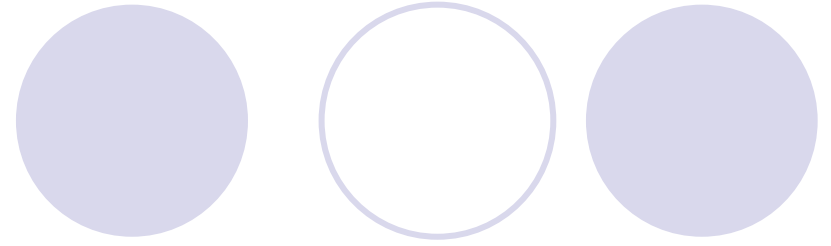
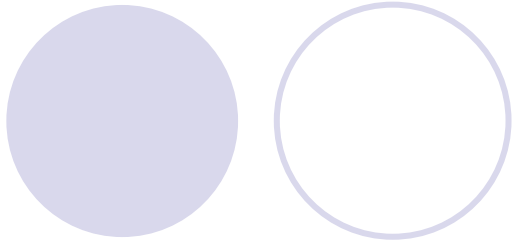


# **Higher education, capability expansion and pro-poor professionalism in South Africa**

Melanie Walker and Arona Dison,  
Presentation at UWC, 21/08/08



- Project website
- <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/education/projects/mw-poverty-reduction/index.php>.
- [We welcome suggestions for adding to/expanding the website.]



- The university is, at one and the same time, both the gatekeeper for the “state nobility” (Bourdieu 1996) and an agency for radical social change...at the faultline – in this case, on the front line of continuing – and worsening – poverty and inequality in South Africa. (Martin Hall, 2007)
- What is it about [higher education] which keeps alive our optimism in its socially transformative power and provides the preconditions for any socially transformative project, yet which also pulls in the opposite direction – towards an ethos of individual competition and the reproduction of a hierarchy of social advantage? (Ruth Jonathan, 2001)

# Why university education matters more than ever

- Nussbaum (2006): ‘Democratic citizens can also fail to think critically about what they hear, putting anger, fear, and power ahead of reason... The democratic mind is a human mind (and as human beings we are imperfect, embodying in each of us dark and light) [it can be] careless, prone to hasty and irrational thinking... [We need an education] that cultivates human beings and their humanity, rather than producing generations of useful machines’.
- Habermas: in universities the ‘lifeworld’ breaks through; we can continue to mobilize the resource of communicative reason in reaching for autonomy, justice and democracy.

# 'Transformation' = pro-poor = capability expansion

- The research project
- How might university transformation be understood as (i) contributing to poverty reduction; and (ii) contributing to poverty reduction through expanding the capabilities and functionings of students in professional education, who in turn are (iii) able to expand the capabilities of poor and disadvantaged individuals and communities?
- ...Because, how poor and vulnerable individuals and communities can be supported and empowered clearly rests on expanded economic opportunities, but human lives can also be enriched by access to public services staffed by professionals committed to human development.
- How does the capability approach assist in answering these questions?

# Poverty reduction



- Poverty is multi-dimensional: to include low income but also low quality of life and the denial of choices and opportunities for a tolerable life. What matters is 'well being'.
- Poverty reduction involves expanding human well-being and agency so that one might say poverty has been reduced when a human life has more well being or more 'capability' for well being. We are working with a definition of well being as the various opportunities and achievements that make up a good life for a person' it is multi-dimensional embracing 'all aspects of human life' (Clark and MacGillivray, 2007), and depends on the exercise/achievement of a range of human capabilities (Sen, 2007).
- Both well-being and poverty are multidimensional; 'capability expansion' is our philosophical basis of human development (Alkire, 2002).
- Poverty is defined in this project as capability failure and the deprivation of plural valuable freedoms (Alkire, 2002; Clark and MacGillivray, 2007)'; poverty reduction is therefore defined as capability expansion for well being and agency.

How through capability expansion can university/professional education contribute to the MDGs?

- Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- Achieve universal primary education
- Promote gender equality and empower women
- Reduce child mortality
- Improve maternal health
- Combat HIV and AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- Ensure environmental sustainability
- Develop a global partnership for development

# Why professional education?



- Professional education is at the nexus of universities and the societies they serve; it points inwards to institutional transformation, and outwards to social transformation.
- It is where academic knowledge, values and professionalism meet the world of practice and interact with the people who are the users and recipients of professional services.
- If universities are essential in processes of cultural change, in generating new values and helping to foster these values in society, then professional education is a key arena to put this to the test.



