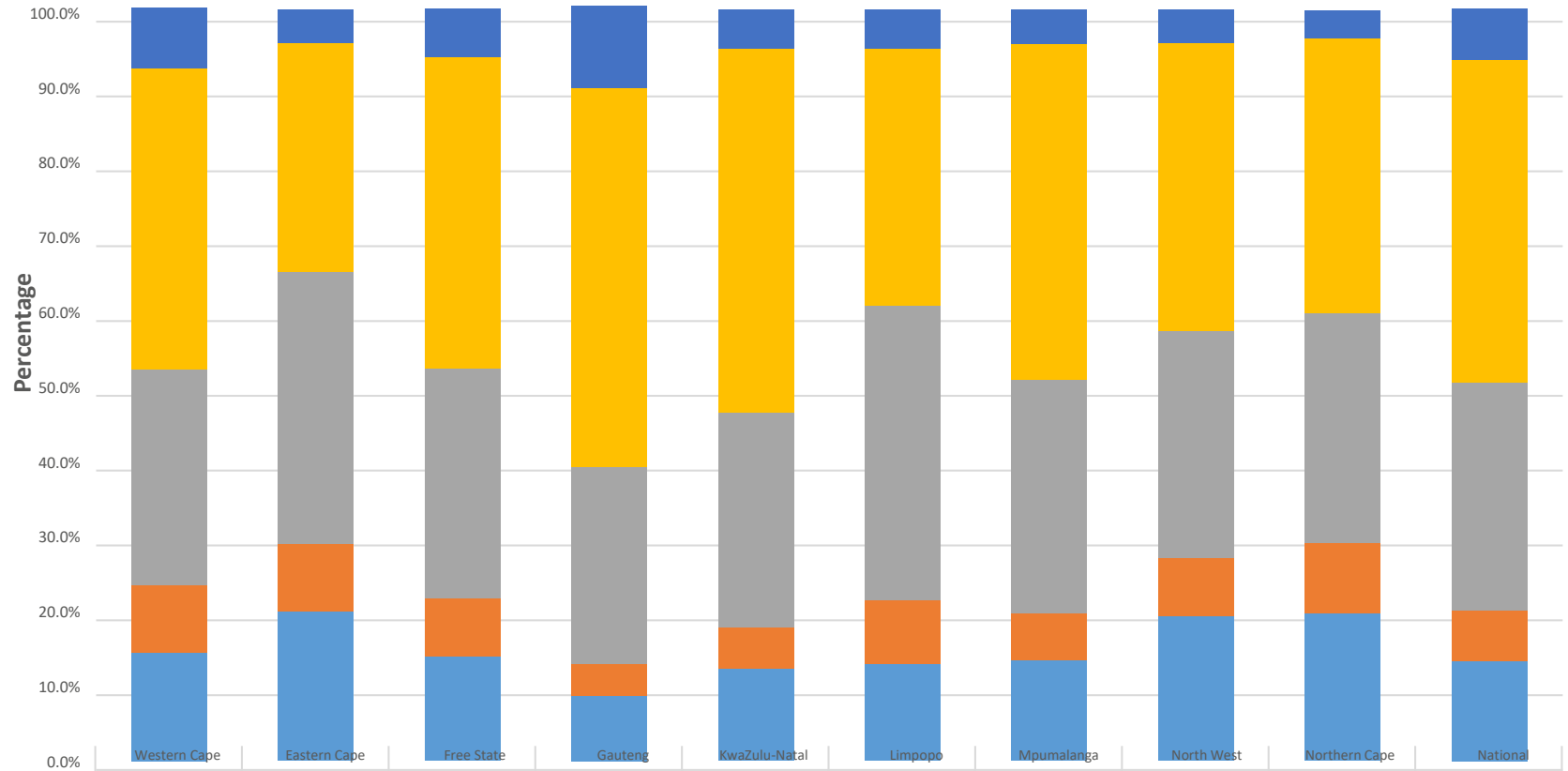
- Two waves of **life history data** (64 students, 59 from rural areas, 6 from townships) third underway, 5 universities, Nvivo codebook written and first two waves of interviews analysed. Third wave under way Short life history videos scripted and being made. [Qual and participatory research enriched by building relationships over time, compared to 'parachute in-parachute out' research]
- Nineteen individual **photo-stories**, and one common photobook (data comprises training workshops, notes, river of life drawings, interviews, UFS workshop, video materials, two short videos). Also participatory workshops (e.g. river of life, vision boards) (working on video)
- **Pilot survey** among Miratho students (n=39, being analysed).
- **Secondary data sets** a) HEMIS cohort, rural, township, suburban students; b) EMIS, Community/Household Survey data by national, provincial (3 provinces: Eastern Cape, Limpopo, Kwa-Zulu Natal) and 3 districts (Joe Qwabi, Vhembe, Harry Gwala) breakdown.

