

Rural and township youth and inclusive higher education learning outcomes

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Research team

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- Partnership with Thusanani Foundation (youth-led NGO)
- Consultants: Alberta Spreafico and Enrica Chiappero-Martinetti (University of Pavia) and Charles Shepherd (NMU)
- ESRC-DfID funding, with NRF
- Why 'Miratho'? (website: www.miratho.com)
- **PAG: Advising on the project as it unfolds. The conduct of, and how to help the project have impact**

Higher education, inequalities, social mobility and the public good

- Our society is grossly unequal: Gini of .69, skewed endowments of education and assets, wealth Gini of .95. Influences/shapes higher education landscape
- ‘Higher education provides opportunities for social mobility. It can strengthen equity, social justice and democracy’ (NDP, 2011). HE offers high private (as opposed to public) returns in South Africa (World Bank).
- BUT, ‘The higher education system is perceived to be reproducing the individual and institutional inequalities that were entrenched by apartheid...’. (Second National Higher Education Summit, Ministerial Oversight Committee on Transformation in South African Public Universities, 2015)
- Getting in, getting on and getting out in higher education is then a public good challenge.

Some basic assumptions

- Amartya Sen: ‘...there can be little doubt that good university education can make

a dramatic difference to human ability and achievements. Indeed not only can it transform individual lives, its role in social change can be quite critical as well’.
- We further assume that undergraduate education does need to prepare students for gainful and socially productive employment, even if that is not all it should be doing. Indeed for low and even middle income students gainful employment is likely to be the most basic economic advantage of a university degree because the benefits of critical and creative knowledge and understanding are harder to enjoy without basic economic security.
- Universities can do something, even if they cannot do everything; and this something may be especially significant for students from less well-off (poor) backgrounds.
- At what stages in the higher education cycle do/can/should universities intervene individually and systemically? What should policy be doing to enable inclusive and fair higher education learning outcomes? What indicators might we develop (inclusive access, inclusive pedagogy, etc.)?

Project overview (1)

- Four year project (2016-2020) (ESRC-DFiD and NRF funded)
- Capabilities conceptual framework: Sen: 'ultimately, the focus has to be on what life we lead and what we can or cannot do, can or cannot be' (Sen, 1999) –our effective opportunities to be whom we want to be. With freedom to shape our goals and future
- Focus on inclusivity of access to HE and participation by rural and (some) township youth – five university sites (University pseudonyms: *Country* –HDI; *Rural* – HDI; Provincial –mid ranking traditional; *Metropolitan* – elite; *City* - comprehensive)
- Inequalities in society and in types of universities, access, participation and outcomes requires a multi-dimensional and intersectional framework.

Project Questions

1. How do 'disadvantaged' youth from rural and township schools access participate in and succeed in higher education, and then move into work? [data].
2. What contextual dimensions of economic, policy, social and educational conditions enable or inhibit access, participation and success? [data]
3. What multi-dimensional higher education [capabilities-based] learning outcomes which benefit individuals and society are valued by stakeholders, including students? [data]
4. How can the capabilities approach be applied analytically to the multiple data sets to produce a multi-dimensional inclusive higher education capabilities-based higher education Index? [measurement, across all data sets]
5. How can the Index be used to inform policy and practice interventions that confront the structural inequalities impacting on learning outcomes of students from challenging contexts? [impact space]
6. How can we develop an innovative theoretical approach for understanding inclusive learning outcomes in higher education but with broader educational relevance in developing countries? [theory space]

Human capabilities (Sen, Nussbaum)

- Capabilities (eg. to access higher education) are the substantive freedoms or real opportunities to lead the kind of life that people value. Freedoms or opportunities which can be chosen and put into practice are 'functionings' - actual beings and doings (eg. accessing higher education, financial security, participating in learning, relationships, social inclusion in HE). Both capabilities and functionings matter in HE
- The capability approach envisages enlarging people's choices about what they value choosing to be and to do, with concern for economic and non-economic issues, equality of opportunities and the conditions for achieving genuine choices. Being able to have choices and options allows us to recognise the conscious and deliberative aspects of human agency, but also the way power and society (and universities) may erect barriers to full justice.
- The moral relevance lies not in the various capabilities each by themselves and only considering the choices made by one person; rather, **the moral relevance lies in whether capabilities are truly available to us given the choices made by others** [state actors, universities, other persons]" (Robeyns, 2016, 406 – citing Basu).

