Professionals and Public-Good Capabilities

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Abstract

Martha Nussbaum (2011) reminds us that, all over the world people are struggling for a life that is fully human - a life worthy of human dignity. Purely income-based and preference-based evaluations, as Sen (1999) argues, do not adequately capture what it means for each person to have quality of life. There are other things that make life good for a person, including access to publicly provided professional services. The question then is what version of education inflects more towards the intrinsic and transformational possibilities of professional work and contributions to decent societies? This paper suggests that we need a normative approach to professional education and professionalism; it is not the case that any old version will do. We also need normative criteria to move beyond social critique and to overcome a merely defensive attitude and to give a positive definition to the potential achievements of the professions. Moreover universities are connected to society, most especially through the professionals they educate; it is reasonable in our contemporary world to educate professional graduates to be in a position to alleviate inequalities, and to have the knowledge, skills and values to be able to do so. To make this case, we draw on the human capabilities approach of Sen (1999, 2009) and Nussbaum (2000, 2011) to conceptualise professional education for the public good as an ally of the struggles of people living in poverty and experiencing inequalities, expanding the well-being of people to be and to do in ways they have reason to value – to be mobile, cared for, respected, and so on. In particular we are interested in which human capabilities and functionings are most needed for a professional practice and professionalism that can contribute to transformative social change and how professional development is enabled via pedagogical arrangements.

Keywords: Amartya Sen, human capabilities approach, Martha Nussbaum, professional education, public good, social justice.

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Introduction

Martha Nussbaum (2011) reminds us that, all over the world people are struggling for a life that is fully human - a life worthy of human dignity. What theoretical approaches could then be the ally of these struggles and situations, and direct attention to an analysis of and recommendations for university-based professional education to enable well-being for all? Purely income-based and preference-based evaluations, as Sen (1999) argues, do not adequately capture what it means for each person to have quality of life. There are other things that make life good for a person, including access to publicly provided professional services. The question then is what version of education inflects more towards the intrinsic and transformational possibilities of professional work and contributions to decent societies? We suggest that we need a normative approach to professional education and professionalism; it is not the case that any old version will do. We also need normative criteria to move beyond social critique, to overcome a merely defensive attitude and to give a positive definition to the potential achievements of the professions. Moreover universities are connected to society, most especially through the professionals they educate; it is reasonable in our contemporary world to educate professional graduates to be in a position to alleviate inequalities, and to have the knowledge, skills and values to be able to do so.

To make our case, we draw on the human capabilities approach of Sen (1999, 2009) and Nussbaum (2000, 2011) to conceptualise professional education for the public good as an ally of the struggles of people living in poverty and experiencing inequalities, expanding the well-being of people to be and to do in ways they have reason to value – to be mobile, cared for, respected, and so on. Such a version of professionalism seeks to advance human development (Haq, 1999) in society, by which we mean, creating enabling and empowering conditions for human well-being, flourishing and agency. It takes as its yardstick freedoms and well-being and asks about the real opportunities people have to flourish. It asks us to consider the normative, the structural, and the subjective (real lives with histories, abilities, and so on), all of which are necessary for the theory and practice of professional lives. In particular we are interested in which human capabilities and functionings are most needed for a professional practice and professionalism that can contribute to transformative social change and how professional development is enabled via pedagogical arrangements. But also, what constrains or enables such professional orientations educationally and socially. Moreover, professional work is complex; professionalism has never been neutral and apolitical and can be understood as a discourse, as part of an ongoing politics of knowledge, power and social organisation (Freidson, 2004; Larson Sarfatti, 2013).

We can draw on the idea that professions can and should build their moral missions and the integrity of professional life. In this vein, the potential meaning and value of professional work are strongly evaluated by Sullivan:

> Anyone who has been stirred and inspired by a committed teacher, an attentive health care provider, a dedicated pastor or rabbi; anyone who has experienced a well-functioning business firm or public agency, school or cultural institution has glimpsed the enlivening possibilities inherent in communities of professional purpose. (Sullivan, 2005: 290)

What is further needed is what Sen (2009) describes as a process of 'public reasoning' where we subject versions of professionalism to public scrutiny and discuss together a public philosophy which can capture the possibilities of professionalism and its purposes for humanising professional work and improving well-being and justice in contemporary societies. Indeed Sullivan argues that how professionals engage in their civic function means bringing their expertise to bear on deliberation about the ends of development, as well as the means. Professional education ought, he says, to model this and challenge students to 'genuine involvement as experts and citizens alike' (Sen, 2009: 289), integrating individual goals with those of publics so that professional well-being is connected to advancing the well-being of persons and communities. Ever-evolving professional projects will respond to local circumstances and, despite the pull towards self-interest, professionals are attached to work that makes contributions to the improvement of their clients and the societies in which they work.

Capabilities-friendly professionalism

Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum's capabilities approach provides a transformative conceptualisation of professionalism so that, in our view, public-good professionalism is capabilities-friendly and falls under the human development umbrella; it enables rich human development and human well-being by advancing people's capabilities (their freedoms and opportunities) and their plural functionings (all the activities and states of being they have reason to value). Sen (1999) developed the capabilities approach to evaluate the effects of living in poverty. He focuses on whether or not people are in a position to choose and live a life that they value, and on comparative and interpersonal accounts of people's beings and doings. The approach allows an evaluation not only of well-being in terms of what people value being and doing, but also of the social conditions which increase their freedom to be or

act in those ways; these conditions can include arrangements for professional education. If person X has more freedom to access quality professional services than person Y, the capabilities approach would ask about unequal social arrangements that enable freedom for one and not the other (assuming that it is agreed that this is a valuable goal).

