

## **Sociology Curriculum and Capabilities Formation: A Case Study of Two South African Universities**

**Authors :** B. Manyonga

**Abstract :** Across the world, higher education (HE) is expanding rapidly and issues of curriculum change have become more contentious and political than ever before. Although research informing curricula review in social sciences and particularly sociology has been conducted, much analysis has been devoted to teaching and transmitting disciplinary knowledge, student identity and epistemology, with little focus on curriculum conceptualisation and capability formation. This paper builds on and contributes to accumulating knowledge in the field of sociology curriculum design in the South African HE context. Drawing from the principles of Capabilities Approach (CA) of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, the paper argues that sociology curriculum conceptualisation may be enriched by capabilities identification for students. Thus, the sociological canon ought to be the vehicle through which student capabilities could be developed. The CA throws a fresh light on how curriculum ought to be designed to offer students real opportunities, expanding choices for individuals to be what they want to be and do. The paper uses a case of two South African universities to present analysis of qualitative data collected from undergraduate sociology lecturers. The major findings of the paper indicate that there is no clear philosophy guiding the conceptualisation of curriculum. The conceptualisation is based on lecturer expertise, carrying out research, response to topical and societal issues. Sociology lecturers highlighted that they do not consult students on what they want to do and to be as a result of studying for a sociology degree. Although lecturers recognise some human development capabilities such as critical thinking, multiple perspectives and problem solving as important for sociology students, there is little evidence to illustrate how these are being cultivated in students. Taken together, the results suggest that sociological canon is being regarded as the starting point for curriculum planning and construction.

**Keywords :** capabilities approach, graduate attributes, higher education, sociology curriculum

**Conference Title :** ICECP 2016 : International Conference on Education and Curriculum Planning

**Conference Location :** San Francisco, United States

**Conference Dates :** June 09-10, 2016