Secondary data strand (EMIS, community survey)

Dimensions with indicators (see example in next two slides) tabulated by national, province, 3 districts. Still to be integrated with interview data.

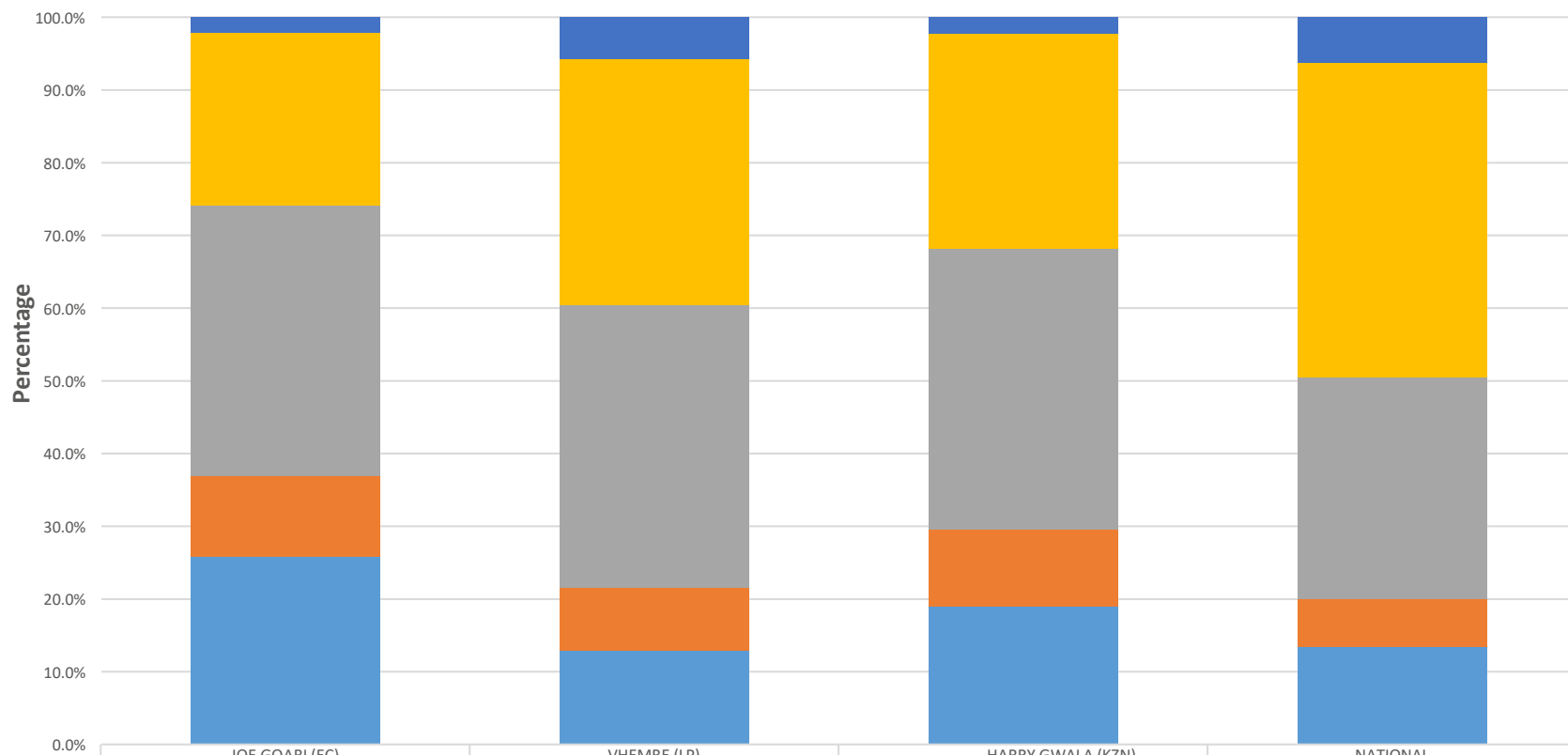
- Demographic
- Educational outcomes
- Living environment
- Work
- Household income
- Access to assets and credit
- Food security and nutrition
- Health
- Transport
- Access to technology
- Peace and violence/community cohesion

