Creating a positive environment for widening participation: a taxonomy for socially just higher education policy and practice

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Abstract

Higher education (HE) systems sustain and reproduce inequalities despite intentions to redress them. However, widening participation rooted in social justice practices increases participation in HE for marginalized under-represented groups through overt, shared and practised values in action and mobilization of HE interests and resources. Drawing on interviews with senior managers, teaching, research, academic/educational development staff and students at six South African universities (2012-16) and scrutiny of literature, our study contributes to cross-country learning by developing a taxonomy of social justice practices: epistemological access; values oriented curriculum; critical pedagogies and professionalism; student engagement and belonging; critical enquiry and communities of practice; ethical leadership and strategic embedding of practice.

Key words: higher education; widening participation; social justice; UK; South Africa.

Introduction

Widening participation has been a key higher education (HE) strategy in the UK over the past three decades (Archer, 2007; Bathmaker, 2016; Burke, 2013; Graham, 2013; Mavelli, 2014; Stevenson et al., 2010). Although a contested concept (Stevenson et al., 2010), it encapsulates the aim to increase access, participation, retention and success of under-represented groups in HE (Burke, 2013; Thomas, 2002). In practice, widening participation has taken the form of institution-wide initiatives spanning a range of activities from pre-university outreach, inclusive curriculum development and student support during study to facilitating employment. Many universities have adopted the student lifecycle model of from first contact through to becoming alumni, at a strategic level, as a model for thinking about student retention and for delivering services in support of student success (Dodgson and Bolam, 2002). Notably, there has been a shift from a focus on HE access to an emphasis on student engagement, experience and belonging (Thomas, 2012). There has been increased attention to student engagement within UK universities (van der Velden, 2012), and this has become a key issue since the HE UK Green paper in 2011 *Students at the Heart of the System* (BIS, 2011), the more recent White paper Success as a Knowledge Economy: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice (BIS, 2016), and a major issue addressed in the Teaching Excellence Framework(TEF) submissions in January 2017.

However, it is still questionable whether HE is really open to all and to whether HE is experienced similarly by different socio-economic status (SES) groups (Furlong and Cartmel, 2009). Research has pointed to increased inequalities within HE despite widening participation policies (Ball, 2005; Clegg, 2011) illustrating how it has been accompanied by deepening educational and social stratification and new forms of inequalities influenced by different sorts

of HE on offer. Choices made are inflected with varied voices and experiences of diverse groups that reproduce divisions and hierarchies in HE. HE itself has also continued to be stratified with strong divisions in institutional status, ease of access and employment prospects (Furlong and Cartmel, 2009; Budd, 2016), making the social justice agenda of widening participation more challenging to realise.

Furthermore, the rise of the student consumer (Williams, 2013) and the promotion of market mechanisms and the impacts of reforming student financial support system have been regarded as another challenge to the notion of social justice through HE (McCaig, 2016). A continuing lack of social justice (Pickard, 2014) persists in the cost of HE in the UK which can be prohibitive to many students who perceive a loan system as a debt, and a tax. Fees are differential across Europe, where it is cheaper to study in English in Maastricht, for example, than in the UK. Student campaign and protests have been gaining momentum in Scandinavia, where Sweden is considering imposing fees for the first time, and also in South Africa, with the 'Fees must fall' campaign from 2015 (Iaccino, 2015), where this article's research project on social justice was based.

In the context of the expanded marketization of HE (Naidoo and Williams, 2014), this paper offers a social justice rooted taxonomy as a useful way of thinking of and examining institutional approaches to widening participation across the student lifecycle. It aims to contribute to academic and practitioner thinking about ethical issues relating to widening participation and higher education, offering some practices on managing ethical issues in HE informed by four social justice perspectives. It is based on a study carried out at six South African universities engaged in addressing inequalities in student experience and success. The study aimed to inform HE policy and practice in the UK (the basis of the award was to bring back to the UK good practice from international contexts) through sharing its findings, in South Africa and globally.

Background

South Africa was selected as a context in which to explore social justice in practice in HE in the light of the country's policy of 'Education for the public good' and similar structural challenges related to non-traditional students' retention and success faced by UK HE and other universities globally. Selective policies including those of fees, disadvantage under-represented groups leading to their non-access or low-access of HE and high non-continuation rates within HE. Students from disadvantaged groups are more likely to need more financial support to overcome their disadvantaged backgrounds and also more likely to need to work while studying (Pickard, 2014). Their financial challenges are not only associated with sufficient funds to pay for the cost of tuition, but also extend to financial transport getting to and from university and money for lunch, accommodation, books, materials and photocopying. For many who are first in the family to study in HE there are also challenges related to a sense of 'belonging' (Engstrom and Tinto, 2008; Richards et al., 2016).

The UK has similarities to South Africa, in that South Africa is one of the most unequal countries in the world, measured in terms of household inequality gaps between the poorest and wealthiest deciles and the UK, alongside the US, is the most unequal in the industrialised economies in the OECD (Hall, 2012a) with comparable challenges related to poverty traps – self reinforcing mechanisms that cause poverty and inequality to persist. In South Africa and the UK

there is a close link between educational attainment and household income. Hall's (2012a) review of the contemporary roles and challenges for HE with regard to social justice in the context of increasing marketization and economic efficiency drawing on empirical evidence from South Africa and the UK suggested that there were similar poverty traps resulting in inequality of educational opportunity and outcome in both countries. He argued that mutually enforcing factors – poverty traps - militated against breaking out of inter-generational poverty and inequality and that universities in their dual role of both gatekeepers, complicit in maintaining inequality and enablers with regard to social justice, had a responsibility to address inequalities in HE. Drawing on Sen and Walker's work, he argued for a move away from equality of opportunity to equality of outcomes facilitated by wide-ranging institutional transformation of the selection and admissions processes, the curriculum and organisational culture, and suggested that South Africa HE had a much more radical approach which we argue offers lessons to the UK.