- Agency (decision-making towards goals and aspirations) expanding or diminishing; empowering or disempowering (more or less capabilities and functionings)
- Human development and equalities are dynamic (improve or worsen) if there is 'a lack of genuine opportunity for secure functionings' (Wolff and De-Shalit 1997).
Dis/advantages can cluster and intersect, and it is a combination and plurality of contextual and conversion factors that shape individual advantage or disadvantage.

Why rural youth?

- According to census 2011, **37.1%** of the South African population live in rural areas
- **Just under 15%** of a given cohort of undergraduate university students come from rural areas (based on detailed analyses of the 2006 and 2007 cohorts)
- National participation (20-24 year olds) rate of 18,4% - but skewed based on population group (race)
 - African (15,4%); Coloured (14,2%), Indian/Asian (48,9%) and white (53.1%)
- Rural youth are slightly under-represented in South African higher education cf to African students
- Rural areas in South Africa face multi-dimensional deprivations
- But 'rural' is fluid and shifting as a label. We take it to mean: students from/living in a rural area (village, rural town), having matriculated at a rural school, who may now be studying at a rural or urban university

Methods

- Multi-method, longitudinal study:
- 65 Life histories (longitudinal over 4 years), supported (in various ways) into the five case universities by the Thusanani Foundation (TF)
- The 65 students participating in the study mostly come from two rural districts, one in the Eastern Cape (Joe Gqabi) and one in Limpopo (Vhembe). Six however come from Gauteng – Orange Farm and Soweto (live there, schooled there)
- Secondary stats (conversion factors and key indicators), HEMIS stats including one detailed university profiles, student engagement survey for one university, student survey in one university,
- Participatory photovoice projects
- Construction, using these multiple data sets, of an 'Inclusive capabilities-based HE learning outcomes Index' for one university in the first instance



Income

- In 2015 - 55.5% of people nationally living in poverty (below R647/\$50 per person per month); Limpopo province (72.4%) and Eastern Cape (72.9%)
- Annual household income of R19,200 (\$1500) and below (Census 2011)
 - Nationally: 44.1%
 - Eastern Cape: 54.2% (Joe Gqabi District: 60.6%)
 - Limpopo Province: 55.2% (Vhembe District: 59.1%)
- Cost for one year study and accommodation at Metropolitan University is about R70 000.

Contextual dimensions (conversion factors) at provincial and district levels

Demographics (population group, sex, age, language most spoken at home)

Educational outcomes (highest level of education, school quintile, no-fee schools, rating of quality of local public school, importance of education for household standard of living)

Living environment (difficulties faced by municipality, main source of drinking water, distance to main source drinking water, water quality, type of toilet, access to electricity, rating of electricity supply, geyser providing hot water, access to postal service)

Work (employment status, industry, occupation type)

Household income (annual household income, household involved in agriculture)

Access to assets and credit (main dwelling, tenure status, title deed possession, RDP housing, refrigerator, electric/gas stove, washing machine, microwave, motor vehicle, important of asset ownership)

Food security and nutrition (run out of money for food past 12 months, run out of money for food 5 or more days in past month, skipped meal in past 12 months, skipped meal for 5 or more days in past month)

