South African universities and human development: Towards a theorisation and operationalisation of professional capabilities for poverty reduction

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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on a research project investigating the role of universities in South Africa in contributing to poverty reduction through the quality of their professional education programmes. The focus here is on theorising and the early operationalisation of multi-layered, multi-dimensional transformation based on ideas from Amartya Sen's capability approach. Key features of a professionalism oriented to public service, which in South Africa must mean the needs and lives of the poor, are outlined. These features include: the demand from justice; the expansion of the comprehensive capabilities both of the poor and professional capability formation to be able to act in 'pro-poor' ways; and, praxis pedagogies which shape this connected process. This theorisation is then tentatively operationalised in a process of selecting transformation dimensions.

1. Introduction

This paper reports on research in progress from an 18-month research project, directed by the lead author, and funded by ESRC/DfID to explore how university-based professional education and training might contribute to poverty reduction and human development in South Africa. The project is developing an interwoven theorising of equality, disadvantage and 'pro-poor' professionalism in investigating the transformation of universities to meet South Africa's human resource needs for the challenges of reconstruction, development and transformation in the 21st century.[1] The broad goal of our research project is to investigate poverty reduction, understood as 'human development' (Sen, 1999) as a social transformation goal for South African universities.

Specifically, the lens of professionalism and professional education has been identified as a measure for evaluating the extent to which universities are contributing to social change. We take the preparation of professionals as one of the essential social functions of the university; it is the 'pivotal point at which social needs and economic and political imperatives meet advancing knowledge and aspiring talent' (Sullivan, 2005, p. 10).

We describe this as 'pro-poor' professionalism but understand this not as top-down, paternalistic 'doing good to the poor', but as a public good professionalism which in South Africa, where poverty is deep and wide (Seekings and Nattrass, 2005), must mean improving the lives of the poor. Our focus is on how higher education then develops educational functionings and professional values by providing transformational resources of teaching and learning so that students might choose to be professionals responsibly committed to pro-poor human development as a core professional value and guide to action. However, the research also includes careful empirical attention to the specific social and educational capability constraints confronting transformative professional education in South African universities.

Our theorising is shaped by Sen's (1992, 1999) capability approach and its further development by Nussbaum (2000); we are therefore exploring how university transformation might be understood as two intersecting layers of an educational contribution to poverty reduction:

(i) through expanding the capabilities and functionings of students in professional education; who in turn are able
(ii) to expand the capabilities of poor and disadvantaged individuals and communities.

The research team is developing case studies at three South African universities selected for their diverse historical trajectories of apartheid dis/advantage, to include an historically white,

English medium university, an historically white, Afrikaans medium university and an historically black university.[2] We have selected five professional education sites, at least one in each university, comprising social work, law, engineering, public health and theology. These professional sites have both been selected pragmatically in relation to access to research sites, but also to represent a cross-section of different professional groups which includes those working more and less directly at the interface of professional contributions and the lives of the poor and vulnerable. While data includes statistical information and relevant policy and university documents, the central data set is made up of qualitative interviews at each professional education site of lecturers and heads of departments, students, alumni, NGOs and professional bodies, together with senior university leaders. A research working group at each university acts as consultants to the project and a sounding board for our analysis, theorisation and dimensions of 'professional capabilities'.

2. 'Transformation': challenge and change

As many scholarly commentators remind us, everywhere universities and the professional education located within them have the potential, enshrined in their histories, to pursue either reproductive or transformative goals (McLean et al., 2008). Our discussion about strengthening professionalism for the public good and public service is located in the South African Constitution, which enshrines the ideals of improving the quality of life of all citizens and establishing a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights (Magasela, 2006). It is further bolstered by the White Paper on Higher Education (DOE, 1997) which identifies the purposes of higher education in South Africa as contributing to societal transformation by combining economic priorities with the need to support a democratic civil society. The transformation agenda set out in the White Paper is then both a resource to advocate change, and a major challenge; it declares that 'higher education [be] transformed to meet the challenges of a new non-racial, non-sexist and democratic society committed to equity, justice and a better life for all' (p. 4), underpinned by transformations in identities, learning and a culture of respect. Thus a transformed higher education system promotes equity and access for individual development, but also the building of a peaceful, prosperous and democratic society.