The capabilities approach was conceptualised by Sen (1999) as an alternative to other ways of thinking about welfare economics and human wellbeing. From a capabilities perspective how well people are doing is evaluated neither by looking at GDP or average income in a country alone, nor by asking how satisfied people are with their lives (because people may resign themselves to bad circumstances). Rather, it aims to assess what people are actually 'capable' of being and doing in terms of living lives they regard as good. Our normative approach is thus for public-good professionalism and the education of professionals who support the capability expansion of their clients by exercising their professional capabilities as public-good functionings. Public-good professionals would be responsible agents with 'other-regarding' goals, aware of their obligation to enhance human development, democratic values, and social justice. From Sen's (2008) perspective, if someone has the power (the capabilities) to make a change that he or she can see will reduce injustice in the world, there is a strong social argument for doing so.

The public-good professional that we envisage through the lens of the capabilities approach would ask such questions as: 'What are my clients or the communities I work with actually able to do and be? What opportunities do they have to be and do what they value? How do social arrangements have an influence on expanding their capabilities? How do we build a profession that values creating capabilities for all?' These professionals would be oriented to thinking about opportunities for persons to choose to live in meaningful, productive and rewarding ways. Where they found a failure of capabilities and valuable achievements for individuals, groups and communities they would ask what changes in structures, institutions, policies and practices might enhance people's flourishing. In turn, by influencing the thinking of professionals, the quality of professional education in universities might enable the poor and vulnerable – supported and empowered in part by professionals and their public service – to achieve valuable goals and to lead dignified and secure lives. From the capabilities approach perspective, enabling people 'to live really humanly' is to reduce inequalities and to foster more justice. From this perspective, a professional education grounded in human development, capabilities' expansion and functioning achievements, can form rich human being, and should be one site where we 'advance justice or reduce injustice in the world' (Sen 2009: 337).

The project

We now turn to the empirical project which shaped this idea of public-good professionalism. The project focused on five professional departments in three South African universities. It combined the theoretical resources of the capabilities approach with empirical data and a deliberative research process. The result of the combination was a 'Public-Good Professional Capabilities Index' to evaluate pedagogical aims and practice in a context in which professionals are urgently needed to address the multi-dimensional problems associated with poverty and to contribute to social transformation in a highly unequal society. Those interested in the project as a whole can read about it in 'Professional Education, Capabilities and the Public Good: the role of universities in promoting human development' (Walker and McLean, 2013). For the purposes of this paper we have selected the drafting of a 'wide' set of 'public-good professional capabilities' to explore what the capabilities approach can offer, as well as shedding some light on the challenges of providing university-based education which will produce professionals with the capabilities for contributions to social transformation.

In the project we made a distinction between general human capabilities to lead a valuable life and professional capabilities, drawing on Nussbaum's (2000) ten central capabilities, with three additions drawn from Wolff and De Shalit (2007) (see Table 1).

Table 1: Comprehensive capabilities

Life	Being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length; not dying prematurely, or before one's life is so reduced as to be not worth living.
Bodily health	Being able to have good health, including reproductive health; to be adequately nourished; to have adequate shelter.
Bodily integrity	Being able to move freely from place to place; to be secure against violent assault, including sexual assault and domestic violence; having opportunities for sexual satisfaction and for choice in matters of reproduction.
Senses, imagination and thought	Being able to use the senses, to imagine, think and reason – and to do these things in a 'truly human' way, a way informed and cultivated by an adequate education, including, but by no means limited to, literacy and basic mathematical and scientific training. Being able to use imagination and thought in connection with experiencing and producing works and events of one's own choice, religious, literary, musical, and so forth. Being able to use one's mind in ways protected by guarantees of freedom of expression with respect to both political and artistic speech, and freedom of religious exercise. Being able to have pleasurable experiences and to avoid non-beneficial pain.
Emotions	Being able to have attachments to things and people outside ourselves; to love those who love and care for us, to grieve at their absence; in general, to love, to grieve, to experience longing, gratitude, and justified anger. Not having one's emotional development blighted by f ear and anxiety. (Supporting this capability means supporting forms of human association that can be shown to be crucial in their development.)

Practical reason	Being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's life. (This entails protection for the liberty of conscience and religious observance.)
Affiliation	a) Being able to live with and toward others, to recognise and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of social interaction; to be able to imagine the situation of another. (Protecting this capability means protecting institutions that constitute and nourish such forms of affiliation, and also protecting the freedom of assembly and political speech) b) Having the social bases of self-respect and non-humiliation; being able to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others. This entails provisions of non-discrimination on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, caste, religion, national origin.
Other species	Being able to live with concern for an in relation to animals, plants and the world of nature.
Play	Being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities.
Control over one's environment	a) Political. Being able to participate effectively in political choices that govern one's life; having the right of political participation, protections of free speech and association b) Material. Being able to hold property (both land and movable goods) not just formally but in terms of real opportunity; and having property rights on an equal basis with others; having the right to seek employment on an equal basis with others; having freedom from unwarranted search and seizure.
Doing good to others	Being able to care for others as part of expressing your humanity. Being able to show gratitude.
Living in a law-abiding fashion	The possibility of being able to live within the law; not to be forced to break the law, cheat, or to deceive other people or institutions.
Understanding the law	Having a general comprehension of the law, its demands, and the opportunities it offers to individuals. Not standing perplexed before the legal system.