Universities have an important role in addressing increasing inequality (Brennan and Teichler, 2008; Hall, 2012a), but face challenges in maintaining academic standards while providing access to students who may need additional support (Dawson et al., 2013). Furthermore, in the current UK context of marketization of HE there can be a tension between a drive to attract fee paying students who can afford to invest in their educational futures through the student loans system, international students paying even higher fees, and an ethic of a socially just system. The 2016 UK white paper for HE *Success as a Knowledge Economy: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice* (BIS, 2016, p. 7) emphasises these seemingly contradictory tensions with the language of investment while simultaneously claiming enhanced equality: 'Whereas only 19 per cent of young people went to university in 1990, in 2013 this had increased to almost 40 per cent – and this includes more people from disadvantaged backgrounds than ever before'. Yet access remains uneven, with young people from the most disadvantaged backgrounds 2.4 times less likely to go into HE than the most advantaged'(UCAS, 2015). The white paper acknowledges that students from less wealthy families are less likely to enter HE (BIS, 2016, pp. 8–9) while fees are set to rise in the UK with the teaching excellence framework linking right to raise them to the achievement of an 'excellent' or 'outstanding' rating (BIS, 2016). The white paper states that 'We will ensure that the TEF assessment framework explicitly takes into account outcomes for disadvantaged groups'(BIS, 2016, p. 19). In South Africa the campaign against fee rises and fees themselves is widely reported in the 'Fees must fall' campaign (Iaccino, 2015) illustrates similar tensions between social justice intent and marketization of HE that frame HE. Thus the equity and fairness agenda in HE (Lange, 2012; Leibowitz, 2012; Morrow, 2009; Walker, 2006a; Walker and Wilson-Strydom, 2017) raises critical questions about capabilities and political responsibilities for care and whether universities contribute to a socially just and equitable society. Questions have been raised about who benefits, about pedagogical issues relating to who will be taught, what will be taught and how (Botman, 2012).

As in the case of HE institutions globally, South African universities have sought to engage deeply with social justice and equity (Hall, 2012b; Leibowitz, 2012). Social justice is rooted in notions of ethics, equity, citizenship, social cohesion and meritocracy. It refers to the fairness of a society in responding to its divisions through the distribution of rewards or burdens and, as such, the phrase has been adopted by those with a redistributive, procedural and interactional agenda (Jost and Kay, 2010). Social Justice derives its authority from prevailing morality codes within each respective culture. HE imports equity and social justice agendas from wider society and looks at ways of improving performance in these respects (Brennan and Naidoo, 2008). In

the context of HE, social justice commitments include transformational activities that are based on pedagogical, curriculum, critical professionalism and educational development orientations and practices (Leibowitz and Holgate, 2012; Walker, 2012; Wisker, 2012) and how these are experienced by and benefit diverse students. Social justice in HE is engaged with social accountability and responsiveness because HE serves as a facilitator of social justice through enhanced access for disadvantaged and excluded constituencies, a developer of knowledge for social necessity and functions as a critic and conscience of society (Singh, 2012).

We sought to learn from the practices of South Africa, which has a great deal of experience in tackling issues of widening participation in a complex, culturally inflected context, to inform thinking and practices which could be differently interpreted in other cultural contexts, in the first instance, in the UK. The decision to base the research in South Africa derives from one of the authors' experiences working with South African university colleagues and the award of a UK HE Academy's Sir Ron Cooke international scholarship initiative which encouraged focus on one country's successful practices to inform more generalisable, while culturally contextualised, developments. The HEA scholarship (providing travel costs) awarded to one of the authors for '*Education for social justice, critical professionalism and capabilities*' (2012-3) was followed by University of Brighton sabbatical project research time in 2013. It sought to explore social justice issues of critical professionalism, capabilities and political ethics of care in South African universities with the aim of sharing, transferring and bringing back good practice to the UK, contributing to the knowledge base on what HE can offer towards the achievement of equity and social justice, which then feeds into positive change across the rest of society. Brennan and Naidoo (2008) engaged with these issues, addressing how universities can contribute to achieving a fairer and more just society and calling for more research into whether and how universities contribute to social justice for those who do not participate in universities.

The article begins by introducing the guiding framework, comprising normative accounts that underpin social justice practices in the South African universities which form the focus of this research: capability, critical professionalism and political ethics of care. Next it presents the methods applied. The taxonomy of socially just HE practices which we have developed from the research data is then introduced and discussed, followed by the implications for HE in the UK and globally and our conclusion.

Guiding perspectives: capability, complementarity, ethics of care and critical professionalism

The perspectives that inform our analysis of the findings and development of the taxonomy are based on the theoretical perspectives that guided the initiatives in the South African universities studied in this article. South Africa based Bozalek and Leibowitz (2012) advanced an evaluative framework for a socially just institution, based on three normative accounts that underlie HE policies and practice, with special attention to social justice. This has underpinned thinking around social justice practice in the studied universities.   These three models are based on Sen and Nussbaum's capability, Fraser's complementarity and belonging and Tronto's political ethics of care approaches. In framing our conceptual guiding map for the taxonomy we take forward all three approaches and add critical professionalism perspectives which also underpinned the initiatives of the universities in this study.

The capabilities approach sees university education as including intrinsic and instrumental purposes, involving personal development, economic opportunities and becoming educated

citizens and agents (Walker, 2006a, 2006b; Walker and Unterhalter, 2007). Education for social justice as encapsulated in this approach stresses and enables the active and reflective development of values and practices that accommodate equality principles in students' access to, experience of and outcomes from HE. Nussbaum's work informs these developments and practices. For her a major value of HE, is producing, 'socratic citizens who are capable of thinking for themselves, arguing with tradition, and understanding with sympathy the conditions of lives different from their own' (Nussbaum, 2002: 302). Cultivated capacities for critical thinking and reflection are critical (Nussbaum, 2010). Social justice also requires the 'equality of capability for diverse students and not just those whose backgrounds and cultural capital are taken for granted' (Walker, 2010, p. 898).