Highest education level of youth aged 20-24 (National and Provincial)



	Western Cape	Eastern Cape	Free State	Gauteng	KwaZulu-Natal	Limpopo	Mpumalanga	North West	Northern Cape	National
Any tertiary	7.4%	4.1%	5.9%	10.1%	4.8%	4.8%	4.2%	4.1%	3.4%	6.3%
Matric/matric equivalent	40.3%	30.5%	41.7%	50.6%	48.6%	34.3%	44.8%	38.4%	36.7%	43.1%
Grade 10/11	28.7%	36.3%	30.8%	26.3%	28.8%	39.4%	31.2%	30.4%	30.7%	30.5%
Grade 9	9.1%	9.2%	7.8%	4.2%	5.4%	8.6%	6.2%	7.7%	9.4%	6.7%
Less than Grade 9	14.5%	19.9%	13.9%	8.7%	12.4%	12.9%	13.5%	19.4%	19.7%	13.3%

Highest education level of youth aged 20-24 (District and National)



Any tertiary	2.1%	5.8%	2.3%	6.3%
Matric/matric	23.8%	33.8%	29.6%	43.1%
equivalent	37.2%	39.0%	38.6%	30.5%
Grade 10/11	11.2%	8.6%	10.6%	6.7%
Grade 9	25.8%	12.9%	19.0%	13.3%

Life story/history strand

The life-stories of a group of historically excluded young people: are driven by the prospect of securing better lives; take up opportunities; tackle socio-economic constraints; thereby contributing to change for themselves, their families and their communities.

Data reveal the complex processes of personal transformation and social mobility through higher education.

Working on life history as method for short video.

Survey strand: pilot (n=39) and challenges

- We want to produce Index – we are not yet sure of how we will do this.
- We want ‘thick’ achieved learning outcomes (combined capabilities
- = ‘aspirational target’) and associated indicators that portray inclusion, equity and quality opportunities. i.e. Outcomes must be expansive, intersectional inequalities must be attended to
- Complex, we are trying to avoid slippage from capability [rich and thick] to data led functioning's and associated indicators; trying to capture processes; trying to indicate structural and human processes that might enable achieved LOs. Indicators need to capture equality and quality. How?

Participatory research strand: Photovoice

- 4 universities, 19 photostories, exhibition and student panel (one student from each of the 4 univs) held at UFS, agreement on 'common book' (translated) for the public domain, two process videos.

Seven draft multi-dimensional combined, relational capabilities [wellbeing]

We elaborate on three:

1. Epistemic contribution
2. Narrative
3. Inclusion
4. Work
5. Ubuntu
6. Navigational reasoning
7. Sufficient resources

Capability (normative –points to justice)	Functioning (Contextual, data-driven)
Epistemic contribution	<p>Gaining higher learning/academic knowledge and understanding to achieve HE qualification. Sharing this knowledge with others and being taken seriously in the process</p>
Narrative capability	<p>Telling one's own story of access, participation and outcomes in higher education. Having the confidence to tell one's own story to diverse others in diverse situations. Having one's story listened to, heard, recognized and valued in the university and by</p>

Capability	Functioning
Subsistence [sufficient resources]	<p>Has access to sufficient nourishment, clothing, shelter, transport and basic physical and mental health.</p> <p>Has psychological wellbeing: is not overwhelmed by fear and anxiety over academic work and/or other aspects of life at university.</p> <p>Has physical security: is not constantly stressed or worried about money:</p> <p>Has access to well-being support when needed, and knows where to go for this in the university.</p>

Capability: **sufficient resources**

- **Hardship at university:** Material basis of educational wellbeing is foundational and has implications for (almost all) other aspects of their education wellbeing. The implication is that there must be a **threshold of resources** for adequate well-being at university.
- **Acute:** basic needs not met
- **Transient:** Basic needs met, but demarcated by reduced human dignity as a result of not being able to engage in typically human activities for normal decent human life while at university (may have a laptop). Debts are growing for some.
- **Limited/Emergent middle-class-** status precarious and will be first generation middle class (eg death of a parent may shift family into intermediate poverty). One or more family members/siblings have completed HE, at least one parent has a secure job usually with govt. Sufficient disposable income for living and other costs. As a graduate may feel salary is too low to provide for extended family but material needs shift (e.g. hardship of not being able to afford a car to get to work in rural areas)

Category	2016	2017	2018
Acute	12	4	2
Transient	47	55	49
Limited/emerging middle class	6	6	9
Total	65	65	60