These should be the goals of public-good professionalism, to enable people to be and to do in all these ways. From our perspective, professionals involved in social transformation are involved in the expansion of human capability and capabilities. Once we had established a set of human capabilities which underpinned the goals of what we called public-good professionalism, we turned our attention to professional capabilities that might be acquired through education - the knowledge, skills and values which constitute the capabilities to practice as professionals working in specific conditions to expand human capabilities.

As there was no extant list of such professional capabilities, we set about developing a methodology for generating a list which was theoretically-informed and reflected both ideals and practical possibilities. All efforts to educate professionals occur in specific conditions, which shape what is possible. In the case of our project, political, social and economic conditions in South Africa combine neo-liberal politics with the legacy of apartheid, of which the most pernicious element is the continuing poverty of black South Africans, which is in

sharp contrast with the affluence of most of the white population. Yet, although South Africa has been caught up in neoliberal policies, it has a transformation agenda in which universities have a role within higher education to contribute to social transformation. Thus there are constraints on but also enablements for public-good professionalism.

As noted above, the research sites were five professional departments in three South African universities selected for their diverse historical trajectories of apartheid dis/advantage: Acacia an historically advantaged university (HAI) (Theology and Engineering); Silvertree also an historically advantaged university (Social Work), and Fynbos, an historically disadvantaged university (HDI) (Law and Public Health). Our concern was to work with diverse interest groups to come to agreements about what would constitute the goals of professional education in South Africa; that is, we did not want to impose our own ideas. They included alumni, NGOs, professional bodies, lecturers, students and university leadership. Secondly, we wanted to understand how the educational arrangements in different university departments contributed to the kind of professional that was seen as able to contribute towards social transformation in South Africa. So we developed a methodology that would allow us to:

1. Draw up a set of professional capabilities that were agreed on by professional education interest groups in South Africa;

2. Describe the kinds of educational arrangements at university and department levels that might produce graduates with these capabilities; and

3. Generate case studies of departments in terms of valued professional-good capabilities and the educational arrangements for forming them.

These processes were complex, dialogic, reflexive, participatory and iterative (described in detail in Walker and McLean, 2013). The final Index comprised four multi-dimensional elements: (1) meta-functionings which are both 'fertile functionings' (Wolff and De-Shalit, 2007) and capability multipliers; (2) professional capabilities; (3) educational arrangements; and (4) an over-arching element that refers to the constraints and enablements in specific contexts. 1, 2 and 3 are normative, structural and subjective, but 4 is historical and contextual. All elements are important, as is the multi-dimensionality of the functionings and capabilities.

Identifying professional functionings and capabilities

In order to derive professional capabilities for the Index, we explored what our respondents said about what professionals oriented to social transformation and poverty-reduction should be able to do, and, about what their practices would look like. The first element of the Index was provided by what all our respondents agreed upon. At a macro level all saw themselves as part of South Africa's ambitious project of social transformation; and, at a micro level, all acknowledged the crucial importance of transforming human relationships – whether with individuals or communities – by foregrounding equality, respect and dignity. These agreements were encapsulated in the first element of the Index which we called 'meta-functionings'; we see these as a normative yardstick for the public-good, even though both Sen and Nussbaum place the emphasis on capabilities, leaving people to choose or not choose functionings for themselves):

- recognising the full dignity of every human being.
- acting for social transformation and reducing injustice.
- making sound, knowledgeable, thoughtful, imaginative professional judgments.
- working/acting with others to expand the comprehensive capabilities ('fully human lives') of people living in poverty.

In order to identify the professional capabilities necessary to function in these ways, we analysed what our respondents said and worked backwards from functionings that they considered valuable so that one capability captures a range of practices (which are contextual rather than normative, thus neither definitive nor conclusive). In this way we identified eight public-good professional capabilities (see Table 2):

Table 2: Extrapolating capabilities from empirical functionings

Functionings (from the data)	Professional Capability (Normative)
Being able to imagine alternative futures and improved social arrangements; commitment to economic development and equitable economic opportunities; environmental awareness. This functioning is based on an understanding how the profession is shaped by historical and current socio-economic, political context national and globally; understanding how structures shape individual lives.	1.Informed vision
Accepting obligations to others; care and respect for diverse people; understanding lives of poor and vulnerable; developing relationships and rapport	2.Affiliation (solidarity)