Transformation in relation to South African universities is commonly understood to refer to changing demographics of race and gender (Cloete et al., 2006). Our understanding includes the importance of these shifts and acknowledges that racially and gender distorted higher education obstructs deep transformation and democratic cultures. At the same time we also understand that transformation needs to extend beyond race and gender demographics to include attention to social class (Hall, 2007), not only the social class of students entering and succeeding in universities but also the much wider issue of the poor in South Africa and how they are to benefit from publicly-funded higher education, as the White Paper implies. We think one way in which this ought to happen is through universities educating professionals who are all critically aware (regardless of their own gender, race or class) of the society in which they will work and oriented to understanding and acting on their own individual and collective responsibility to act to bring about improvements. Our argument is that when universities do certain kinds of things, certain kinds of student professionals are formed. This is further developed in the paper as aspects of justice.

Suffice to note at this point that, as Morrow (1998, p. 387) points out, higher education institutions 'are major distributors of benefits in society, especially those benefits which stretch forward into the future'. Such benefits need to be made available to South African society now and in the future and public good professional education is a significant distributive mechanism in this process. Transforming universities then involves demographic shifts but also developing people [professionals] who can contribute to changing society. The view of transformation that informs this project is therefore that, 'transformation is not just its own goal; the goal is an improved, more just and more equitable society' (Van Niekerk, 1998, p. 301). Another way to put this, is to say that a transformation process would involve universities contributing to human development but in ways also appropriate to their positioning as higher education institutions, in this project, the professional education they provide.

Yet the social and educational challenges are immense, given the continuing legacy of apartheid inequality and oppression, including racially skewed professional groups. The South African Finance Minister, Trevor Manuel, said on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the founding of the United Democratic Front[3] that public servants, who should be the 'mainstay for transformation', have lost the passion for their work. He continued in his public speech that, 'Our ability to deliver a deep and durable democracy focused on improving living standards will never be attained without the commitment of our public servants in the key social sciences' (quoted in Joseph, 2008, p. 3). Manuel's speech points to a tension, which we acknowledge in our discussion of universities and transformation. There is the pull on the one hand, 'towards an ethos of individual competition and the reproduction of a hierarchy of social advantage' (Jonathan, 2001, p. 48) and, on the other, towards social transformation.

This is further exacerbated by absolute and relative income poverty in South Africa. If household incomes are divided into deciles, and the relationship between the lowest and highest decile is expressed as a ratio, most countries in the South have a ratio of between 1:10 and 1:20. The ratio for Brazil is about 1:50. The ratio for South Africa is more than 1:100, and continues to widen (Hall, 2007; Seekings and Nattrass, 2005). While taking serious note of this wealth inequality, in our project we are working with a multi-dimensional understanding of poverty and poverty reduction to include both low income and low quality of life. We are influenced by literature and research on empowerment of the poor, which emphasises the importance of dignity and empowerment. For example, 60000 people in Narayan et al's (2000) comprehensive project on the *Voices of the Poor* spoke about the importance of relationships of, 'respect, not being rude, honesty, fairness, not being corrupt, truthful, not lying, not cheating, listening, and being caring, loving, kind and compassionate, hard-working, helpful and professional' (2000, p. 188). These perceptions map over Nussbaum's (2000) concern with human dignity and that each person is treated as a human being worthy of respect and dignity; we have intrinsic worth by virtue of our human beingness. Nussbaum writes that the idea of human dignity 'has broad cross-cultural resonance and intuitive power' (2000, p. 72); 'each person [is] a bearer of value, and an end' (2000, p. 73). Indeed, it features prominently in the 1996 South African Bill of Rights South African Government, 1996). 'What this approach is after', Nussbaum says, 'is a society in which persons are treated as each worthy of regard, and in which each has been put in a position to live really humanly' (2000, p. 74). Enabling people 'to live really humanly' is to reduce

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[2] For a detailed account of the historically trajectories and development commitments of different kinds of South African universities, and for an explanation of these descriptors, see Cloete et al. (2006).

[3] The United Democratic Front comprised a broad ANC-aligned aligned coalition of mass democratic organisations, formed in 1983 to resist and overturn apartheid from within South Africa. See Seekings (2000).

poverty. To reduce poverty in this way is to exercise a pro-poor, public good professionalism.

It is this form of professionalism that we suggest South African universities committed to social transformation ought to make available through their professional education programmes. While there is no guarantee that graduate professionals will want or, indeed, be able to use the full range of capabilities their education and training bestow, education for professionalism for the public good can nonetheless be understood as a matter of justice.