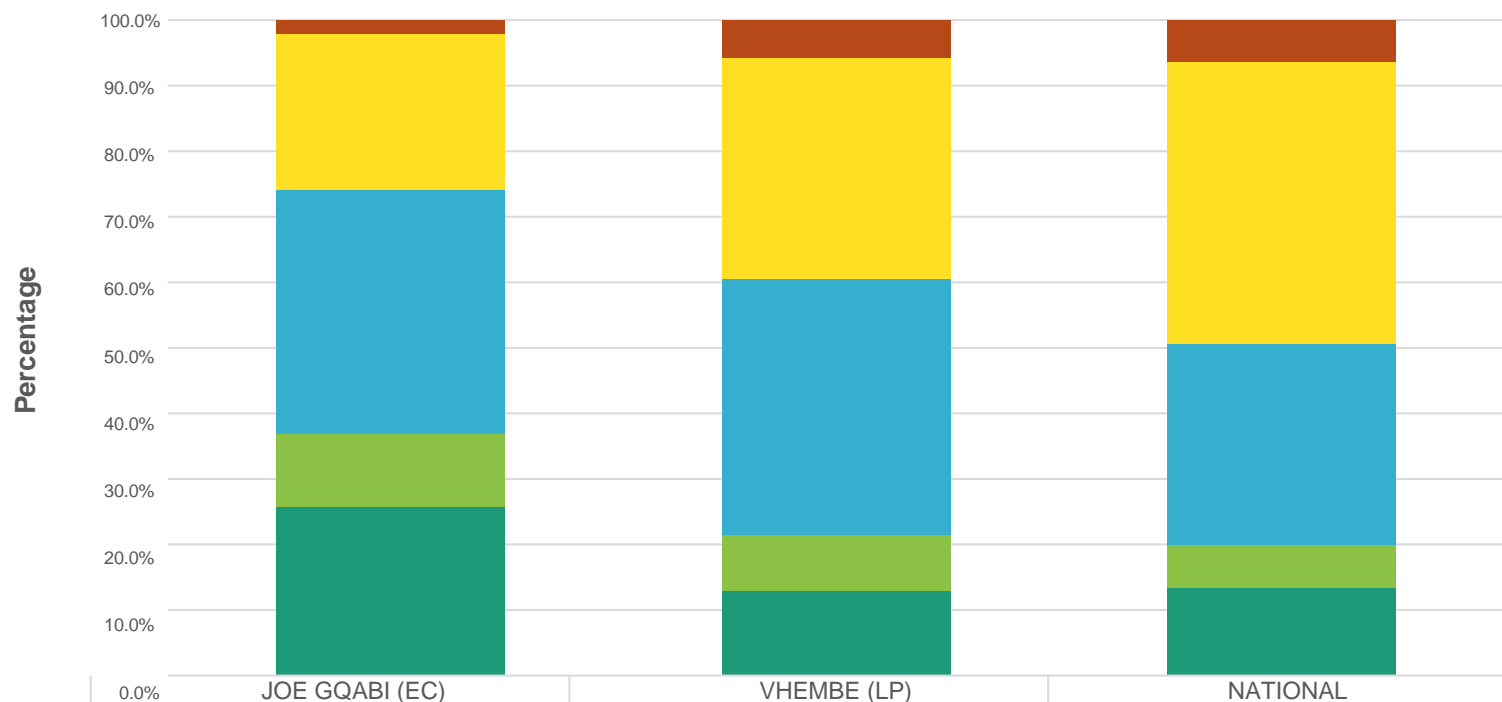
Health (rating of quality of local hospital and clinic, importance of health for standard of living)

Transport (mode of transport to education)

Access to technology (TV, radio, landline, cell phone, tablet, PC, internet, internet café)

Peace and violent/community cohesion (rating of quality of police services, safety during day and night, victim of crime, religious belief)

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



Any tertiary

2.1%

5.8%

6.3%

Matric/matric equivalent

23.8%

33.8%

43.1%

Grade 10/11

37.2%

39.0%

30.5%

Grade 9

11.2%

8.6%

6.7%

Less than Grade 9

25.8%

12.9%

13.3%

Poverty

- DHET based on data from Statistics South Africa: about 30% of South African university undergraduate students could comfortably pay fees; about 25% are supported through public financial aid. About 45% of students come from households that currently face some degree or a high degree of economic difficulty. Long-run average unemployment for degree holders is 4.2%. (cf to around 68% youth unemployment).
- So HE can be a source of social mobility – if students can get to the end.
- We have found that getting to the end requires above, all economic resources - *we are interested in what it means to be poor in the space of the university.*
- Thus, we are working with Lotter's view of poverty – as extreme or intermediate - to think about our 65 students.

Material basis of educational wellbeing

Poverty in relation to specificity of HE as social space of investigation	Extreme	Intermediate	Emergent (marginal) middle class
Definition	Basic needs not met Stats SA lower poverty level of R441 pm	Basic needs met, but loss of human dignity as a result of not being able to engage in typically human activities for normal decent human life (Lotter 2011) OR poor relative to others in the university/society. Probably slightly above upper poverty level of just under R1000 pm	Not in poverty but status precarious and will be first generation middle class. One or more family members/ siblings have completed HE, at least one parent has a secure job usually with govt. Sufficient disposable income to contribute to student's living and other costs (eg. laptop).
Miratho numbers	11.5%	73.1%	15.4%
Indicative functionings	Not able to afford a place to stay, to wash, or food to eat. Unable to pay university fees. Multi-dimensionally deprived; lack of economic and social freedoms.	Accommodation (may be 'squatting'), and food but some still food insecure. Unable to afford necessary toiletries or good clothing. Cannot always afford travel to Uni. Very limited family financial support. Capability deprivation in some aspects: respect, belonging, full participation in class, worries affect studies etc –social exclusion from range of university activities. But may still be included in human activity of classroom learning.	Access to 'hot knowledge' about HE. More security of income. Own laptop May still be income insecure in relation to payment of University fees Learning with far fewer worries