across social groups and status hierarchies; critical respect for different cultures; communicating professional knowledge in an accessible way/courtesy and patience	
Perseverance in difficult circumstances; recognising the need for professional boundaries); fostering hope; having a sense of career security	3.Resilience
Community empowerment approach/ promoting human rights; contributing to policy formulation and implementation; identifying spaces for change/leading and managing social change to reduce injustice; working in professional and inter-professional teams; participating in public reasoning/listening to all voices in the 'conversation'; building and sustaining strategic relationships and networks with organisations and government	4.Social and collective struggle
Empathy/narrative imagination; compassion; personal growth; self care; integrating rationality and emotions; being emotionally reflexive about power and privilege.	5.Emotional reflexivity
Acting ethically; being responsible and accountable to communities and colleagues; being honest; striving to provide high-quality service	6.Integrity [and courage][2]
Expressing and asserting own professional priorities; contributing to policy; having confidence in the worthwhileness of one's professional work; having confidence to act for change.	7.Assurance and confidence
Having a firm, critical grounding in disciplinary, academic knowledge; valuing indigenous and community knowledges; having a multidisciplinary/multiperspective stance; being enquiring, critical, evaluative, imaginative, creative and flexible; integrating theory and practice; problem solving; open minded	8.Knowledge and skills

While we could identify professional capabilities common to all the professions that were the focus of our study, there were nonetheless variations. As might be expected, we found a sharp distinction between Engineering and Law on the one hand, and Theology, Social Work and Public Health, on the other. Here we elaborate on how the professional capabilities appeared in three of the professional departments.

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[2] In discussion with teachers in May 2013 on an M.Ed programme at the UFS, they added to integrity the capability also of courage (to act, stand up for what is right). We have always seen the list as a framework of interrogation than fixed. We hope others will work with it and change it.

Engineering at Acacia (HAI)

We chose a new voluntary module on critical perspectives on society which also included a community work element where students went to the local township and taught mathematics and science to grade 11 and 12 learners (The module has subsequently been made compulsory).

The engineers' *informed vision* was discerned in their general commitment to South African development. There were differences, though, in how individual engineers thought about the form of contribution. For a few, the choice was to contribute to poverty reduction directly by building facilities in poor black townships. For the majority, the contribution was indirect: by building infrastructure thereby alleviating poverty through the 'trickle-down effect', and by encouraging disadvantaged children to take up engineering. Despite claims from lecturers at Acacia that it is important to grasp socio-political and economic realities, there appeared to be little awareness among our participants about constraints on engaging in direct work with people living in poverty.

Above all, engineers valued a high level of *knowledge and practical skill*. The knowledge, of course, is highly specialised and not regarded as for discussion with non-engineers Particularly valued were the cognitive functionings of being logical and innovative, especially for finding cost-effective and workable solutions in a developing country: Pieter, a white engineering student, commented: 'We need engineers that find new ways to do stuff easier and better, and cheaper and more reliably [. . .] you really need guys who can think a lot.' Thomas Ryer, the Dean, was more analytic, observing that if engineers could be produced who are 'initiators, integrators, and innovators', then engineering can be cast as a 'catalyst in poverty relief'.

Engineering students demonstrated affiliation towards people living in poverty in the sense of accepting an obligation to help; that is, they accepted the Department's decision for a community module in the curriculum. Yet there was a hint from them that poor communities are composed of passive others to whom 'good' needs doing, rather than being composed of equals with whom to consult and collaborate. Working alumni engineers (selected for interview because they work with communities) value affiliation: the alumna Jeanne Marais thought: 'You've got to look at everybody as if you were in their shoes'.

They spoke of the 'negativity' that can accompany large-scale poverty, and saw a role encouraging colleagues and employees. For example Chantal Brown, a black[3] African alumna, observed that in her work: 'Often you gets lots of people that are de-motivated [...] especially as an engineer, you walk around, you work with blue collar workers [...]. I can encourage people [...]. I can motivate people to do their best and just speak hope in peoples' lives because [they] can become very despondent'. All participants acknowledged the importance of relationship-building, of understanding different cultures and being able to communicate with people from diverse backgrounds, including knowing African languages to communicate with workers on projects. Marian Lamprecht, a white lecturer who at the time led the *Critical Perspectives on Society* course, identifies a need for something beyond knowledge and skills: 'Engineering is very much a formula, A + B = C, and the moment you start dealing with people with different backgrounds, then you have to have a human understanding of their way of thinking'. Nevertheless, such communications skills were often valued as an aspect of efficiency and good management (getting the job done), rather than for solidarity with people living in poverty.Engineers put great store on being *resilient* because the profession is competitive; more so if an engineer wants to focus on poverty-reduction projects. Christo van Heerden is a young white lecturer who, unusually among his colleagues, works on community projects, emphasised the need for resilience: 'You've got to have a lot of hair on your teeth1 [...] There's lots of issues, there are lots of problems getting jobs, finding tenders, BEE [...] so you've got to have a really strong will'.

Integrity was taken particularly seriously. Alumni who had been practising for some years were insistent about not being fraudulent, and about being truthful with workers and clients. They also stressed being responsible and accountable, conscientiously constructing products and buildings and following safety procedures; they pointed out the harm engineers might do by not doing their job properly. In fact, the need for integrity was so emphasised by the groups we spoke to that we suspected a problem within the profession as a whole in South Africa. Christo van Heerden, who reported that he makes a considerable effort to involve himself in community projects, had an opinion on this: 'A lot of engineers, they don't like responsibility, they just do something, but they take a step back'. The Dean, Thomas Ryer,

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[3] Race-based terms are deeply problematic and yet still widely used in South Africa as a means to monitor equity shifts. They still also signal (although not essentially) something of the positioning of the speaker.

elaborated the reasons for engineers to have a 'very good value system', again efficiency is foregrounded:

> You're always in a management position as an engineer, people look up to you. So if you're going to break the rules, you don't come on site, you're not punctual for meetings, you're slack, then that's going to come across to your workers, it's going to affect them. You're going to get people pitching up late [and] stealing, because it comes from management level.