Capability: epistemic contribution

- Architectonic?
- Proposed by Fricker - engages Nussbaum's idea of 10 central human capabilities as necessary for human flourishing and definitive of an international standard of justice. She argues that the capability for epistemic contribution should be one.
- Fundamental to human flourishing to have the opportunity and freedom to give information and understanding, to be credible knowers and tellers in society.
- Two forms of epistemological injustice: testimonial (not listened to/credible giver of knowledge because of who you are); hermeneutical (not having the means to communicate intelligibly to others about structural exclusion eg race, gender, low-income).
- Two forms of epistemic materials: informational [giving, receiving](including evidence, doubt, hypothesis, argumentation) interpretational (making sense, alternative ways of seeing).
- So here in/equality is understood to be about the relationships between people, their knowledge-making interactions. The capability for epistemic contribution is frustrated by not appreciating or mistrusting people as knowers and is indicative of wider structures of inequality.

Two ways of thinking about the capability for epistemic contribution

- (1) What epistemic materials the students bring with the to university – how they already (potentially, actually) function as epistemic contributors.
- (2) What universities do and could do to expand opportunities and freedoms for students to make epistemic contributions both at university and, importantly, later as graduate workers and citizens.

Students poised/want to gain epistemic materials from their disciplines and university life.

- University exposes you to a whole lot of things, it's a different world. I never knew most of the things until I got to university, everything about it gives you life, you feel more alive because you're exposed to so much. (Sonto, City)
- I just want to know as much as possible, though I will not make a living out of these degrees, I just want to know, I am going to university to know, to have an understanding of how the world works.(Thendo, Country)
- University is [...] mind developing. You learn new things there and every day, there are new things that you learn there. Even the place itself, you learn from it. You learn from everything at university. It's a place of learning. (Asanda, Provincial)

Capability: **narrative** (photovoice)

- 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 (small digital cameras); presented these for feedback, followed by further photograph taking; final day curated and captioned their stories, including a title; book of photostories produced for each province.
- Production together of a common photobook ('The bitter truth of success')
- Drafting an Inclusive University Charter
- The process and outcomes exhibition powerfully highlighted the importance of enabling the narrative capability of ordinary students as a way of enabling voice, developing confidence, and taking account of their experiences.

Students' 'inclusive university charter'

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.

Student welfare : Establish a food programme; 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.

Inclusive teaching : Good, clear lecturing by experienced/ trained and caring lecturers; Training for lecturers in using teaching ICT platforms; Using English for all lecturing, combined with inclusive language use in classes (eg. small group discussions); Include students who register late through pod-casts, handouts, catchup tutorials etc.

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 using the internet effectively for study purposes; Enable reasonable access to computers for learning for all students; Provide internet services for off-campus students - make deals with providers for cheaper provision.

Teaching space : Address overcrowded lecture halls because they hinder the process of learning.

Capability	Functioning
Inclusion	<p>Is treated with respect by administrative staff, lecturers and other students</p> <p>Treats other students, lecturers and administrative staff with respect</p> <p>Participates in academic life</p> <p>Participates in social life at the university</p>
Work	<p>Has knowledge and skills that are relevant for employment or self-employment.</p> <p>Knows what is required to apply Is well-prepared to find a graduate level job in the public or private sector and/or being prepared for</p> <p>Is connected to people who can help in finding or securing a job.</p>

Capability	Functionings
Ubuntu	<p>Understands that own well-being is connected to the well-being of other people; shows support, care and concern for the well-being of others, and values this.</p> <p>Has mutually trusting relationships with other people</p> <p>Shares resources with other students who do not have these resources and has others share their resources.</p>
Navigational reasoning [planning my life]	<p>Forms a view of the life s/he want to lead according to her values Imagines future aspirations, and reflects on and on how to achieve her/his aspirations; has a sense of hope about her/his future</p> <p>Is empowered in terms of being able to reflect on and make decisions that shape her/his life</p> <p>Able to be determined, to persevere to face multiple problems with courage</p>

Capability	Functioning	Indicator
Navigational reasoning (could be Nussbaum's practical reason) [planning my life]	<p>Forms a view of the life s/he want to lead according to her values</p> <p>Imagines future aspirations, and reflects on and on how to achieve her/his aspirations; has a sense of hope about her/his future</p> <p>Is empowered in terms of being able to reflect on and make decisions that shape her/his life</p> <p>Able to be determined, to persevere to face multiple problems with courage</p>	<p>I think about what a good life is for me and what I need to do to achieve it.</p> <p>I am able to make my own decisions about my life.</p> <p>I know how to make my way through university procedures I am hopeful that I will have a bright future (aspiration).</p> <p>I am able to stay strong and keep focused in the face of challenges.</p>

Student agency: Narrative of self as persistent, determined, resilient, goal- driven, aspirational, working hard to ensure success in forging better, 'brighter' futures and make their families and communities proud.