Evidence from student lives: Intermediate/Relative poverty

- Anathi – 21 years, female student, B.Ed, Provincial University, from rural Eastern Cape, mother domestic worker, four siblings, one completed school now unemployed, two still at school, has one cousin who is employed at supermarket

“You know, for my first year, like since I didn't have those expensive clothes, expensive things, you see how people dress on campus and stuff. I would feel so small. I would just sit in the corner and be like no, what am I doing here? I am just fooling with myself. I don't belong here and stuff. It's not actually nice. Even though like it was kind of difficult for me to ask for help, because I see people, I view them as they are different from me. Like, they won't understand even though I ask for help and stuff, so I just do things on my own...

I still feel like that. It hasn't changed. I still feel like that. Whenever we are going to class and then I see these girls talking and stuff and laughing and they talk about something I know, I still find it difficult for me to talk because it's like they are not there and they don't notice me. I don't know what I should improve, or I should improve my wardrobe or what, for them to notice me.”

Evidence from student lives: Emergent Middle Class

- Wanga – 18 years, female student, Mechanical Engineering, Metropolitan University, from rural Limpopo, mother works for Department of Agriculture (fisheries) 5 siblings, all attended college, brother is a teacher.

Gets an allowance of R1000 per month from her mother, and mother also pays rent of R1250 per month (shared flat)

When asked what she uses her allowance for:

“Okay, like I have to buy toiletries, and they cost around R300, all of them, which means I am left with R700, just because now I am self-catering, I have to buy groceries, and it’s around R400. I am left with only R300, and then I have to go to church also, and I spend about R35 per day, if I go like three times in a month, then it’s not enough.”

Poverty categories

- Dynamic and shifting.
- Lwazi, Rural University, 4th year medicine:
- ‘the struggle never ends, especially for a black child, it never ends. You want to think that you’ve went that uphill, but there’s another coming’.

Poverty and/or capability deprivation to explain ill/well-being of rural students?

- With regard to poverty, CA focuses not on what you have but on what you can do and be; *poverty is a lack of overlapping freedoms*. Sen urges a redefinition of poverty as capability deprivation, given that low income or lack of wealth are just some of many different ways in which human beings can suffer capability deprivation.
- We are broadly in agreement...but
- Our data is showing that the capability for sufficient-secure financial (material) resources needs to be in place before we consider other capability deprivations (broadly supported by Sen and perhaps by Nussbaum's notion of poverty as 'capability failure').
- Lotter (2011) and Wolff et al (2015) are helpful.

A Philosophical Review of Poverty, **Wolff, Lamb and Zur-Szpiro, JRF, 2015**

- Poverty as capability deprivation (as argued by Sen and Nussbaum) extends the meaning of poverty beyond its ordinary understanding.
- We think: lack of capability due to low income/economic capacities = poverty; BUT rich, with lack of capability due to e.g. discrimination, poor health = not poverty
- Avoid redefining poverty as capability deprivation. Rather – poverty refers to resource-related deprivation – even though this is only one part of possible human deprivation
- While ‘capability theory is an excellent theory of human development, we should resist the attempt to redefine poverty as capability deprivation...the more we emphasize other sources of deprivation, the less important poverty appears to be as central term’ (pg. 26-27)
- For our students – the material basis of educational wellbeing is foundational and has implications for (almost all) other aspects of their education wellbeing.

Emerging...

- Three central capabilities so far:
 1. to be able to access university;
 2. epistemic access/epistemic contribution (recognition as knowers) at university;
 3. to be able to have sufficient and secure financial resources for access into and through HE (even while we recognize that material resources alone do not equate to well-being).
- Two key opportunity structures:
 1. Finances (economic resource-based deprivation) and
 2. Quality of Teaching (school and university).
- Innovative conceptualization of learning outcomes as well-being and agency
- Shaped by multiple constraining conversion factors.

INDEX: Relevant Research Questions

1. How can the capabilities approach be applied analytically to the multiple data sets to produce a multi-dimensional inclusive higher education capabilities-based higher education Index?
[measurement, across all data sets]
2. How can the Index be used to inform policy and practice interventions that confront the structural inequalities impacting on learning outcomes of students from challenging contexts?
[impact space]

Quantitative Analysis

1

Focus: Evaluation of HE learning outcomes and the processes through which they are pursued, developed and achieved by young people and in particular disadvantaged youth.