The students -- who it must be remembered were studying at Acacia, an historically white, elite university and whose future profession enjoys high status in society as a whole -- conveyed a palpable sense of *confidence and assurance* that they will be problem-solving agents of change who can make a difference to society. For example, Dawie, a white student, spoke of the problems of rural communities living near mines: 'We just need to know there is a problem and we can actually do something about it'. While there was confidence about achieving practical solutions to infrastructure problems, it was not the norm to give serious time and effort to community projects either in the Department or in the profession at large.

Law at Fynbos (HDI)
Here we selected the final year elective for the Legal Practice course which involved working in the pro bono university law clinic.

Some law participants recognised that awareness of the realities of life for the majority of South Africa's population, and understanding the specific social and economic situations of clients enables lawyers to provide access to justice and socio-economic rights. At the same time, there was little confidence that lawyers possessed or acted on such awareness and understanding: one lecturer, Khatidja Bashir, claimed that what is needed is 'a mindset change of how we provide legal services'. In general, despite South Africa's sharpened need for lawyers oriented to human rights, as anywhere else in the world, the individual lawyers who choose 'public-interest law' from conviction are a minority who accept that they will earn less money than in other legal areas of works. The group of students we spoke to was within this minority and held an *informed vision*. Many were from poorer communities themselves and so knew about disadvantage and most felt an obligation to 'put back' into the communities. Be that as it may, for lawyers knowledge of the law is paramount. All groups emphasised the importance of a thorough *knowledge* of the substance and content of the law to being an effective public-good lawyer. Like engineers, the

knowledge is dense and specialised; and, like engineers, lawyers should be problem-solvers. Valuable *practical skills* include opening a case file, managing a practice, and doing pro bono work. The law lecturers we spoke to also emphasised that a 'good' lawyer treats people with respect, as dignified human beings, and is not prejudiced by illiteracy and disadvantage.

Affiliation is particularly important for a lawyer working with vulnerable people, who might have been abused and who can feel baffled, intimidated and alienated by legal processes. Affiliation functions as being able to communicate about the law to clients. One of the white law students, Lynne, commented: 'What is important is that you don't indulge in this legal jargon with indigent clients, stick to the basic language and that's how you respect them as well [...] you don't make them feel like "I'm superior and you're inferior"'. For Lynne, then, communicating the law – in the case of our study in the Legal Aid Clinic in Fynbos University – is communicating knowledge that can empower people. All our law groups thought too many lawyers see clients as a way of making money and drew attention to a tradition of 'dehumanising' people (Ebrahim was distressed that in court people are called 'accused number one', 'accused number two'). So it is important to empathise with clients and to support people's ability to choose their own options. Nazia told us 'I try to sit with my client and to first make her feel that she's human again'. Lawyers spoke less about *social and collective struggle* than about how they might as individual lawyers assist individual clients. Nevertheless, there are a few lawyers who regard their work as part of the process of nation-building. Zolani Ncube is a black African alumnus, brought up in rural Transkei, who worked for a private firm and saw himself working with other lawyers oriented towards social justice to 'uplift' communities. Such lawyers are represented in the range of national legal organisations mentioned above. Nonetheless, being part of social and collective struggle was not, in the accounts we heard, greatly in evidence, and Leonard Smith, the Deputy Dean, did not think that it was essential for being a public-good lawyer. On the contrary, he continued, it was something of an 'overhang' from the transition period; 'no-one is really doing that [now]'.

Law alumni combined *resilience* with *emotional reflexivity* when talking about working closely with difficult cases often with people suffering extreme poverty and hardship. Students too spoke of the need for resilience when dealing with clients who have been through traumatic experiences, especially when they cannot offer help. Sandra, a coloured student, said 'you get so emotionally attached to your client, but you have to stop and break yourself off from that situation'. And Tozi, a black African student, explained:

'Some [clients] come here without having dealt with that emotional side, so you have to be the social worker, the psychologist and also be a legal person at the same time [...] it's very emotional, it gets draining because you see how divided South Africa is'.

There were a number of key elements of good professionalism amongst lawyers. During a focus group interview for example one student observed that *resilience* is necessary to remaining committed to legal and social principles for 'the long haul', that is, for a career of several decades. *Integrity* is also essential in law. All groups spoke of the importance of having strong principles and ethical standards of behaviour and acting honestly regardless of what branch of law. Arguably, lawyers also need to have the *confidence and assurance* that their work is worthwhile. Mainly this is to make a difference to individuals and communities; for a few it is also to make an impact on public policy. For example, Thandi Dlamini, a black African alumna who works for a women's legal aid centre, stated that she preferred to choose cases which could change an existing law, for example, challenging the principle of primogeniture to enable girls and illegitimate children the right to inheritance, because such cases will have a more lasting impact. For Leonard Smith, the Deputy Dean, professional confidence and leadership qualities will empower clients 'to establish businesses, to get into contracts, actually to work for themselves'.