3. Pro-poor, public good professional education in universities

3.1. The demand from justice to professionalism

We are therefore working with two fundamental principles of justice to evaluate professional education and professionalism. Where there are difficult trade-offs to be made or where pedagogy and quality requires scrutiny, it is to these principles of justice that we turn in adjudicating practices and public policy. The first has a stronger focus on the individual self, the second a stronger focus on others.

The first, following Terzi (2008), would be equality in developing selected valuable professional capabilities. There would be a commitment to each student having equal opportunity through the design of pedagogical arrangements to participate and succeed in higher education 'as an equal among others' (Terzi, 2008, p. 184). What matters for justice in the context of a society struggling with an apartheid past is that students have equal access to and success at university, across a diversity of race, gender, social class, and so on. Who then has the advantage of becoming a professional where such opportunities have been racially skewed in the past, and in some professions has been gender exclusive, then needs attention.

The second principle of justice would involve obligations to others who do not have the advantage of higher education. Drawing on Rawl's (2001) difference principle, Terzi (2008) argues that where only some have the advantage of developing more complex educational functionings, justice requires that this inequality should 'benefit others, as well as ourselves' (p. 163). Thus, while the South African government constitutionally guarantees equal liberties, people face ongoing choices about how to use those liberties in their lives and with others. For professionals, we propose that:

> It is their right, and their obligation, to use these liberties responsibly, both for their own benefit and the good of others. To do this they [professionals] need to weigh reasons and evidence for different courses of action: the capacity for rational reflection is an essential tool for this. (Brighouse, 2002, p. 10.)

Sen (2008, p. 336) explains that capability (further elaborated later in this paper) 'is a kind of power' and a 'central concept in human obligation' to use that power for social betterment. In becoming certain kinds of people through higher education – being knowledgeable, being confident, being able to reason critically, being reflexive choosers – we also take on social obligations. Within the human development and capabilities approach is an implicit call to people to take responsibility 'to bring about the changes that would enhance human development in the world' (Sen, 2008, p. 335). Sen (2008) points out that most theories of justice propose that social cooperation as a form of mutual obligation is reasonable because it brings joint benefits. The view he proposes differs: 'It is based on the argument that if someone has the power to make a change that he or she can see will reduce injustice in the world, then there is a strong social argument for doing just that' (p. 335). This social reasoning obliges anyone with

the power (like professionals) to use this power to help others, even if it is asymmetrical. When we have the advantage of a higher education which is 'relevant to major ends of human life' (Nussbaum, 1990, p. 192) – for our purposes in becoming lawyers, health professionals, engineers and so on – 'how exhilarating that activity then is, and how deep', says Nussbaum (1990, p. 192), 'the obligations it then imposes'.

Justice provides us with a principled basis for deciding what we distribute, to whom and why for just social arrangements and for the design of institutions. Justice describes the obligations we have towards each other (Brighouse, 2004; Sen, 2008; Terzi, 2008,). While we recognize the limits as well as the possibilities of the contributions professionals might make to reducing poverty, we are also of the view that 'justice cannot be a matter only of the state-legislated structure in which people act but is also a matter of the acts they choose within that structure, the personal choices of daily lives' (Cohen, 2000, p. 122). Even in the face of overwhelming poverty there is something professionals, having had the advantage of higher education which forms and expands their professional capabilities, can do to 'nudge' (Thaler and Sunstein, 2008) people's lives in a direction which enables them to have more well-being.

We therefore arrive at the normative view that the better off in South African society – like professionals – 'must become highly sensitive to moral appeals' for there to be progress in solidarity to link the better with the worst off (Cohen, 2000, p. 112). What is owed to the poor by professionals? In turn, what practices and educational opportunities in higher education and training enable students to 'act rightly' (Brighouse, 2008, p. xi) as professionals in South African society?

3.2. Capability and functioning of both professionals and the poor

In our project we advance our framework for 'pro-poor professionalism' as the expansion of people's capabilities—both the people to whom professionals provide a service and the professionals themselves. Reducing poverty 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' (Sen, 1992, 1999). Poverty is thus defined in this project as capability failure; poverty reduction is defined as capability expansion. More capability equates to less poverty.

