

Institution: The Open University		
Unit of Assessment: C22 Anthropology and Development Studies		
Title of case study: Enhancing female empowerment and measuring capabilities in low- and high-income countries		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2004-2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Freda Wolfenden	Professor of Education and International Development	2004 onwards
Paul Anand	Professor of Economics, Decision Sciences and Philosophy	Full-time throughout
Alison Buckler	Senior Research Fellow International Education	2010 onwards
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 1 st August 2013 - 31 st July 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>Research conducted by Wolfenden, Anand and Buckler has championed and contributed to female empowerment and capabilities in low income contexts across Africa and Asia at individual, community, national and international levels. The main impacts include: (i) generating new capability-based quality of life measures that have been applied to evaluations of female empowerment initiatives, medical interventions and contributed to ways in which international agencies understand and monitor progress; and (ii) enhancing the capabilities of women teachers and implementing new pathways into teaching through gender-focused research activities on pedagogy, learning and female teachers' lived experiences. The development of these direct and explicit capability measures has supported a self-help programme for over 1,500,000 women in India and increased the number of female educators and girls' access to, and participation in, school in Malawi and Sierra Leone.</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
The Development of Practical Capability Indicators from Sen's Capability Approach		
<p>Anand's research was the first to recognise that direct capability indicators exist in standard household and health surveys and that these could be extended to create suites of indicators that measure quality of life extensively and in a wide range of research, policy and practice settings. In 2005, Anand led a multi-disciplinary team of philosophers and social scientists to operationalise Sen's (1985) theory (which is fundamentally interested in the freedom people have to live the life they wish through the freedom to pursue the things that they have reason to value), by focusing particularly on the measurement of what adults could do in different domains of life. This enabled the creation of a survey instrument delivered in the UK by YouGov. The resulting published research [O1, O2] was recognised as offering a clear proof of concept that direct capability indicators can be developed by working with the methodological principles that apply to household survey design.</p>		
Applying Sen's Capability Approach to Teaching Programmes in Order to Enhance Female Capabilities		
<p>Informed and inspired by Anand's ground-breaking work on the practical implementation of Sen's capability approach within surveys, Wolfenden and Buckler drew on the approach to enhance girls' education (access and participation) and gender equality in Sub-Saharan Africa. Their research focused on pedagogy for developing learner expertise and highlighted the development of capabilities of autonomy and social relations during the learning experience. Murphy and Wolfenden [O3] revealed how different levels and modalities of participation in</p>		

learning bears on schooling and provides boys and girls with different possibilities for accessing knowledge that is valued and legitimised by teachers and schools. The research highlighted girls' resistance to teacher-centred lecture-driven pedagogy, based on hierarchical teacher-learner relations, and why girls find this approach disempowering.

Additional research by **Buckler**, which also built on the work of **Wolfenden** and **Anand**, developed an ethnographic-focused study of the professional needs and aspirations of female teachers in rural settings in five countries in Sub-Saharan Africa [O4, O5]. She used the capability approach as a framework for understanding teachers' needs and aspirations to produce two conceptualisations of professional capabilities for teachers generated by official and teacher perspectives, respectively. This novel application of the capability approach highlighted how female teachers experienced dissonances between the activities in their professional education programmes and the way their working lives are situated in the classroom realities of multiple languages, severe poverty and instability. Her research revealed which professional capabilities were valued by female educators, as well as constraints on pursuing them.

Wolfenden and **Buckler's** findings subsequently informed action research to address the critical shortage of qualified female teachers in rural Malawi. This innovative pilot programme (funded by the Scottish Government in partnership with the Government of Malawi, DfID, SEDA and local NGOs) offered a 'bridging course' to formal teacher training programmes for women in rural communities through combining supported distance learning with in-school vocational experience. The research explored participants' motivations for joining the programme and how gendered sociocultural legacies shaped female trainee constructions of the teacher role and conceptions of teaching [O6]. The original contribution of this research arises from the fact that previously no documented research had been carried out with similar groups of candidates, and instead focused only on those who already have qualifications for teacher training or who were still at school. This research revealed a deep commitment to improving the role of women in their local communities - acting as role models and in service to their local communities and country.