# Capabilities (opportunities to be and do) and functionings (actual beings and doings)

- CA focuses on what people are effectively able to do and to be - and the opportunities they have to be whom they want to be.
- In this project, this would apply both to clients ('comprehensive capabilities') and professionals ('human development professional capabilities').
- BUT given the rich array of relevant functionings how operational is the CA?

# Education capability?



- Perhaps the most important individual thing is for each of us to be capable of treating others with respect: that is something that is up to each of us, but which takes proper training [education, learning, pedagogy]. One must start with the internal capability of treating others with respect. (Richardson, 2007).

# Nussbaum's 3 education capabilities

- Martha Nussbaum: 'Education is a key to all human capabilities' (2006, p322).
- In higher education (Nussbaum, 1997) she advocates an education which develops each person's capacity 'to be fully human': someone who is: 'self-aware, self-governing, and capable of recognizing and respecting the humanity of all our fellow human beings, no matter where they are born, no matter what social class they inhabit, no matter what their gender or ethnic origin'.
- examined life (self); the ideal of the world citizen (society), and the development of the narrative imagination (others).

What kind of university/professional education would a capability perspective recommend?

- At the heart of the notion of a capability is a conception that a person is able to develop a reasoned understanding of valued beings and doings. This in itself is a powerful argument for forms of education, through which an individual can explore her own conception of what it is she has reason to value. If an important normative goal is capability expansion, then a university education is a part of expanding the capacity to make valued choices in other spheres of life and to each person having well-being.



But.....

- Capabilities do not mean skills or internal capacities. This shifts the focus to individual success or failure whereas the capability approach points to the social arrangements - for example pedagogical conditions or normative purposes of universities - that enable or diminish individual capability formation.

# Functionings



- The responsibility of a university committed to social transformation is to enable students to develop relevant capabilities while at university: that is, to impart the knowledge, skills and competence which constitute the capability to practice as professionals working for social transformation.
- But, we are interested also in their actual functionings as professionals - that they actually do exercise their professional capabilities in a way that furthers social transformation. These functionings then constitute a *proxy* for seeing how and if they are developing valuable capabilities.

# Comprehensive Human Capabilities (Nussbaum+ Wolff and De Shalit)

1. Life
2. Bodily Health
3. Bodily Integrity
4. Senses, Imagination and Thought
5. Emotions
6. Practical Reason
7. Affiliation
8. Other Species
9. Play
10. Control over one's environment
11. Doing good to others
12. Living in a law-abiding fashion
13. Understanding the law

# Participatively generating dimensions and metrics

- We have 3 RWGs working with us:
- an iterative impact strategy
- conceptualize transformation
- identify university transformation (poverty reduction/capability expansion) dimensions and metrics which are university specific, professional education specific, and common (across sites and universities);
- review these in the light of empirical data



# An example of a human development professional capability

<b>Human development professional capabilities</b>	<b>Professional goals and qualities as functionings</b>	<b>Indicators in/from professional education and training</b>
<b>Capability to be a change agent</b>	Forming a conception of the good Having pro-poor professional values Valuing human beings and their human dignity Integrating theory, practice and professional values. Working collectively with fellow professionals for transformation Identifying with the role of contributing to pro-poor professionalism beyond your own professions	Development of confidence to speak/argue/advocate  Leadership skills  Critical theoretical knowledge  Networking/professional capital/ability to work effectively with other agencies

# An example of a human development professional capability

Human development professional capabilities	Professional goals and qualities as functionings	Indicators in/from professional education and training
<b>Affiliation</b>	Showing concern for others Imagining and understanding how the world is experienced by poor persons Respecting each person's identity and dignity Acting in an ethical way	Pedagogies of discussion, dialogue, deliberation and collaborative work Respectful relations between staff and students, and students and students Learning how to identify and listen to the 'better' argument Learning to live with and value diversity; learning how to act/be interculturally aware and competent, and to act and communicate in an anti-sexist and anti-racist way

# University human development/ transformation (HDT) dimensions



- What multi-dimensional metrics can be developed to evaluate and assist change towards (i) formation of graduates who can contribute to the economic and social development of South Africa, and (ii) 'social transformation' and a role for universities in poverty reduction?
- 'Big' dimensions (of value, broad and vague) and more specific 'indicators'.