Capabilities are the real and actual freedoms (opportunities) people have to do and be what they value being and doing; the capability approach (Sen, 1992, 1999; Nussbaum, 2000) in our project is a means to theorise questions of justice, equality and professional education. Sen focuses on what people are actually able to be and do, personally and in comparison to others, and on the self-determination of their ends and values in life to generate reflective, informed choices of ways of living that each person deems important and valuable—to choose and lead a life one values. Put simply, the capability approach asks us to evaluate well-being in terms of what people value being and doing, and to work to increase their freedom to be in those ways or to do those things.

Capabilities are constitutive of human well-being. Thus well-being freedom depends on the underlying capability so that 'the capability set gives us information on the various functioning vectors that are within reach of a person' (Sen, 1992, p. 41–42). In this way capability and well-being are tightly connected. Following Sen (1992) we take (achieved) functionings to be constitutive of a person's well-being and their absence to suggest ill-being. For example, both having the opportunity to appear in public without shame and actually appearing in public without shame constitute well-being. The ability to go about without shame highlights 'the need for dignity, respect and freedom from humiliation' (OPHI,

2008)—both to have the opportunity and to actually exercise such freedom. To take another example, not just the opportunity for empowerment, or agency, but being able to exercise such agency in advancing the goals one values. By looking at capability and functioning and making interpersonal comparisons we are at the same time comparing one person's well-being (or ill-being) with that of another. Thus equality in key capabilities (dimensions) points to equality in social and educational arrangements.

For our purposes it then follows that 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 ways that further social transformation.

We might describe functionings in another way as professional 'beings and doings' that are valuable to the professionals who emerge from higher education. For example if it matters to a student that their work as a professional will contribute to poverty reduction in the wider society, then their training should widen and expand their capability to function as such a professional. Our understanding of poverty reduction would entail, for example, an ethic of care and respect for the vulnerable and disadvantaged in society. In classrooms, practical settings and assessment tasks of a course which successfully expanded professional capabilities, we would expect to see the students functioning in this way. If we think it is important for students to develop critical perspectives on knowledge and scholarship, then we would want to see them functioning in this way. Functionings would be proxies for what are calling human development professional capabilities.

3.3. Praxis pedagogy

We think that the form of education and training that will foster pro-poor values is a kind of praxis pedagogy which is transformative, critical, and attentive both to knowledge and to responsible action in society. Praxis is understood here to involve both the integration of academic knowledge (acquired at university) and 'practical knowledge reflected in how one lives as a citizen and human being … informed by *phronesis* or practical wisdom' (Bridges et al., 2008, p. 9–10). Professional education ought then to enable each student to acquire and apply knowledge towards 'socially and politically committed action' and to be able to clarify their own conception of the good (Elliott and Lukes, 2008, p. 101). We see praxis pedagogies having three key elements and we elaborate these briefly (McLean et al., 2008):

(i) Firstly contextual knowledge and understanding. It is indisputable that professionals in South Africa work and will continue to work in challenging circumstances. A broad, critical and reflective understanding of context in which they will be working will assist in thinking about possibilities as well as what is needed to make changes. A sense of history in general and an understanding of the history of specific professions can develop a sense that things need not be as they are now.

(ii) Secondly, developing identity, commitment and community. Professionals oriented to the public good in South Africa cannot afford to become domesticated; nor can the country afford them to be. They will need to raise strong and principled voices in policy-making forums and in the communities where they practice. Courage and resilience will be needed. The work of change agency cannot be left only to individuals so that making affiliations is crucial. Making alliances within one's own profession and with progressive groups in society will be a sustaining part of professional work. The first affiliations should be made in the professional department or school (Freidson, 2004); and for this the students need to experience 'participation in the development of a shared culture which includes their fellow student–professionals' and their teachers' dialogue and contention with each other' (Sullivan, 2005, p. 271).

(iii) Thirdly, transformative learning to mirror the emphasis on transformation in South African society. We use the concept of transformative learning to convey the idea of learning, which integrates individual and collective interests, which we think relevant to professional education for the public good. Our definition of transformative learning involves students being challenged at personal (values, assumptions, attitudes) and social or discursive (underlying assumptions or worldview) levels (Taylor and Fransman, 2004). Transformative learning must incorporate critical reflective enquiry, and it should take emotions seriously (Palmer, 2007). Progressive educators have proposed versions of transformative learning which can be used as resources to develop indicators: for example, Waghid (2006) proposes that for the transformation of society South Africa needs to substitute for the transmission mode, which dominates, a pedagogy of deliberation and mutual respect in which students are fully participative.