2

Goal: The development of a multi- dimensional capabilities-based inclusive higher education index.

Data Sources



Individual:
Primary
data



**Family-
related:**
Primary data



School-level:
Primary and
secondary data
(i.e.
HEMIS data, Stats
SA, etc.)



Contextual:
Primary and
secondary data
(i.e.
Stats SA, etc.)

Variables to Consider – Inspired by the CA and the Qualitative Interviews



Endowments

Conversion Factors I

Capabilities

Conversion Factors II

Functionings

- **Individual:** individual income, owns textbooks
- **Family:** Family SES, Social Grants, Dwelling Characteristics, availability of study resources at home, internet access, etc.
- **Contextual:** presence of high school in the municipality, library in the municipality, poverty rate, highest educational levels achieved by youth population, etc.

- **Individual:** gender, race, language spoken, value attributed to education and HE specifically, friends' value of HE, individuals' access to information about HE, access to study resources, access to funding for HE, etc.
- **Family:** parents' education level, parents' support/attitudes towards HE, parents' employment status, brothers/sisters' edu. and employment status, number of household members, etc.
- **High School:** free or fee for high school, teacher: student ratio, access to study resources at school, matric grades, teachers' support for HE, career guidance, introduction to HE institutions, introduction to funding agencies for HE, overall experience of high school, etc.
- **Contextual:** rural/urban context, unemployment rate, return rate of HE, transportation available

- **Opportunity to Access HE and thereby potentially achieve HE Learning Outcomes:** free choice to access HE, free choice of degree course to enroll in, limits to access HE, alternatives to HE, etc.

- **Individual Factors:** interest in/value attributed to HE studies, class attendance, time dedicated to individual studying, availability of funding for HE, received funding from the TF, living on campus or at home, etc.
- **Family:** family financial resources to support HE, family emotional/cultural support to pursue HE, time to study at home, resources to study at home, limitations to succeeding in HE, etc.
- **HE characteristics:** access to educational resources at school, internet access, teacher:student ratio, quality of teaching, student diversity, various HEMIS indicators, etc.
- **Contextual:** availability of transportation to reach HE, enrollment and graduation rates from HE in district, etc.

- **Learning Outcomes of HE**
 - Cognitive outcomes:** general knowledge and domain specific know-how outcomes measured, for eg. through end of yrs school exams, or school grades, graduation, etc.
 - Non-Cognitive outcomes:** values, beliefs, self esteem, identity development, autonomy development, relational outcomes, etc.
 - Labour market Outcomes:** N. of employed within a yrs from graduation, etc.

Independent and control variables

Dependent
variables/composite index (Y)

Inclusive HE CA-based learning outcomes

Indices and potential composite

Access Index

Enrollment by race, gender, SES, rural/urban context and matric grades; funding opportunities; study guidance mechanisms and resources; graduation by race, gender, SES, rural/urban context etc.

Cognitive Learning Outcomes Index

End of year exam grades by subjects; maths-reading and science scores relative to PISA national averages; delta from initial exam results to end of yrs exams and graduation scores, graduation rates, self-assessed cognitive progress, etc.

Non-Cognitive Learning Outcomes Index

Self-assessed delta in autonomy, self-esteem, ability to speak up for oneself, aspirations, community participation, political participation,

Labour Market Outcomes Index

Employment status after 6 months and after a year of graduating, income after 6 months and after a year of graduating, self-assessed contribution of HE to current employment status, etc.

Possible Steps re the survey

- **Identify and define variables of interest and type of survey.**
- **Develop Questionnaire from October 2017**
- **Pilot April 2018**
- **Survey August 2018, follow-up August 2019.**

Stakeholders

Meeting/Workshop(Johannesburg March 2018)

- DHET, USAF, SAGEA (big employers), other employers (Business Initiative advice), REAP, student stakeholders - SAUS, all universities in SA, support services staff at univs.
- CHE, HELTASA, SAERA, Axiom Education, HSRC, Parliamentary Portfolio Comm on HE and Training (Connie September)
- British Council
- Media
- Student Associations: Religious, Sporting, Subject/Profession-based, Gauteng SRCs (logistics and funding for students outside Gauteng)

Impact

- How to reach policy-makers and practitioners and get change dialogue going
- Be bold, 'ruffle feathers'
- Tell story of relationship between HE and society from the student perspective, through life histories and survey data – rather than from the university/institution perspective