3. References to the research

- O1. Anand, P.**, Hunter, G., Carter, I., Dowding, K., Guala, F., and Van Hees, M. (2009) The development of capability indicators. *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities* 10, no. 1, 125-152. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649880802675366>
- O2. Anand, P.**, Krishnakumar, J., and Tran, N.B. (2011) Measuring welfare: Latent variable models for happiness and capabilities in the presence of unobservable heterogeneity. *Journal of Public Economics*, 95(3-4), pp.205-215. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2010.11.007>
- O3. Murphy, P.** and **Wolfenden, F.** (2013) Developing a pedagogy of mutuality in a capability approach - teachers' experiences of using the open educational resources (OER) of the teacher education in sub-Saharan Africa (TESSA) programme. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 33(3), 263-271. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2012.09.010>
- O4. Buckler, A.** (2015) Quality teaching in rural Sub-Saharan Africa: Different perspectives, values and capabilities. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 40, 126-133. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2014.10.008>
- O5. Buckler, A.** (2016) Teachers' Professional Capabilities and the Pursuit of Quality in Sub-Saharan African Education Systems: Demonstrating and Debating a Method of Capability Selection and Analysis. *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*, 17(2) pp. 161-177. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19452829.2014.991706>
- O6. Safford, K.**, Cooper, D., **Wolfenden, F.**, and Chitsulo, J. (2013) 'Give courage to the ladies': expansive apprenticeship for women in rural Malawi. *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, 65(2), 193-207. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13636820.2012.755213>

4. Details of the impact

This research has contributed to impacts in international and national organisations in low- and high-income countries, and on the skills, competencies and agency of female trainee teachers and school students in Malawi and Sierra Leone.

(i) Impacts on International and Organisational Policy and Practice

Translation of **Anand's** capabilities research into official policy briefings and reports is helping national and international organisations take practical steps to incorporate quality of life measures into their assessments of progress. Significant policy contributions include: a commissioned paper for the EU in 2019 to help policy-makers launch an initiative to understand and tackle inequalities from a broader multi-dimensional perspective than was previously the case [C1]; a commissioned paper for the UNDP to help it understand connections between human development and subjective wellbeing for an Annual Report in 2016, which argued for the broadening of human development [C1]; and a commission in 2019 for the World Bank to provide an overview of quality of life measurement [C1]. In addition, **Anand** was invited to adapt the capability indicators for use in mental health clinical trials, leading to a health measurement instrument (OXCAP-MH) that has been translated into 5 different languages and is used around the world [C1], in over 28 clinical trials [C1].

Anand's capability indicators have also been translated and adapted for use in an Indian context. The Rajiv Gandhi Trust is an Indian charitable organisation with the aim of supporting the development needs of women living in deprivation. The trust has implemented its self-help programme for women across 50 districts in Uttar Pradesh, one of the most economically and socially deprived states in India. Between July 2016 and December 2020, the programme has created 100,000 self-help groups involving 1,500,000 women. To obtain further funding to support the programme, the trust needed to measure impacts on women, such as empowerment, social satisfaction, employment, mobility and safety. The trust chose to adopt **Anand's** capability indicators to evaluate its programme. The evaluation provided statistical assurance that women's capabilities were being enhanced, particularly with respect to a variety of freedoms, and helped explain the popularity of such programmes in the face of modest financial benefits [C2].

(ii) Impact on Skills, Competencies and Agency of Female Trainee Teachers and School Students in Malawi and Sierra Leone

Wolfenden and **Buckler's** research findings directly informed the design of an intervention to address the critical shortage of qualified female teachers in rural Malawi. From 2012 to 2016, 2,250 female primary school trainee-teachers were supported in gaining the qualifications necessary for entry to Teacher Training Colleges. As a result of this programme's success, OU researchers were invited to support the design and implementation of a similar model in Sierra Leone. This was first delivered by Plan International and Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) through DfID funding with OU technical support and later by FAWE / Banyan Tree - a Corporate Social Responsibility fund that supports sustainable development projects. Since 2014, over 900 young women have participated in these 'bridging' programmes in Sierra Leone and over 80% are now enrolled for the distance learning Teachers Certificate with NGO/DfID sponsorship [C4].