Social Work at Silvertree (HAI)
Here we looked at the whole of the final year programme.

In social work, there was a strong *informed vision* underpinning an active role in societal transformation: the lecturers educate social workers as change agents working to reduce poverty and inequality, and to promote social justice. Miriam Grey wanted all graduates from the course to see the rights of people 'living in informal settlements, in squatter communities' as being 'as important as the rights of people who live in [wealthy areas like] Constantia or in Stellenbosch'. Some social work professionals should contribute to transformation of the profession at a macro level, taking up leadership positions. All groups subscribed to the principle of client 'self-determination' which defines social work in South Africa: it represents a break with the past by shifting the emphasis from helping people to cope towards empowering them to change their own circumstances.

The social work *knowledge* base focuses explicitly on being a transformative change agent. Students are expected to understand the roots of poverty and inequality within the context of South African political, social and economic history, and global trends. Amanda Hoffman, a lecturer commented that:

> [Unless social workers] understand root causes of problems [they will be] part of the problem [...] they're going to be working on symptoms and perpetuating the inequities of the past [...] They're going to be putting on band aid strips as opposed to understanding where the leverage needs to come in order to make shifts in power and in access to resources and access to opportunities.

Students should understand civil, political, social and economic rights as enshrined in the Constitution and Bill of Rights because as the Head of Department Miriam Grey put it, 'the realization of those rights is part of their work'.

Practical skills focused on ways of empowering communities. Alumni were particularly adamant about this. Thandi Matshisa was a black African alumna and was typical in declaring that people must be assisted to 'change themselves' in groups: 'The role of social workers is to strengthen resources and social structures within communities rather than imposing solutions'. (An important example is supporting people in communities who are already playing an HIV counselling role.) Anne Hardy, a white alumna, linked empowerment to respectfulness, pointing out that communities can be supported by being respected and by being shown how to build on their own 'inner resources'. Social workers must make sound and creative professional judgements to devise appropriate strategies, so they need the skills of facilitators, managers, advocates and educators.At the very heart of social work is the capability of *affiliation.* It is expressed in the functionings of empowering and respect characterised by motivating, encouraging, facilitating and mediating: as one Indian student, Sharon, put it, 'So it's not just going out there and getting this project to work, it's [...] to really empathise and understand where they're coming from first before you implement the project'. Empowerment and respect means building relationships, as the alumna Anne Hardy points out: 'Relationships before projects [...]. You earn the right to be among folk by relating to them first, they can either want you or they don't want you [...] even if it takes a year before you are effectively in there, even though their needs are tremendous, it takes time to build a relationship and trust'.

In South Africa, *social and collective struggle* is integral to social work: lecturer Amanda Hoffman described the central purpose of social work as 'redress[ing] the wrongs of the past'. For Anne Hardy, quoted above, redress takes the form of 'giving a voice' to poor communities by 'encourag[ing] advocacy and systems and structures'. Nevertheless, even though it was emphasised by lecturers, collaborating with other components of the social

welfare system was little mentioned by students or most alumni. A representative of the professional body, Liezel Vermaak, who was white, thought that poverty reduction 'is really something that must be planned strategically, and there must be a collective approach [...] across all the government Departments and professionals in this field', indicating that this capability could be strengthened.

Resilience is critical because economic and social problems appear overwhelming. Again, Anne Hardy gave an insight into the difficulty:

> You've got to be prepared to be committed and to persevere. It's so easy to give up, and there are reasons to give up [...]. But if you stick long enough and you're committed enough there's a real sense of integrity and transparency and openness to the realness of the situation. I think that's what a social worker needs. And not to be deluded about the situation and not to romanticise it, but to know that humans can change, countries can change, but you've got to be there for the long haul.

Thandi Matshisa worked for an NGO and emphasised that avoiding burnout meant not getting 'over-involved', that is acknowledging that 'you're just a small drop in a big ocean', and so maintaining boundaries is right even though it is difficult; she continued, 'you're constantly taking your clients' stories home with you. You can't help it sometimes'.

Social work should encompass a good deal of *emotional reflexivity*, for example, students knew they would need to encourage and motivate, while simultaneously pursuing the principles of self-determination. One white social work student, Carla, commented:

> [When] going into impoverished communities [...] you can't go in thinking that you're the expert [...] people are going to be looking to you for answers because they feel hopeless, but at the same time if you go in there as a mediator between people and draw out those ideas and the needs from them, that immediately takes away that feeling of hopelessness and revives the community.

Integrity means 'going against the grain'. Lyn, a white student, was of the opinion that social workers should be willing to 'get a bit of flak [...] because of their value system [and] be willing to fight'. Taking a different perspective, lecturer Amanda Hoffman described integrity as 'a make or break thing', a social worker should be: 'an honest reliable person who doesn't generate false hope, who's honest in terms of what they bring, what their own shortcomings are [...] who is never deceptive and never dishonest with money and who can be counted on'.

