

About the Project

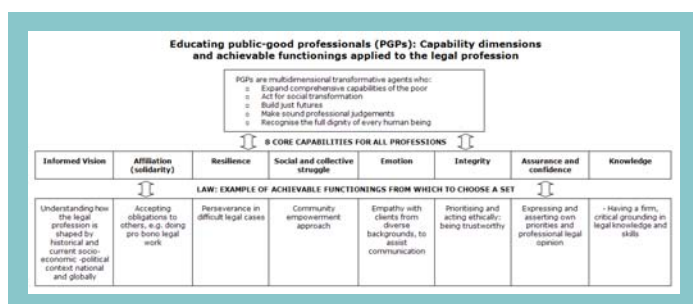
This 18 month project explores the contribution of Professional Education to poverty reduction in South Africa, using the capability approach developed by Amartya Sen (economics) and Martha Nussbaum (philosophy) as a framework for conceptualising poverty (www.nottingham.ac.uk/research/projects/mw-poverty-reduction.htm)

Funded by the ESRC/DfID Poverty Reduction programme; based in the School of Education, University of Nottingham; and linked with Faculty of Community and Health Sciences at the University of the Western Cape, South Africa.

Poverty reduction as 'capability' expansion

Having a capability means someone has the freedom to choose and realize beings and doings that are valuable to them. Well-being depends on these achieved functionings; advantage is assessed in terms of achievable functionings. Poverty reduction and educational and social transformation = capability expansion.

We use the capability approach both to conceptualise poverty, and as a framework for producing the capabilities that 'public good' professionals need to work towards poverty reduction in South Africa.



Key Questions

How can/ ought professional education in universities form public good professionals who are able to contribute to poverty reduction in South Africa?
What is the value of the capability approach?

Higher Education and Society in South Africa

Despite over a decade of democracy, poverty has not decreased in South Africa.

- ♦ 44.2% of SA households are deprived and poor; Gini coefficient of 1:100.
- ♦ But, South African Bill of Rights: 'enshrines the rights of all people in our country and affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom' and HE policy has a vision of transformation.
- ♦ A university's transformation in the content and style of its teaching, the ethos of the institution, a culture of equal recognition and respect in relationships between staff and students, can influence the degree to which graduates make professional choices to improve quality of life for the poor and marginalised.
- ♦ Professional education is at the nexus of universities and the societies they serve and a lens on transformation.

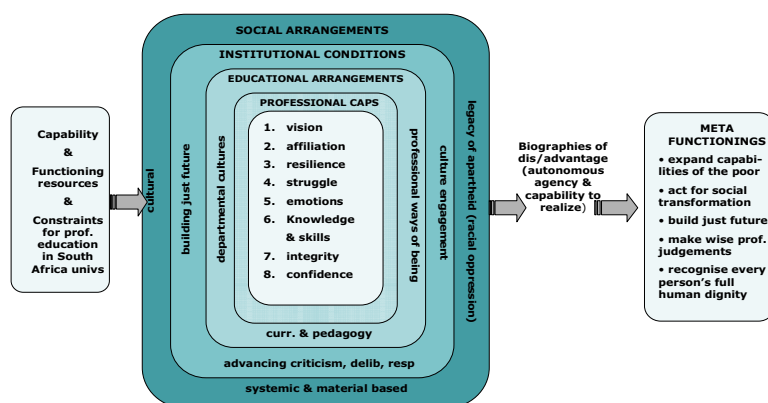
Methodology

- ♦ Five professional education case study sites at three historically diverse universities in South Africa: Public Health, Law, Engineering, Social Work, and Theology.
- ♦ 90 qualitative interviews: students, alumni, lecturers, senior faculty, professional bodies, NGOs.
- ♦ Textual analysis: statistics; documents such as South Africa's Bill of Rights and the White Paper on Higher Education, websites; newspapers; secondary literature.
- ♦ Participatory consultation with Research Working Groups (RWGs) at each of the three universities.

Contribution to knowledge/significance

- Capability-based theorisation of public good professionalism.
- 8 public good professional capabilities to inform policy and teaching and learning: informed vision; affiliation (solidarity); resilience; social and collective struggle; emotion; integrity; assurance and confidence; knowledge.
- Original Professional Capabilities Index (PCI):
 - ♦ 8 public good professional capabilities;
 - ♦ 4 university human development dimensions;
 - ♦ 4 educational arrangement dimensions;
 - ♦ 2 social constraint dimensions.
- Expanding and developing theorisation of capability approach to higher education, especially conceptualisations of 'other-regarding' agency and associative justice; of social consciousness and elite contributions to pro-poor policy; and capability to realize to integrate equity agendas and professional education agenda.

(Draft) Public Good Professional Capabilities Index (PGPCI) Walker, McLean, Dison & Vaughan, 2009



Impact

- ♦ Through RWGs participation/impact/dissemination built in from beginning; consultative development of PCI.
- ♦ Presentations, meetings and workshops in South Africa, UK and international conferences.
- ♦ Website for working papers, project information, and presentation slides.