# Some examples.....

- HDT Dimension: '*Connectedness*' university is connected to society and society in turn is connected to the university; change in one influences change in the other. Indicators gender equality; (Habermasian) communicative reason; both critical scholars/hip and public intellectuals; research and teaching address the 'moral urgencies' of the city, region and country; leadership 'speaks truth to power'...
- HDT Dimension – '*Understanding and reducing poverty*': Indicators: rigorous research which addresses MDGs; public policy dialogues to integrate theory and practice; graduates have a strong sense of public service; graduates have knowledge and some understanding of and experience in thinking systematically about moral and ethical problems and can communicate with precision, cogency and force for greater equality....

# More examples.....



- HDT Dimension: '*Inclusive institution*' Indicators: staff and students with the capability of treating every person with respect; every student matters to every professor- a strong service ethic is widespread; every graduate has a profound sense of their value and human dignity; dialogic and participatory pedagogies; graduates with 'narrative imagination' – a broad and imaginative knowledge and understanding of other cultures and other times, able to make decisions based on reference to the wider world and to the historical forces that have shaped it...
- HDT Dimension: '*Graduates who are “strong evaluators”*' Indicators: capability for practical reason (to do the right thing, at the right time in the right circumstances); able to evaluate some ethical values or ideals or goods to be more important than other; able to reflect on and to be able to re-examine their valued ends, drawing on theory and academic knowledge....
- HDT Dimension.....Indicators.....



- How might we understand and explain the overlap of university dimensions and professional education dimensions, and both of these with ‘comprehensive capabilities’?
- What about transformation in relation to the complexity of any one university and the complexity of any one department?
- How do universities/teach/form/change values - in the direction of public values?

# ‘Pro-poor professionalism’?

- What is owed to the poor and disadvantaged by professionals?
- Not just any version of ‘pro-poor’: rather, how can professionals increase human well being by expanding people’s [comprehensive] capabilities and functionings to choose and have good lives?
- What practices and educational opportunities in higher education and training enable students to ‘act rightly’ as professionals in South African society? How does university education develop educational functionings and professional values by providing ‘transformational resources’ (Terzi, 2008) and ‘wide possibilities to learn in a stimulating environment’ (Terzi, 2008) so that students are able to become and be professionals committed to pro-poor human development as a core professional value, and guide to action.

# ‘Transformation’?



- How does this relate to transformation of each university? Specifically we are looking at whether and how human development and widening capability are social transformation goals for South African universities.



# A University for human development/(equal) capability expansion

- Human development : ‘creating an environment in which people can develop their full potential and lead productive, creative lives in accord with their needs and interests’ (UNDP, 2006)
- Goal of human development: ‘freedom’ to exercise genuine choices and to participate in decision-making that effects people’s lives’.
- Reinforced by human rights which help ‘to secure the well-being and dignity of all people, building self respect and the respect of others’ (UNDP, 2006).
- How does a University foster ‘human development?’; what dimensions are valuable and why (why does the University do what it does?).
- *What distinctively does each institutional environment offer? (Could Social Development or Law, or Public Health or Theology be done in the same way at another/different university? To what extent does the transformation of the Dept turn on the transformation of the University?)*



# Three capability expansion issues

- Capabilities or functionings?
- Selection of relevant/valuable capabilities [dimensions] which and by whom?)
- How to weight different capabilities [dimensions] for an overall assessment (indexing and trade-offs)?



# Choosing dimensions

- So, what would be the human development dimensions in a university contributing to social transformation as poverty reduction and the MDGs?
- What would be the human development/pro-poor dimensions in a professional education department ( e.g. graduate attributes, pedagogical processes, professional values and choices.....) contributing to social transformation as poverty reduction and the MDGs?
- How would we ‘measure’/evaluate them?



# Finally.....

- Alkire (2002) argues that the dimensions of human development should:
  1. be valuable (readily recognizable as the kinds of reasons for which oneself or others act).
  2. combine scope with specificity (both broad and clear).
  3. be critical and complete (taken together, should encompass any human value).
  4. not pertain to only one view of the good life.