Arguably, in South Africa social workers have low status, disproportionate to their education, level of skills and important role in society. Yet there was strong expression of

assurance and confidence in the form of professional pride. For Amanda: 'The social work profession is a fantastic profession. I think that social workers have a huge opportunity to be transformatory, to make a significant contribution to transformation in any society where they're working, particularly in South Africa'.

Variations in public-good professional capabilities

The capabilities that we identified arose from theoretical considerations and from the complete set of data collected from different interest groups in five professional fields. This does not mean that the valuing of each capability was as strongly expressed by all professions or all individuals, and in some fields expressions of some of the capabilities were faint or implied. By way of reminder, the eight capabilities are: informed vision; knowledge and skills; affiliation; social and collective struggle; resilience; emotional reflexivity; integrity; and assurance and confidence. We attempted to characterise variation by conveying central values:

- Engineers valued efficiency, creative problem-solving and honesty in dealings with clients and workers.
- Lawyers valued knowing the law and placing the client first.
- Ministers valued God's guidance in transforming themselves to transform the communities they work in.
- Social workers valued being change agents who empower clients to grasp their rights.
- Public health professionals valued understanding and addressing in policies and collaborative practices the complex determinants of health and health care.

It was possible to draw up a table as a heuristic referring to weak and strong manifestations of each public-good capability in each professional field (see Table 3).

Table 3: Weak and strong manifestations of public-good capabilities

[(0=weak, 5=strong)]

Capability	Engineering	Law	Theology	Social work	Public health
Informed vision	3	3	5	5	5
Knowledge and/or skills	5	5	5	5	5
Affiliation	3	4	5	5	5

Social and collective struggle	0	2	5	4	5
Resilience	5	5	5	5	5
Emotion reflexivity	0	3	5	3	3
Integrity	5	5	5	5	3
Assurance and confidence	5	4	5	5	3

Although impressionistic, this illustrates how questions might be raised in relation to a capability set in the absence of 'hard' measures. For example, assuming it is desirable to have all eight capabilities working coherently together, how can it be achieved? Or, why is it that emotional reflexivity appeared somewhat weakly in most professional fields, but is theoretically - and potentially politically valuable - for a democratic society. As Nussbaum (2001: 11) explains, our emotions are suffused with intelligence and discernment, and thus potentially a source of deep awareness and ethical reasoning and 'part and parcel of a general inquiry into the good human life'.

We found that these variations in values influenced pedagogical arrangements that students encounter in order to form the capabilities to: frame problems of justice and injustice in relation to their own professional field; think about them critically and compassionately; and acquire specific professional knowledge and skills which might enable them, in their future working lives, to reduce injustice by increasing the well-being of individuals and groups. We explored our empirical data for examples that could highlight what is actually possible in specific contexts. In the same way as the eight professional capabilities are broad enough to allow for situated interpretations, we developed wide dimensions of educational arrangements for public-good professionalism which we found inflected differently from site to site.

From our data, departments pursued the eight public-good professional capabilities in weaker and stronger forms, depending on the values of the professional field. These variations played out in similarities and differences of curriculum and pedagogy, which were also influenced by the wealth of the university – Fynbos was considerably less well-resourced than the others. All the departments were thoughtful about teaching, all had undergone review and change since the transition from apartheid in 1994, and for all we spoke to this is an ongoing process. The commonalities in pedagogy and curriculum clustered around the

message that the past must be redressed. There were five major strands (inevitably more strongly expressed in some departments than others) that relate to four of the capabilities.

First, in all the departments, even if in one course or module, students were expected to understand that they were entering a professional field in specific socio-historic circumstances in a country where many people are living under conditions of great poverty, and that they have a role to play in addressing the problem (informed vision). Secondly, in all departments there were attempts to inculcate respectfulness (clearly seen as a part of a necessary break with the past), often demonstrated through relationships in the classroom (affiliation). Thirdly, knowledge and skills were seen as vital to make some form of contribution to a society that is in need of a great deal from its professionals, whatever the field. In particular, all professionals need to be and were expected to be creative, problem-solving, critical thinkers. Fourthly, the messages were strong in teaching that professionals must display integrity. Fifthly, we observed students gaining confidence and assurance as they were being educated, though it was differently inflected for engineers and lawyers who enjoy high status in society; for theologians who are accepted into communities as ministers; for social workers who know that their profession has not been held in high regard in the past and even now; and, for health professionals who are already working in the field and can reap an immediate benefit from their studies.

We can see, therefore, that the other three capabilities disappeared almost altogether in some fields. Social and collective struggle made almost no direct appearance in the curriculum or pedagogy in Engineering or directly in Law (despite significant involvement in the policy area by law academics). In Theology there was a strong focus on bringing black and white people and churches together, although in the South African context of deep religious divisions based on race, this could be understood as a form of social and collective struggle. As a functioning in Social Work and Public Health social and collective struggle appeared as encouragement to 'network', 'forge links' or 'collaborate'. In Public Health, appreciating and acting on the necessity of services and systems working together to promote the health of people living in poverty was a central value.