The social justice approach of Nancy Fraser emphasizes the complementarity of a politics of distribution, recognition, representation and belonging; and is implicit in all the other three approaches we focus on as it sees the major goal of social justice as 'participatory parity', where people within different collectivities (gender, race, location, SES etc.) can participate on a par with others in social life (including HE) and what it might entail. Distribution involves redistributing financial and material resources towards participatory parity, to those previously excluded from HE. Recognition is concerned with how people are regarded in relation to social markers ascribed to them (Bozalek and Leibowitz, 2012) so that a social justice approach aims to redress misrecognition and stereotype biases by exposing and eradicating normalised values that impede parity of participation (Fraser, 2000), through institutional and policy changes. Misrecognition operates at symbolic, cultural and emotional levels producing ways of imagining potential and ability, and the kinds of people who are recognised, or not, as having the potential to benefit from HE (Burke, 2015). Misrecognitions occur in taken for granted practices of admission, selection, assessment and feedback. Representation and belonging concerns who is considered a social member, whose voice is heard as legitimate, who has a right to access and structural arrangements for support and care (Fraser, 2009a).

A political ethics of care sets terms of dialogue required to develop strategies for socially just institutions (Bozalek and Leibowitz, 2012). Drawing on Tronto (1993, 1995, 1996), Bozalek and Leibowitz argue that aspects of care need to be worked out consciously, become more visible and that they require a deliberate political process to be enacted and formal practices to review and evaluate how well organisations are meeting them. They highlight Tronto's argument that care is about meeting needs and should be considered as a practice rather than an emotion or disposition. The notion of responsibility is a key focus; with HE institutions having a responsibility for paying attention and responding competently to different circumstances and vulnerabilities of diverse students that influence their success in HE. The political ethics of care approach also draws attention to the shared responsibility by students and HE institutions for the quality and outcomes of learning.

Critical professionalism emphasizes, develops and enables collaborative and reflective processes in teaching and is specifically engaged with the practice of HE staff (Wisker, 2012; 2013). It focuses on and underpins learning among academic staff, enabling development of practices to encourage and empower students as critical and empathic individuals, agents able to consider what it means to be human. It makes a foundational contribution to professional development for socially just teaching (Leibowitz and Holgate, 2012). Walker (2001) describes critical professionalism in terms of the combination of criticality, reflexivity and questioning of the purposes and values underpinning teaching in HE for the public good and professionalism which emphasises public service and commitment to learning.

All of these four normative value driven approaches have relevance in HE in terms of policy and practice. They emphasize different aspects in conceptualising social injustices in higher education that impede student success, and the conceptual entry points to frame corrective action. Combined they provide a comprehensive and dynamic approach towards a social justice agenda in HEIs. The capability approach stresses education for social justice, equality of capability and initiatives that expand student's experiences, advance student agency, wellbeing and achievement and foster social change towards greater justice (Walker, 2010). It asks of HEIs that they consider how can they can address pedagogical and non-pedagogical obstacles to student achievement and develop student capability for diverse students. The complementarity perspective emphasises participation parity (Fraser, 2000) of students focussing on how disparities in experience and achievements are based on misrecognition of the unequal situation and needs of diverse students.   It demands of HEIs that they recognise and redress institutionalised obstacles so as to build student engagement, belonging and success at university. Redistribution, recognition and inclusion are important complementary conceptual aspects (Fraser, 2007) of strategies for parity of participation that entail institutional arrangements that permit all students to participate as peers. Inequalities can deny students the economic or cultural resources to participate, interact with or engage effectively with or within HEIs and thereafter in their professional and social lives.

The political ethics of care approach (Tronto, 1993, 1996) draws attention to care as meeting the needs of students and staff. Care requires of HEIs to be attentive, responsible for, competent and responsive to the needs of diverse students. This means attention to assessing need, acknowledging that students are located differently economically, socially and culturally, taking responsibility for that need and determining how to respond to that need (Bozalek et al., 2014). It requires of HEIs to be competent in caregiving, which has resource implications, and the responsiveness of the care receiver to that care. Critical professionalism emphasises critical reflection and action (Wisker, 2013). It foregrounds notions of critical professional learning where professional educational practitioners critically engage with professional learning that embraces justice and fairness typically through collaborative and reflective processes. The critical professionalism approach asks of professionals in HE to critically reflect and foster learning where professionals and diverse students share an understanding of the roots of inequality and injustice that shape student experience and success, their position and their responsibilities in achieving social justice.

These four perspectives shed light on a complex weave of intertwining issues that shape student experience and success. All four approaches emphasise issues of relevance to the widening participation agenda of internationalization, employability, retention and success, themes that aim to nurture knowledge and skills which help develop diverse students, enable and empower them, and lead to qualities essential to the aims of HE and its effect on society. They enable awareness of and ownership of learning, informed agency, and valuable transferable skills useful in successful study and employability throughout life.

Context and Methods

The two South African universities that were the initial subject of this study (2012-13) (Wisker, 2013) were geographically close to each other. One was a HAU (historically advantaged university) with at the time predominantly white and Afrikaans speaking students; the other was

a HDU (historically disadvantaged university) with predominantly black and working-class students. South Africa is one of the most unequal countries in the world in terms of inequalities in household income (Hall, 2012a). Accounting for this status quo, South Africa HE policy has been characterised by initiatives aimed largely to address historically situated social injustices (Hall, 2012b; Lange, 2012). HE initiatives have sought to support disadvantaged groups gain access to university and retention activities. They have also aimed to engage educators in critical reflection of their pedagogic practices in order to take action in their teaching and interaction with students. Initiatives have attempted to involve students and educators in the critical reflection of their own lives and social justice issues and practices beyond the university that are then embedded in teaching and learning activities. Underpinning this intent are rationales for the advancement of society through consolidating democracy and human rights, developing citizenry, eradicating poverty, and promoting peace, security and sustainable development (Botman, 2012). In the context of the nation's informing value of 'education for the public good', HE in South Africa is seen as serving a specific role in these processes (Botman, 2012).