To sum up then, our theorising of pro-poor professionalism is underpinned by two principles of justice: equal capability and obligations to others. It has three core features: demands from justice, the expansion of professional capabilities and praxis pedagogies.

4. Developing dimensions of pro-poor professional education

We now turn to consider how we are attempting to operationalise this theoretical approach in choosing dimensions of pro-poor professional education in South African universities. This involves a four stage process: (i) choosing comprehensive capabilities that make for a fully human life; (ii) selecting a subset of professional capabilities; (iii) identifying university transformation dimensions; and, (iv) bringing these three together as a multidimensional scorecard.[4] Thus as work-in-progress, we have drafted a provisional list of dimensions of pro-poor professionalism and professional education oriented to the human development of each and every person, both clients and professionals. Remember that we are exploring how universities contribute to poverty reduction through expanding the capabilities and functionings of students in professional education, who in turn are able to expand the capabilities of poor and disadvantaged individuals and communities. We make no attempt to index or prioritize any of the capabilities in each dimension and take each one to be important and valuable, influencing and shaping the formation of all others.

We therefore first elaborate comprehensive dimensions; all the capabilities everyone needs for full human flourishing. But given our research focus we have also posed the further question: which of these capabilities and functionings are specific to professionals working for social transformation and which should, therefore, be incorporated as broad goals in pro-poor professional education and training? Ideally students' professional education programme should expand their capability to exercise their functioning professional capabilities.

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[4] The idea of a 'scorecard' has been taken up specifically in education by Unterhalter et al. (2005) and Morley (2005).

We have identified indicators of the kind of professional education and training that fosters capability development and functioning for students, orienting them to working in particular ways with poor persons and communities, and to appreciate that poverty is multi-dimensional and that poverty can be reduced in some way through professional action. Thus professionals might work to expand people's dignity, work with them in respectful ways, work with other professionals and civic society to lobby for increases in social grants, and so on. Such pro-poor professional action, because it is grounded in capability expansion which takes people to be agents of and in their own development, ought not then to be understood as paternalistic or condescending.

A set of dimensions should be 'thick' (Nussbaum, 2000), that is philosophically and theoretically meaningful in relation to a life of full human dignity, also 'vague' (Nussbaum, 2000) in not being over specified or derived from a particular metaphysical worldview (for example secular or religious). We need a framework of dimensions for the purposes of evaluation and comparison of one life with another life. We need to say what it is we want to develop and what the ends of development ought to be and how we will know, and to be able to identify practical ways to evaluate difficult trade-offs where choice might be expanded in some dimension while being restricted in another, for example, more academic knowledge or more experiential learning. Moreover, in the 'spirit of the capability approach, the process of specification should be collaborative, visible, defensible and revisable' (Alkire, 2002, p. 20). We do not expect or want these dimensions/capabilities to be complete or exact; we develop them here for the purposes of public dialogue in the project and with others who may be interested in this approach.

Alkire (2007, p. 90) suggests five steps, which we have followed, for choosing valuable dimensions:

1. Use existing data. [We are using data on diversity in universities and secondary literatures on South African higher education.]
2. Make assumptions—perhaps based on theory. [We are theorising from the capability approach, from professionalism and from key concepts like 'transformation'.]
3. Draw on an existing list that was generated by consensus. [We are using Nussbaum's list and its expansion by Wolf and De-Shalit as the working basis for comprehensive capabilities for the poor.]
4. Use an ongoing deliberative participatory process. [We have an iterative impact strategy in which we work alongside a research working group in each university, post papers and information on the project website and plan dissemination workshops with a range of stakeholders, following data collection.]
5. Propose dimensions based on empirical studies of people's values and/or behaviours. [Our data includes documentary and statistical evidence and interviews with students, lecturers, university leadership, alumni, professional bodies and NGOs.]

5. Pro-poor professional capabilities and functionings

We are of the view that the combined Nussbaum (2000) and Wolff and De-Shalit (2007) list constitutes a useful comprehensive list, broad and vague to allow for contextual variations in how such capabilities might actually look in different situations. In the list below capabilities 1–10 are drawn from Nussbaum's central universal capabilities which are all required for a fully human life. Numbers 11–13 are elaborations derived from Wolff and De-Shalit's research. Taken together we consider them a useful working list of multi-dimensional comprehensive capabilities in

Comprehensive capabilities (from Nussbaum; Wolff and De Shalit) [5]
1. Life
2. Bodily Health
3. Bodily Integrity
4. Senses, imagination and thought
5. Emotions
6. Affiliation
7. Practical reason
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

Fig. 1. Comprehensive capabilities.

the lives of each poor person, up to a certain threshold as Nussbaum suggests, to be determined constitutionally (Fig. 1[5]).