Determination to claim the future they want.

- Any challenge I can stand and overcome (Akhona, Rural)
- I was a very determined student. I was, like: 'OK, you know what, let me try and study my way out of this situation. OK, I'm going to go to university next year, I'm sure of that. And my classmates were like: No, man, how could you? Who do you think you are, man? [...] And I was like: 'Even though I'm coming from a rural background, I know I'm going to make it. [...] I know I'm going to become something great in life. I have this feeling in me. I trusted my gut. [...] I know that I'm going to become something in life. [...] You know, I'm not a naturally brilliant student, I'm a hard worker. [...] (Khethiwe, City)
- I don't let things tear me down. If I'm down I pick myself up to do great.(Nyiko, City)
- Most of my friends, we are dedicated. We are those who want to change their families' backgrounds. So I took it as a challenge that I want to be the first one to go to high school, the first one to go to university, to graduate and to have proper work (Asanda, Provincial)
- I came here so that I can bring about a difference not only in my family but in my community, in our country. I want to bring about change, and I believe that I will bring about that change because I think the reason why I was born in the situation that I experienced maybe the Lord [...] wanted me to experience the lifestyle so that I can tell a story, so that I can be able to motivate others and tell them that no, it's possible. [...] I mustn't have an excuse of why I didn't make it in life (Tiyani, Metropolitan)
- Then I saw that I have great character in myself of fighting spirit(Menzi, Provincial)

Intersecting conversion factors/intersectional inequalities

- 64 students (59 rural)
- Rural areas have multi-dimensional deprivations. Families with limited or no tertiary, and sometimes grade 12; communities in which few/no-one has been to university, many are unemployed and there is little chance of escaping poverty; low quality, under-resourced school education.
- A conversion trilogy of family, community and school or influential people can structure/impede expectation encouraging the academic effort and self belief necessary for access and passing on variety of information necessary to apply for university, or it might reduce social uptake possibilities
- **Agency** (In nearly all cases) struggle to belong and students' academic struggles seems to spur them on to work harder, deepens their resolve and their determination to claim the future they want.

Tentative findings so far

- Capabilities does offer us a normative and practical justice-focused language to examine and surface inequalities, processes, relationships, outcomes across micro-meso-macro levels. We like its ethical individualism but recognize that it lacks attention to collectives or relational ontologies.
- Access is shaped by income, information, school, family, NGO, own hard work and determination. Universities do not do much/enough for rural and township schools. ['We did not have a clue']
- Participation shaped by income (peace of mind or not, time to completion, ability to focus only on studies), prior schooling experiences of learning (a lot of drill and practice and memorization), uneven quality of teaching and lecturer commitment or access to critical thinking (epistemic access), relationships with approachable lecturers, limited feedback given, not enough tutor support in smaller groups (and not always good), not accessing ECA (sport for some, volunteer work for some) or understanding its value for social capital/networks, friendships and study groups, individual instrumental determination, commitment to family welfare, religion plays a role in most lives, individual hard work, tenacity, not giving up, not holding university to account for quality, reasonable access to computer essential for learning and assignments, student agency not sufficiently mobilized/recognized/valued by university – not seen to bring valuable epistemic materials. We think Ubuntu values do prevail for these students. Multi-lingualism not really valued.
- Commitments to giving back in some way
- Participatory workshops and PV strand (voice, narrative capability) evoke powerful learning, confidence etc. Bringing students together from different universities was unexpectedly powerful. Different way of enabling, expressing and understanding student lives, experiences and aspirations.

Advice/discussion

- Do the 7 capabilities resonate, or not?
- Capabilities valuable but not easily measurable? Easily domesticated as 'skills', 'learning outcomes', 'graduate attributes'?
- Getting rich (but complex) capabilities language out to key stakeholders (DHET, universities). How, who? What would persuade/convince?
- Getting participatory research onto DHET agenda as part of T and L funding?
- Survey and indicators, mixed methods.....(needs work to integrate data sources). What indicators might help develop policy, practices and accountability to realize vision of capabilities and also SDG4? How to establish these to express rich quality and equality?