The social justice initiatives at the South African universities were built on Sen and Nussbaum's capability approach applied to HE by Nussbaum and Walker, amongst others. The universities also drew on Fraser's notion of complementarity, and Tronto's 'political ethics of care' perspectives and critical professionalism approaches in designing their initiatives to widen participation in HE.   The study aimed to understand social justice and HE developments in South Africa through documentary reviews and in-depth interviews conducted during three scholarly working visits from 2012-13. It aimed to share good practice with other UK universities through networks, underpinned with full awareness of the values, strategies, practices and the importance of context in such transfers. Following an initial focus on documentary reviews of the two universities and ten interviews, early work was carried out to start a descriptive taxonomy of effective practices based on the interview data and grounded in the four theoretical perspectives (capability, social justice, political ethics of care and critical professionalism). Interviewing was then extended (2013-16) to a further four universities to increase the range of examples, and explore the range of practices.

Documentary reviews covered the universities' publications and reports, and academic and empirical literature on social justice initiatives in HE institutions in South Africa which provided background and contextual information for our study. Documents of the universities included learning and teaching strategies, governance plans to evaluate how the universities approach and describe their initiatives in relation to social justice issues. Semi-structured interviews were conducted initially with eight staff and postgraduate students in the first two universities then a further eleven staff and postgraduate students in the additional four universities.

Throughout the research the guiding question was: how do universities promote social justice issues in practice? Staff and students were asked about their involvement in social justice-inspired initiatives. Questions covered definition, scope and kinds of initiatives, their experiences and perceptions of the value of the initiatives, what was helpful and challenging, the benefits and outcomes. Participants were asked about the meaning of the initiatives and whether they changed because of them, including what it meant to be a critical professional, where relevant. The study was also concerned with the identification of learning development processes, and what the students took away from it. Other questions explored problem identification and solving and spreading values.

We developed a descriptive taxonomy through an iterative, inductive process using data from the interviews. We identified examples of initiatives useful for developing a taxonomy, through categorising key themes that emerged around the research. Drawing conceptually on notions of equality of capability, participation parity, care and critical professional learning we identified strategies and practices that reflected these notions, their benefits and the rationales provided. We then grouped them into six broad categories that represented a clustering of connected ideas and share them here before turning to the interview data itself.

The taxonomy of types of initiatives

Our research identified six broad categories of initiatives with overlapping aims and strategies (see Table 1) that were judged relevant: epistemological access, values-oriented curriculum, critical pedagogies and professionalism, student engagement and belonging, critical enquiry and communities of practice, real experience, senior management leadership and ethical leadership and strategic embedding of practices. These embody social justice principles in HEs through institutional and personal efforts to support education for social justice and equality of capability for diverse students (Walker, 2010), participation parity (Bozalek and Leibowitz, 2012; Fraser, 2000), conscious efforts of care (Tronto, 1993, 1995, 1996) to meet the needs of disadvantaged students and develop critical professionalism of staff (Wisker, 2012; 2013).

Epistemological access

As Brennan and Tiechler (2008, p. 261) indicate the 'quantitative-structural aspects of HE e.g. access and admission, patterns of institutions and programmes, student enrolment and flows of graduation and graduate employment' have received growing attention. The participating universities went further to root access in terms of social justice imperatives, and consciously worked out ways to redress 'misrecognition' (Bozalek and Leibowitz, 2012; Fraser, 2000). Misrecognition is redressed through epistemological access, by exposing and eradicating normalised values that impede parity of participation (Fraser, 2000) through institutional and policy changes. Epistemological access, as described by research participants, refers to initiatives aimed at enabling students to gain access to particular forms of knowledge hitherto excluded from. It entails initiation into discourses and practices of a discipline (Morrow, 2009). At the studied universities these included initiatives working with schools to improve the quality of teaching, and pre-entry initiatives aimed at HE participation parity (Fraser, 2000) for example through in-school support in key subjects such as Maths and English for Academic Practice , pre-arrival support and extended student support for groups traditionally excluded from university. As one participant remarked:

> '*We look at ethics really, the one from engineering was looking at how she could bring ethics into engineering…South Africa is now known as the lowest in the world in Maths and Science, it is the bottom country in the world so that is a huge social justice issue…So epistemological access is also social justice issue. Our representative at our university said stop doing the diversity workshops concentrate on giving people access, epistemological access and then that way you are doing social justice work.' (Lecturer2)*

Epistemological access through 'ethics in engineering' through maths support, English for Academic Purposes, access courses, extended degrees and pre-arrival support for non-traditional students redressed elements of the issues that essentially fail to enable epistemological access, such as inadequate resource provisioning, poor teaching, poverty and socio-economic stresses. In these ways, epistemological access initiatives redistribute resources (Fraser, 2000, 2007), demonstrate care (Tronto, 1993, 1996) on the part of the institution and enhance capabilities (Walker, 2006b) of diverse students in meaningful ways. Epistemological access to and within the university raises the question as to what constitutes 'meaningful access'. It requires a holistic understanding of what enables epistemological access in and beyond the classroom. It involves engagement of learning and teaching practices with wider societal conditions that enable learners to gain access to particular forms of knowledge.