We thought there might be a case to be made for the comprehensive list to inform broader university decision-making and the institutional ethos beyond the specificity of curriculum and pedagogy in a department. For example, we discussed the issue of HIV/AIDS education and the impact of AIDS on the number of professionals in South Africa. We therefore thought that life and bodily health did matter for the wider institution (and for the comprehensive list for the poor) but was not specific to professional education (except as curriculum content for some professional groups). We further discussed the issue of bodily integrity given the high incidence of crime and rape in South Africa (Dison et al., 2008) and the evidence of harassment and violence against women on many South African campuses (Shore, 2003). We were of the view that fear of harassment and violence on campus was an issue for the university, and would be an issue for a department in so far as there was a failure in the social arrangements at the university to support bodily integrity.

But we did not feel that all these capabilities needed to be applied in the space of professional education in universities, and in curriculum and pedagogy. Therefore, bearing the above list in mind and taking into account early engagements with colleagues working in the three case study universities, we have drafted a small preliminary number of dimensions from the comprehensive capabilities list which would be particularly relevant to professionals working for social transformation. By considering praxis pedagogies as elaborated earlier we link these capabilities to a common set of features or indicators in professional education and training that would develop valuable human development professional capabilities. We therefore worked to begin relating selected 'comprehensive' capabilities, human development professional functionings as proxies for capabilities, and how these might appear as indicators in curriculum and pedagogy for professional education and training.

It was not our plan to work out all the possible professional capabilities as our intention is to work with the universities to flesh out, refine and change this list.

What follows is our work-in-progress in conceptualising professional capabilities. We suggest two in the first instance – the capability to be a change agent and the capability for affiliation – which we take to be architectonic 'fertile functionings' (Wolff and

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[5] For an elaboration of each of these central, comprehensive capabilities and a detailed explanation of what each means (for example 'other species') see Nussbaum (2000, pp. 78–80) and for Wolff and De-Shalit's (2007) explanation for their expansion of Nussbaum's list see pp. 187–191.

De-Shalit, 2007, p. 10). Securing fertile functionings 'is likely to secure further functionings' (Wolff and De-Shalit, 2007, p. 10). Similarly 'corrosive disadvantages' such as disrespect for students or disrespect for poor persons in practice settings yields further disadvantages (Wolff and De-Shalit, 2007, p. 10), in our case it would diminish pro-poor professionalism.

Because pedagogy and student development is institutionally framed, and because there are institutional dimensions to inequality of capabilities, in this project we have further begun to develop institutional dimensions and more specific indicators which point to the social arrangements that shape capability formation. Both institutional context and pedagogical sites need to be held together. We therefore also need to produce dimensions of human development transformation at university level. This is not to say that professional departments cannot 'work against the grain' in a non-supportive university contexts (and we have examples of this from the apartheid past) but rather to make the point that Sen (1992, 1999) is always concerned with social arrangements and how these work to expand or reduce capabilities. The broader university ethos will play a role in shaping the formation of students and what they might potentially be and value (Higgins, 2007).

The university transformation dimensions are selected and identified specifically in relation to the formation of students in professional programmes, although they would of course apply to the formation of all graduates. On the one hand, this specificity might exclude some dimensions with resonance outside of professional programmes, but on the other hand they would work relationally and iteratively for comprehensive and professional functional capabilities. The idea is to frame the scorecard in ways which it has specificity which ought to make it useful for thinking about university transformation and professional education.

One of the examples we are developing in thinking about this is the institutional dimension of 'connectedness':

Institutional dimensions reflect back and on pedagogical arrangements which foster the capability and functioning development of students, studying in diverse professional fields, and how they are being prepared for what it means to 'act rightly' as a professional in conditions of profound inequality and poor quality of life for large numbers of South Africans.

Finally, we bring them together in some kind of multi-dimensional, layered and interconnecting evaluation 'scorecard' or heuristic, in which we have three intersecting dimensions all of which influence each other, and none of which ought to stand alone.