Wolfenden and **Buckler's** research has been used to bring improvements in the Teacher Training College programme by the: 1) removal of the gender-biased General Paper from the entrance examination; 2) greater use of moderation in assignments to increase standards; and 3) provision of Practice Study Mentors to enhance support for trainee teachers, which led to attitudinal and behaviour changes related to teacher professional learning by recognising and sharing the knowledge held by practicing teachers [C4]. Prior to the programme underpinned by OU research, recruitment and retention of female trainees on these distance learning programmes was less than 10%; on the OU research-informed programme (2015-2020)

retention was over 75% [C7, C8]. This success led to an invitation to talk to the Sierra Leone Teachers' Service Commission, senior leaders from NGOs at the Global Perspectives Conference (October 2018) and inclusion in the Education Workforce Report (Education Commission, 2019). In 2020, a further USD1,000,000 was secured by Plan Canada to extend the programme.

In summary, through participation in the OU-designed programmes, over 3,000 women (aged 18 – 40) in rural Malawi and Sierra Leone have embarked on pathways to financial independence and undergone personal transformation [C3, C4]. A female Learning Assistant from Sierra Leone stated: *"Before they were "Just look at this, she is just giving birth to a lot of children without doing anything. But now I'm part of this programme, they call us "Teacher" [...]. We have respect now in the community."* Another stated *"We have not been secure. Now we are respected in this community. Where people who used to abandon us, [they] now look at us as respectable people, so we are really happy"* [C4]. In the Sierra Leone intervention, over 50% of these women are mothers and none had previously completed or passed the secondary school leaving exam [C4]. In Malawi, 55% of programme participants achieved the School Certificate and over half planned to progress to formal teacher training or to continue in a role as a teaching assistant or volunteer in their local school [C3]. Others intended to use their certification to move into health, study for a Technical, Entrepreneurial and Vocational, Education and Training Authority (TEVETA) course or start their own business [C3]. In Sierra Leone, over 80% of participants have progressed to study on the distance learning Teachers Certificate programme at the Teacher Training Colleges, whilst continuing to work in their local primary schools [C4]. This programme has allowed the women to move away from insecure jobs to more stable employment where they are better able to contribute to their community. For example, in Sierra Leone, several have stood as candidates in local elections [C4]. It has also contributed to an increase in confidence and self-esteem in the women, leading to a change in the way they interact with their community and how they are perceived. One Learning Assistant from Sierra Leone stated: *"My value and esteem in the community has increased and that has made me very happy and proud. In fact, some community members are now referring to me as a teacher"* [C4].

In both countries the inclusion of more women in the education workforce has lent support to moves for greater diversity in the teaching community and is challenging gender norms. Furthermore, for students, the presence of female teachers is helping to create a safer and more inclusive learning environment. Participation in the teacher training programmes by mentors, head teachers and tutors, combined with the emerging agency of the trainees has begun to lay the foundations for improvements in girls' education practice within the communities in which the women are becoming teachers [C4]. Female trainees act as mentors and role models for girl pupils, supporting individuals to return to school after marriage and / or childbirth and to negotiate difficult family issues, including poverty, death, abuse and early marriage [C3, C4]. From the schools in Malawi there is quantitative data on the programme's impacts on pupils, including increased attendance and retention, with fewer girls 'repeating a year' in classes supported by female trainees [C3]. For example, the percentage of girls completing a year of primary school increased from 47% (2012 baseline) to 91% (2016 endline) and the percentage of teachers behaving as better role models for girls increased from 20% (2012 baseline) to 93% (2016 endline). Headteachers and teachers (approximately 1,000) now strongly value the trainees' in-class presence to support pupils [C4] and their own participation in the programme has led to a greater awareness of female pupils' learning needs and an enlarged repertoire of student-centred pedagogic approaches to meet these learning needs. Community leaders attribute a decrease in domestic violence to the trainees' increased confidence and independence generating respect within their families [C4]. As a result of this research, **Wolfenden** has been seconded part-time as Education Director and Team Leader at Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's Fund Manager to shape policy and practice in girls' education.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

C1. Reports and testimonial letters relating the impact of measuring capabilities research.

C2. Rajic Gandhi Trust Testimonial transcript.

C3. Reports relating to Access to Teaching in Malawi.

C4. Reports and testimonials relating to Access to Teaching in Sierra Leone.