For the participating universities the process of the initiation into the discourses and practices of the discipline required further assistance for students by way of addressing the more social issues affecting access, settling in and thriving, such as housing, food, transport and other forms of support. For example, some pre-university activities involved providing advice for students in obtaining bursaries and providing material support such as accommodation, mentors, travel money and food vouchers. At university, retention activities included extra study provision to facilitate epistemological access. Epistemological access might require moving beyond curricula to include other facets of a students' life where poverty and disadvantage might exclude them from participation. Morrow (2009) argues that from an educational perspective epistemological access is about what a curriculum should entitle learners to. From a political perspective it raises questions about social and educational justice. However, it also has to engage and deal with mal-distribution and misrecognition (Bozalek and Leibowitz, 2012) embodied in stereotyping and unconscious biases related to individuals on the basis of their social markers – race, gender or religion. Such mal-distribution and misrecognition prevent people from interacting as full partners or in an inequitable manner with others. Epistemological access helps redress inequalities in access in meaningful ways.

Values-oriented curriculum

Social justice values of enabling equality of capability and participation parity through recognising the needs of, representing, engaging and creating a sense of belonging for disadvantaged students (Bozalek and Leibowitz, 2012; Fraser, 2000) were some of the key defining characteristics of the values oriented curriculum designed and adopted by the participating universities. A values oriented curriculum involves facilitating topics embedded in social justice values so that they find exposure in healthy discussions in learning activities. Political ethics of care (Tronto, 1993, 1995, 1996) is necessary on the part of lecturers, in designing curricula that affords this recognition of difference. Inclusion of values in the curricula advances a social justice agenda of ethical engagement by enabling students to critically analyse themselves in terms of judgement of their behaviour and the experiences of others. Curriculum as a set of learning experiences provided to students for their all-round development and modification of behaviour serves as a powerful approach to social justice practice in HEIs.

A number of models aimed at integrating values into curricula were identified that included curriculum alignment with values, hybrid problem-based learning, exchange visits between the studied universities, working with other African universities on curriculum development. Rationales for development of curricula were based on implicit theories of power, inequality and

social exclusion. The justifications given for these curriculum development initiatives were that a curriculum that engages with social justice issues in unequal countries establishes credibility and gains the confidence of students. As a guide for learning, the curriculum was an important shaping force as it foregrounds what is considered valid knowledge, the criteria for its selection and inclusion and how it is mediated pedagogically and acquired by learners (Walker, 2012). The participating universities' notion of curriculum included the official (documented) and operational (how it is delivered) as well as the hidden curriculum (associated with norms and values). Here the curriculum was regarded as more than text inscribed in the text syllabus to include an understanding of knowledge encoded in dominant beliefs and behaviours related to race, identity, history and knowledge that reflect societal power relations. Content of subjects was modified to address social justice values and aims by introducing topics on self, identity and community in some courses.

A values oriented curriculum engenders critical enquiry and discussion practices that produce justice through the development of graduates with critical knowledge, critical self-reflection and capabilities to act in the world (Walker, 2012). It has a 'redistributive, procedural and interactional agenda' (Jost and Kay, 2010) insofar as it aligns social justice values such as equity, empowerment and sustainability.   At the participating universities it was underpinned by notions of ethics, equity, citizenship, social cohesion and meritocracy. Curriculum alignment is focused on an ethical awareness of capabilities and agency that seeks to expand these by enlarging choices (Walker, 2012). It emphasizes the complementarity of a politics of distribution, recognition, representation and belonging (Fraser, 2009b) that allows for a better understanding of the kind of knowledge and judgement needed for an inclusive educational curriculum in practice and principle (Biesta, 2013; Osberg and Biesta, 2010). As one participant described, it involved:

> 'Trying to shift a curriculum or a pedagogy to so that you give people alternative ways of interacting and relating to people.' (Lecturer2)

Curriculum implementation entails creating new pedagogical experiences and removing pedagogical obstacles (Walker, 2010) so that in the studied universities, planning and delivery was intended to focus on facilitating students to become autonomous, critical and responsible learners. Value-based intended learning outcomes were clearly communicated to students and delivered in a well-structured way. Hybrid problem-based learning was one of the kinds of initiatives developed. In one successful instance, it involved bringing together two very different groups of students from two universities to tackle an issue. Exchange visits were organised between the two universities (one historically advantaged and the other historically disadvantaged) with courses designed to engage students in learning about each other and creating opportunities for alternative ways of relating to people differed from themselves. In this case students worked together to draw their versions of their home area and when they shared these, differences of quality of life, space, were then discussed and mutual understanding developed. Universities participating also worked with other African universities to develop values-based curricula in other countries. In one university an African doctoral study programme enabled PhD students from other African countries to engage with colleagues in South Africa in a bespoke programme, and for some, to engage with PhD colleagues in Cambridge UK. Curricula transformations are political and involve judgements, decisions and actions about what interests and kinds of knowledge are promoted at the expense of others, and in so doing highlight questions of content, purpose and relationships (Biesta, 2013).

Strategies for a values-oriented curriculum may differ with regard to specific national contexts, but as one lecturer remarked, what is needed is:

> '…whole system models to try and integrate these concerns into the HE system. Because you can do curriculum change but it doesn't help if you have one thing in your curriculum and another thing in your practice. So you need the hidden curriculum and the implicit and explicit curriculum, and then the policy systems because you can't solve these problems just in the classrooms you need your estates divisions and so on.' (Lecturer4)

In other words, it requires the disruption of certain knowledge, behaviours and mainstream discourses to produce new knowledge, discourses and discursive patterns – the unspoken and unwritten rules of behaviour - that go way beyond what is written, but also beyond the classroom to include all those who work within the university system. The transformation of the institutional curriculum involves complex social transitions at multiple levels.