The second and third columns need both to be added to, and each dimensions fleshed out, in the case of professional capabilities we add in features of professional education elaborated in Fig. 2

Index of dimensions of professional capabilities (PCI)	Functionings or professional goals and qualities	Features of professional education and training.
Capability to be a change agent	• Being able to form a conception of the good • Having 'pro-poor' professional values; valuing human beings and their human dignity. • Having critical theoretical knowledge, but also able to integrate theory, practice and professional values. • Leadership skills and confidence to speak/ advocate. • Able to mobilize resources for change • Strong sense of their own effective agency.	1. Contextual knowledge and understanding. 2. Developing identity, commitment and community. 3. Transformative learning.
Capability for affiliation/s	• Showing concern for others; imagining and understanding how the world is experienced by poor persons. • Respecting each	1. Contextual knowledge and understanding. 2. Developing identity, commitment and community. 3. Transformative learning.
	person's identity and dignity • Acting in an ethical way • Ability to work effectively with other agencies; working collectively with fellow professionals for transformation. • Contributing to pro-poor professionalism beyond own profession	

Fig. 2. Professional capabilities.

Dimension of university transformation	Indicator
Connectedness	• University is connected to society and society in turn is connected to the university, change in one influences change in the other. • Both critical scholarship and public intellectuals. • Research and teaching address the 'moral urgencies' of poverty in the city, region and country. • Leadership 'speaks truth to power'.

Fig. 3. University transformation dimensions.

Multi dimensional 'scorecard' for pro-poor [public good] professional education and university transformation		
Dimensions of comprehensive capabilities of the poor	**Dimensions of professional. capabilities and functionings**	**Dimensions of university transformation**
Life; bodily health; bodily integrity; senses, imagination and thought;...etc	Able to be a change agent...etc	Connectedness...etc

Fig. 4. Scorecard for pro-poor professional education.

and for university transformation dimensions, the indicators elaborated in Fig. 3. We further need to develop indicators for professional education such as demographic data, throughput data, staff–student ratios, and so on (Fig. 4).

For example, for graduate professionals to work to expand the capabilities of the poor they need themselves to develop the functional capability to be transformative agents. To do this, in turn they need exposure to professional programmes in which curriculum, pedagogy and assessment fosters the appropriate knowledge, understanding and identity. In turn again, a university which is connected to changing society through attention to poverty reduction will provide a context which further encourages such ways of being, and supports and rewards professional departments in pursuing these goals. Finally who is getting access of professional education and who is succeeding is an issue of equality in capabilities.

6. Conclusion

We are currently refining and elaborating professional capabilities from the empirical data and producing university dimensions in conversation with the research working groups. What we do not yet have is a method to link dimensions and indicators to some kind of metric. We want to avoid being reductive so it may be that this cannot be done without sacrificing complexity. Notwithstanding this problem of measurement, we suggest that the theorisation of pro-poor/public good professionalism outlined here and grounded in professional capabilities and a professional capability index (PCI) offers a generative approach to equality, advantage and social change which might be taken up in diverse educational settings. We hope that this research will contribute to debates on transformation of universities in South Africa, offering a fresh perspective from capabilities, and contribute substantially to theorisations of professional agents' responsibilities for poverty reduction which are respectful of and empowering for the poor.

We think the development of a professional capabilities index addresses these challenges creatively and generatively, taking account of professional values, critical knowledge and responsible and ethical practices. In the end professions, professionals and the public institutions of health and social care systems and legal structures are public goods requiring a social partnership between professionals and the publics they serve (Sullivan, 2005). Universities therefore have a key role to play in social transformation in educating professional who understand and embrace professions as 'good work' (Sullivan, 2005, p. 13). In our view this constitutes a substantial contribution towards meeting the policy commitment in the White paper on Higher Education (DOE, 1997) and the aspirations of the South African Bill of Rights (1996) to enshrine 'the rights of all people in our country and affirm[s] the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom' in a good society, one that university-educated professionals and universities have a shared commitment and responsibility to build. This is not to claim naively that university education can be expected to deliver structural change in macroeconomic policy, unemployment, health, poverty and so on. It is to argue that the capability approach, operationalised in this project as dimensions of professional capability formation, aligned with university transformation dimensions, points theoretically, discursively and practically in a direction which enables human potentials through a practice of public good professional education.

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