Both Theology and Social Work education stressed emotional reflexivity. However, they took quite different forms, which relate to pedagogy. In Theology emotional reflexivity related to making personal transformations that were expected to occur in the context of the university and department through discussion, prayer and thought, whereas in Social Work it related to the extensive placements students were given during which they come face-to-face

with the harrowing realities of extreme poverty. The relatively light emphasis on practical, concrete experiences in real communities in Theology might also explain the absence of discussion about resilience (except from the alumni), which is in contrast with Social Work for which it was a central capability. Public Health appeared to assume resilience on the part of their working health professional students, and there were small hints of the need for both emotional reflexivity and resilience in Engineering and Law, in so far as students and alumni saw themselves as working directly on poverty reduction.

Overall, in terms of curriculum and pedagogy, we can connect the explicit vision of Theology, Social Work and Public Health to strongly articulated, transformative, critical curricula and pedagogies aimed both at students' acquisition of knowledge and skills, and at encouraging an attitude of conscious and responsible action in society. Nevertheless, the balance between actual concrete practice and experience, curriculum content, and opportunities for discussion and reflection is crucially important for the development of the full range of capabilities. Despite the similarity of the visions of Theology and Social Work, the former appeared underdeveloped pedagogically because too much emphasis was placed on transformation in theory – this was set to change with 'community service' elements being strengthened. In Engineering and Law specific parts of the curriculum and a general ethos from some lecturers (shared in the case of Law) lent themselves to the development of public-good professionalism – and the issue is one of extending innovative courses to more students.

Constraints

An integral part of our Index is the contextual constraints on public-good professionalism. This is because without understanding of and working with the context, aspirations are likely to remain rhetorical. In the South African context, we found myriad systemic, material and cultural constraints on public-good professionalism in our case studies. For example, while the lecturers in Theology were highly committed to poverty reduction, the historical rift between black and white churches still reverberated; there are too few social workers working with individuals and communities in extremes of poverty and social breakdown, and they are under-resourced, low paid and low status; and, the Department of Public Health faces a serious lack of knowledge and skills in health professions in Africa. A major constraint for all professions was uncoordinated effort -- there was an urgent need to build partnerships and to collaborate and network with other professions and groups. Undoubtedly,

lecturers in professional education departments are making real efforts to educate students with the capabilities to tackle South Africa's many problems, and the students we talked to see themselves as part of social transformation. Nonetheless, our participants were also disillusioned by entrenched poverty, increased inequality, and the incompetence and sometimes corruption of professionals in their fields. The legacy of apartheid still poses tremendous material and social difficulties.

Our case studies demonstrate how historical, political, economic, social and cultural contexts set permeable if not fixed boundaries on what it is possible to achieve in terms of values and practice. It is clear that, interested as we are in the possibilities of education, lack of resources, understaffed services and inappropriate government attitudes toward the proper role of professionals can demotivate even strongly motivated groups to serve the poor, the needy and the disadvantaged.

Conclusion

Although our research was located in a specific context, we hope that it stimulates reflections about broader complexities, problems and questions related to social change and to university-based professional education. Taking a capabilities view, professional education is a means to advance social justice by providing capability-expanding services to people living precarious and vulnerable lives. The exploration of education of the 'public-good professional' through the lens of the capabilities approach sheds light on four important issues.

Firstly, it draws attention to the importance of making agreements with key interest groups about what constitutes professionalism: the aspiration of educating public-good professionals is unlikely to be achieved without such agreements. Secondly, capabilities can constitute a set of goals for professionalism that holds across professional fields. Thirdly, the capabilities approach reveals the conceptual difference between having opportunities (in the form of knowledge, attitudes and skills) and choosing to act on those opportunities. From the perspective that I have explained, the task of professional education is to design curriculum and pedagogy which offers students the freedoms to become and to choose. Nonetheless, Sen also notes that whether capabilities or functionings could be placed in the evaluation space depends on what one wants to look at. We still feel intuitively that professional education students ought to be able show the exercise of meta/fertile functionings during their degree education and training, and that we would recognise a public-good professional in the field as

someone strongly exercising these four functionings. Fourthly, used as an evaluative framework the approach can reveal strengths and lacunae which are likely to configure differently in different professional fields. Finally, our case studies show how material conditions can constrain efforts to educate the public-good professional: the groups we spoke to wanted professionals who would possess the capabilities of contributing to poverty reduction and social transformation through their work, but a range of resources, history and culture presented constraints both in departments and later in the professional fields of work.

Despite the constraints, we believe that there are always grounds for hope in an imperfect world. We found it in the strong and clear visions of public-good professionalism that the students, lecturers, professionals and others we spoke to held, and in the strenuous efforts to equip future professionals with public-good capabilities by way of education. We witnessed an ideal at work: in pockets, professional education in South Africa is producing outstanding professionals whose solidarity, rationality and reflection will make them more likely to act as agents for transformation.

Within the ambit of professional services there are injustices which are 'redressable' (Sen 2009: vii). Without waiting for perfect social structures, or perfectly just institutions to be put in place, or even perfect professionals, the capabilities approach offers a contextualised, collaborative and feasible vehicle for designing and evaluating curriculum and pedagogy. We can imagine that more lawyers acting over and over again more humanely in the way described by the lawyers we spoke to can forge a more open legal access pathway for the poor, for example. New social pathways are 'walked and woven' (Cooper, 2001: 128) in non-ideal circumstances, while holding to the ideal of what it means to be a public-good professional.

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Acknowledgements

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