Critical pedagogies (teaching and learning practices) and critical professionalism (academic development)

Aspects of processes and persons, such as teaching and learning and the academic profession (Brennan and Teichler, 2008) were approached through critical pedagogies and professionalism. Critical pedagogies combine education with critical theory, focus on power as a central concern in the learning and teaching context, on whose interests' knowledge is passed on and regard education as emancipatory. These pedagogies also try to connect classroom learning with the experiences, histories and resources students bring to the university. Participating universities used participatory learning and action research techniques to enable diverse students to come together to understand their different experiences, as one research participant explained:

> 'What we decided to do is to use participatory learning and action techniques which is to get students to draw about their communities or to draw their experiences in life and then to discuss this with each other. Because people are so geographically separated in South Africa they don't get the chance even to interact with other students so we brought students together across very different universities and we also had debriefing sessions afterwards and in these sessions it was quite illuminating.' (Lecturer2)

A focus on experiential aspects was one of the approaches to critical pedagogical practices that cultivate capacities for critical thinking (Nussbaum, 2010). Critical pedagogy provided students with the tools to analyse critically how texts are constructed and in turn construct and position viewers, readers and themselves. For example, one initiative involved reading about self, identity and community and visits to other universities with students from other universities working in groups of six to negotiate and communicate over email applying participatory learning and action tools. In doing so lecturers attempted to provide numerous entry points into learning by combining the core subject elements with practical aspects. The pedagogic approaches were also underpinned by a conscious attempt to enable non-traditional students to take positive and constructive action towards their learning; sharing of responsibility advocated by the political ethics of care approach.

In addition to these pedagogies, an important consideration was the teachers' continual critical reflections on their teaching practices and responses to students' evaluative feedback. Central to their approach was respect (Fraser, 2009b) and care (Tronto, 1993, 1995, 1996) for students as individuals taking into consideration equality and diversity. Teaching practices for some were informed by critical professionalism. Some university lecturers from two universities were involved in a series of workshops, reflective practice and research around critical professionalism as part of their academic or professional development based on Walker (2001) interpretation of a critical professional to suggest the combination of criticality, reflexivity and questioning the purpose and values underpinning teaching in HE for the public good and professionalism with an emphasis on public service and the commitment to learning.

Giroux (2012) envisions critical professionals as transformative intellectuals whose pedagogies develop critical literacy and active citizenship amongst students and redefine knowledge and intellectual practices to address important social problems. At the studied universities critical professional development involved initiatives aimed at enhancing responsibility towards students, colleagues and the wider community and developing an openness to difference and a concern for how power works and constrains learning. The critical professionalism initiative emphasised critical, reflexive and scholarly elements of professionalism that included enquiring about the learner through action-based, critical and participatory means and social engagement with a community of enquiry that shared the purpose to explore these issues through critical interdisciplinary dialogue and engagement in research.

The collaborative and interdisciplinary research project implemented at one of the universities provided twelve academics from 8 departments in five faculties and the university's centre for learning and teaching the opportunity to meet regularly over three years to discuss papers, conduct individual and joint research projects, conducts seminars and also research themselves as a team. Critical implies a developed ability to open up space for new engagement across cultural and other differences and a new generosity of spirit with regards to the reasons for and modes in action of the contestation, creation and uses of knowledge (Wisker, 2012). It makes a foundational contribution to approaches to professional development for teaching for the public good (Leibowitz, 2012) or social justice imperatives. It speaks to the issue of fostering an environment of inclusivity and how critical pedagogies and professionalism might contribute to student engagement and belonging.

Student engagement and belonging

Critical pedagogies and professionalism at the South African universities were underpinned by a conscious aim to engage students in their learning and university life and nurture a sense of belonging. As Van der Velden (2012) establishes, student engagement encompasses a spectrum of different forms of engagement stretching from a pedagogical focus on how students engage with their learning to student populations engagement with university life. Fraser (2007, 2009b) emphasises the importance of belonging and representation which in an HEI would entail cultivating and environment where diverse students voices are heard as legitimate and represented. Initiatives in the studied South African universities included reflective learning, leadership building and connecting theory to real experiences to critically engage students with their learning. They were aimed at developing capabilities, in ways that Walker (2006) frames as 'agency disrupting habitus'. This emphasis on agency situates students' engagement with their learning and sense of belonging to the university in terms of them developing capabilities for

practical reason, being able to make well-reasoned, informed, critical, independent, intellectually acute, socially responsible, and reflective choices) and education resilience (Walker, 2006; Hall, 2012a).

One particular outcome of the initiatives aimed at engaging students was the leadership roles that mentors developed, as observed by one participant:

> 'The other thing that is amazing to me is the leadership roles that they take on. Next year or was it this year one of them was the vice chairman of the students representative council. We have a system of mentors where second and third year students are selected to help first year students...support monitors help with personal growth doing their first year in two years, support modules in the sciences involving an extra hour after the course, system of mentors where 2nd and 3rd year students help 1st year students.' (Lecturer6)

The leadership role served to cement their sense of belonging to the university. In addition to practical support offered to students by way of mentoring, the importance of 'real experience' in engaging students in their learning was noted by one participant in relation to course design:

> 'I was also thinking about students of course, and you take it to them and then they live it on in other ways through their kind of rippled practice so that's really important and fundamental. I want my students to take risks I want to take them out of the University into settings they're not used to, and that's also what I do so I can always try and understand what it's like, how I can be vulnerable, how I can hold their hand into communities that are very different from their own, and for me that is kind of a social justice pedagogy, for me that's really important as it's so easy to be stuck in the ivory tower and be self-referential as a student.' (Lecturer3)

The course initiatives helped engage non-traditional students. A sense of separation by those whose entry is via a different mode or are on extended degrees requires some commitment to 'political ethics of care' (Tronto, 1993, 1995, 1996), the process of meeting needs and helping students to develop particular capacities and capabilities. This attention to political care through the programme structure meant extended degree students were respected and accepted as mainstream students gained an understanding of what they had gone through and the non-traditional students gained confidence.

Values-oriented extra-curricula activities linked to fostering engagement and a sense of belonging were underpinned by theory such as Sen and Nussbaum's capability approach. Students were encouraged to contribute to a centre as volunteers for example making composters for gardeners who produced food for their families. This underpinning of social justice approaches also carried through to the kinds of research and research communities fostered by staff and research students at the university through the application of critical theory to critical research questions and issues reflecting the South African contexts.

Critical enquiry and communities of practice

Notions of social justice practice in HE as developing critical and reflective thinkers (Walker,

2001) and redressing misrecognition through its exposure and eradication of normalised views that impede parity of participation (Fraser, 2000) were evident in developing critical enquiry and communities of practices centred around social justice issues. One such practice was two universities engaging their students in research learning that was directed toward social justice, empowerment and self-actualisation. The activities underpinning this practice extended from academic research at postgraduate levels, to action research with communities and the development of research communities of practice. Participants in the research that included doctoral students and researcher developers cited theorists such as Sen, Engestrome and Bhashkar with whose work they had engaged and approaches (critical realism, cultural historical theory, phenomenology, action research) in developing doctoral research conducted on social justice issues.

Research activity covered conceptualisation and theorisation of social justice issues, problems and challenges (e.g. theatre and the criminal justice system, environmental concerns, working with the community) and participatory and transformatory action research. The development of communities of practice where students met, read, discussed and learned about agency and social change themes were some examples. Research students met twice a week to discuss their respective research on social justice issues with the aim to think and work together.

With respect to research-related community engagement, there were research activities that engaged with various communities through outreach research professional practice and placements. Also, there was shared use of space for community-university engagement. Community engagement initiatives and community oriented doctoral research which fostered links with the local community through knowledge exchange and co-construction activities were some of the activities in the research domain of social justice inspired practice. One doctoral student cited theatre techniques as a very specific way to open up discursive space to explore social injustices in the community through her research work with youth and prisons. She noted that:

> 'And we really just used theatre techniques to tell the stories that they wanted to tell and I think it was an important life skill developmental activity for them…I think there's something about the embodied collaborative meaning making that the theatre space develops…it ties in with cultural means of expression, so people can choose how they want to express themselves…and it meant that people would witness them in very very different ways…as young people with something important to say and not as victims, not as the oppressed, but as someone who stands up and says I want to be funny or I want to tell you this about how we see politics.' (Student3)

In addition to research leadership around critical enquiry and communities of practice, ethical leadership was important for socially just practices.

Ethical leadership and strategic embedding of practice and research

Ethical leadership has been observed in the broader leadership literature as extending from a sole focus on productivity and profits to encompassing responsibility of ethical and moral conduct. It presupposes not only ethical competence of the individual but also transforming institutions and other people. Hall (2012a), drawing on social justice approaches of Sen and

Walker, has suggested that cultural change is necessary for institution-wide transformations and appropriate leadership is key and suggests that it has been demonstrated at the University of Cape Town and University of Pretoria. In our study, at the strategic and management level, the South Africa Netherlands Trust (SANTRUST), a South African and the Netherlands partnership programme, conducted postgraduate research methods development, supported PhD student proposal writing and research methodology and methods development particularly in the early stage of their research and ran supervisory workshops for staff. Two of VCs supporting this strategy of a pre-doctoral preparation programme, one of whom also supported a 'doc week' twice yearly development programme for PhD students engaged in their projects, suggested that there was a dedicated intention to reach out to (often rural) students who had not had access to HE or doctoral programmes. Like other VCs consulted, they were committed to this as a social justice practice.

The two interviewed, however, went even further with their policy initiatives and commitment to enacted values in practice. They publically spoke about social justice as more than a theory but a professional and personal practice which could be led from their roles and could permeate the university – in effect demonstrating a form of critical professionalism and embracing the principles of political ethics of care (Tronto, 1993, 1995, 1996). They also actively supported students with everything from accommodation and food, bursaries for poor rural students, curriculum content, teaching practices – through to doctoral themes and supervision practices and bespoke doctoral centres. This work then tracks out into making changes in the community through research and professional practice.

This strategic engagement with social justice issues demonstrates the need to embed social justice values across university hierarchies with sound examples from the top, and out institutional, disciplinary and individual levels. Political ethics of care (Tronto, 1993, 1995, 1996) sets the terms of dialogue required to develop strategies and practices for socially just institutions (Bozalek and Leibowitz, 2012). Strategic embedding of practice demands a conscious attempt to engage with the organisational aspects of HE which Brennan and Teichler (2008) regard as steering and management, stakeholder engagement, governance and financing.

Personal commitment, for example, in providing extra financial resources to those in need was another example of social justice inspired practice. One Vice Chancellor made personal savings such as travelling economy class rather than the business class that he was entitled to so that the resources could be used to provide housing support for disadvantaged students. This illustration of ethical leadership, of leading by example has potential to create an environment that encourage ethical practices in other areas that foster access, participation, retention and success of disadvantaged students in HE.

Implications of this taxonomy for HEIs in the UK and globally

Access, participation, retention and success in HE of diverse groups poses serious challenges for policy and practice because it is bound up with historical inequalities (Burke, 2015) and social injustices. Close attention needs to be paid to different practices and contexts within which inequalities and injustices are formed or reproduced. The taxonomy described in the previous subsections and now illustrated diagrammatically in this section (see Table 1) can serve as a means for thinking about a guide that articulates rationales for social justice (ethical) principles

in HE and developing an ethical institutional policy framework and practices to address issues of fairness and equity in HE. Such institutional arrangements can support disadvantaged students in attempting to 'participate as equals' (Bozalek and Leibowitz, 2012) in HEIs and improve their chances for success.   Inspired by social justice frameworks of capability, complementarity, ethics of care and critical professionalism at some South African universities, the taxonomy provides concrete examples of how they have engaged with social justice issues.

Social justice questions and issues arise across the student lifecycle and in institution-wide processes. As higher education is both a public (Walker, 2001; Leibowitz, 2012) and private good, universities have a social responsibility to incorporate issues of redistributive justice into contemporary HE planning, policy and practice. This means that in order to contribute to making HEIs more socially just, planning needs to be focussed not only on patterns of distribution, but also the relational social structures and institutional contexts in which fairness and equity can be fostered. Thinking these through in relation to epistemological access, values-oriented curriculum, critical pedagogies and professionalism, student engagement and belonging, critical enquiry and communities of practice, real experience, senior management leadership and ethical leadership and strategic embedding of practices can be a useful starting point for addressing institution-wide ethical principles and making them explicit. Our taxonomy can inform a joined-up to widening participation that is rooted in social justice principles.

Table 1: Types of Social Justice Practices from the Research

Practice	Examples	Strategies	Rationales and Benefits (capability, belonging, ethics of care and critical professionalism)
Epistemological access	Extended degrees Access courses and pre-arrival support Bursaries	Develop practices to enable meaningful access, transition and experience for non-traditional students	• Achieve participatory parity • Provide ethical epistemological access to specific subjects e.g Maths and Engineering
Values-oriented curriculum	Hybrid problem-based learning Working with other African universities on curriculum development	Ensure underpinning values of social justice and global citizenship inform curriculum alignment and that examples are evident in modules	• Ensure elements of curriculum engage with social justice issues • Establish credibility and gain the confidence of the students • Give people alternative ways of interacting and relating to people who are different from themselves • Encourage critical thinking and develop problem-solving skills • Facilitate the construction of new progressive discourses • Foster global citizenship • Develop learning, understanding and engagement
Critical pedagogies and critical professionalism	Social project on diversity engagement Academic staff development relating to integrating social justice issues in teaching practices and conduct action research into teaching and learning practices	Critical and reflection teaching and learning practices and academic development strategies developed related to social justice values , content and practices, including diversity and inclusivity practices, clear on course documents,	• Enhance listening skills and engagement with all people including those who are different from the mainstream in relation to ability, physical and mental abilities, origins, ethnicity , religion, gender, ages sexuality etc • Enable tapping into academic identities as teachers and helps engagement with social justice issues

Practice	Examples	Strategies	Rationales and Benefits (capability, belonging, ethics of care and critical professionalism)
	Support modules and support monitors Publications	developed, shared, evaluated	• Enable academics to have a positive influence on students through inner work
Student engagement and belonging	Modules and their learning outcomes Student volunteer committees Centres Placements, field trips, joint modules and joint activities within modules linking student groups	Individual student, groups and SU involvement in designing and running classes, activities and non-taught events Experience embedded in curriculum – special modules with LOs and assessment eg placements, field trips, joint modules and joint activities within modules linking student groups, activities and assessment involving co-construction of knowledge	• Enhance confidence and negotiation skills • Foster social justice learning that is carried through into practice • Build leadership skills • Facilitate a better understanding of others, social justice, 'live it' and engender acceptance • Engender experiential learning and generative processes • Foster personal growth and self-development • Encourage empowerment of student learning practices in and beyond university involving enquiry led learning, co-construction of knowledge
Critical enquiry and communities of practice	Research initiatives for personal and wider community change Communities of practice PhD social justice programmes	Theatre techniques for social change, development of spaces and learning activities to encourage communities of practice	• Life skills, creativity and empowerment outcomes for research participants • Constructive transformations through reflection and creating new identities • Disrupts patronising lens and gaze • Improves quality of life • Publications to disseminate good practice and foster wider learning • Find spaces to carry research into practice • Ideas incubation, innovations and sustainable

Practice	Examples	Strategies	Rationales and Benefits (capability, belonging, ethics of care and critical professionalism)
			improvements through networking and connections between people with similar interests and the facilitation of information and knowledge flows • Develops contextual research that is socially connected and active
Ethical leadership and strategic embedding of practice	VC and SMT commitment to values and practical developments of social justice – access, finance and curriculum change Regional centres for expertise in education	Structures such as regional centres of expertise and practice Senior management leadership Access through financial and personal support Sensitive dealing with any actions and reactions undermining social justice	• Engages in situated practices and learning • Integrates teaching, research and community engagement • Develops individual and collective agency

The taxonomy of types of social justice practice identified within the studied universities raises questions for other HEs in terms of what institutional initiatives can be developed to provide epistemological access to diverse students, what values should underpin the curriculum and in what ways? The taxonomy also invites HEs to consider how to foster student engagement and belonging, develop critical enquiry and communities of practice and sustain ethical leadership and strategic embedding of social justice practice to address inequalities in access and outcomes for widening participation students.

Conclusion

Our taxonomy of social justice practices in HE derived from studies of university social justice practice in South African universities is underpinned by capabilities, complementarity, ethics of care and critical professionalism. It highlights some of the approaches to redress contemporary challenges in widening participation. We argue that the mapped practices provide opportunities for widening participation that enhance student belonging for non-traditional students. A concerted and conscious effort in engaging with social justice approaches goes some way in trying to redress social justice and aid retention. It requires a different approach to HE that is part of wider a concern with inequalities, meaningful access and capabilities (Walker, 2003, 2006b; Walker and Unterhalter, 2007), complementarity (Fraser, 2009b) and ethical care (Tronto, 1993, 1995, 1996) approaches and for insights from these approaches to be weaved into the fabric of HE policy and practice. In effect, social justice requires a twin-pronged approach to redistribution and recognition of differences (Fraser, 2009b). Under-represented groups are 'bivalent collectivity' insofar as they suffer both socio-economic mal-distribution and cultural misrecognition.

Creating positive environments for socially just widening participation in HE is a multi-layered political process or enterprise. The research on South African universities foregrounds some opportunities to create more inclusive and engaging environments for diverse students driven by a redistributive, procedural and interactional agenda that can inform UK and global practices. The practices speak to the need for the alignment of policy, institutional actions on enrolment and retention, curriculum, appropriate pedagogies and academic development as well as the integration of multi-level initiatives with complex coordinates of disciplinary, academic and student values and practices. Management of these complex processes requires an understanding of social justice approaches, new knowledge and pedagogic practices, leadership and commitment at different levels and a sense of the whole system to address the values and aspirations at each level with those of the whole systemic framework.

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