

Collaborative open textbook creation: Perspectives on student involvement

By

Glenda Cox, Michelle Willmers and Bianca Masuku
University of Cape Town



Centre for
Innovation in
Learning and
Teaching



UNESCO CHAIR
IN OPEN EDUCATION
AND SOCIAL JUSTICE



University of Cape Town

28 703

STUDENTS

4 928 staff (1 184
academic and 3 744
professional,
administrative support
and service staff).



Digital Open Textbooks for Development

Initiated as a three-year (2018–2021) **research, advocacy and implementation** project funded by the Canadian IDRC, following in wake of Research on Open Educational Resources for Development (ROER4D) and other CILT open education initiatives (since 2007). Now an institutionally funded initiative.



General objective:

To contribute to improving *inclusion* in South African higher education by addressing equitable access to appropriate and relevant learning resources.

UCT open textbook authors in the DOT4D study



Kensleyrao
Apajee
**Mechanical
Engineering**



Chris Barnett & Cesarina
Edmonds-Smith
Chemistry



Stella Papanicolaou
Architecture



Dr Juan Klopper
Surgery



A/Prof. Abimbola
Windapo
Construction



A/Prof Maria Keet,
Computer Science



Jonathan Shock,
Mathematics



Dr James
Lappeman,
Marketing



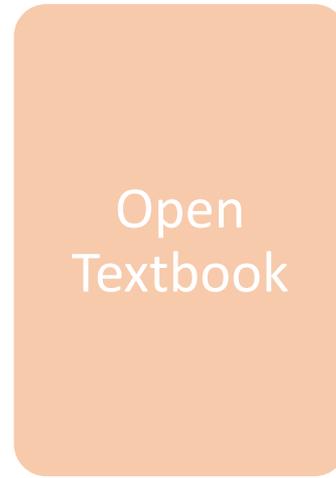
Tim Low,
Statistics



Dr Michael Held,
**Orthopaedic
Surgery**



Dr Claire Blackman
Mathematics



- Economic 'distribution'
- Cultural 'recognition'
- Political 'representation'

- Open licences
- Localisation
- Voices

- Free
- Digital
affordance: adaptability
- Co-creation

Unpacking social justice

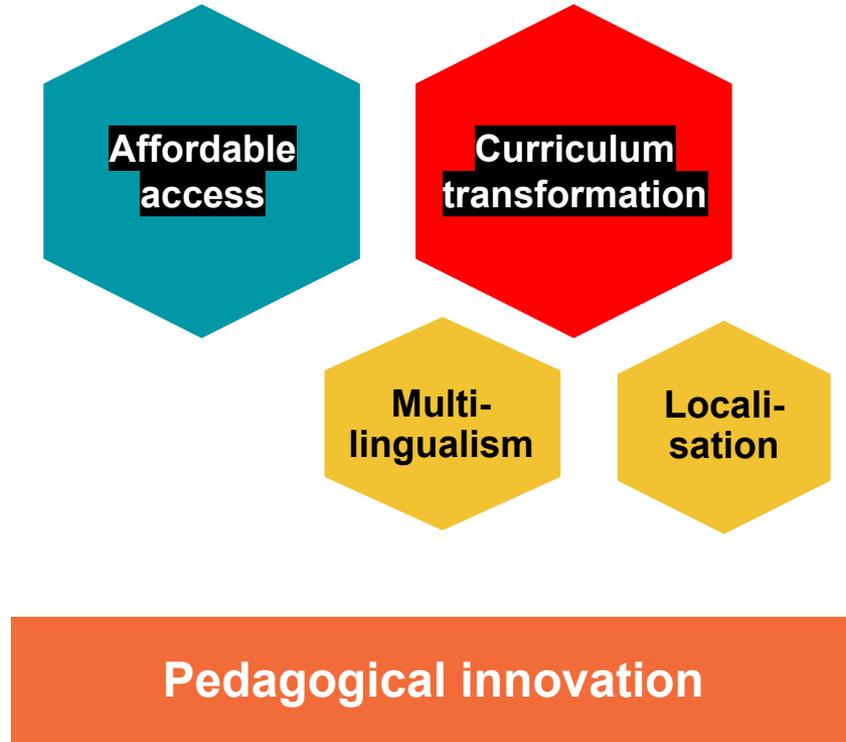
Social justice is a concept that requires the organisation of social arrangements that make it possible for **everyone to participate equally in society**.

Fraser (2005) considers social justice as “**participatory parity**” in **economic**, **cultural** and **political** dimension

(Cox, Masuku & Willmers, 2020)



Social justice drivers for open textbook production at UCT



Open textbooks and social justice

Open textbooks save money

1. Economics

Student protest #fees must fall



openstax

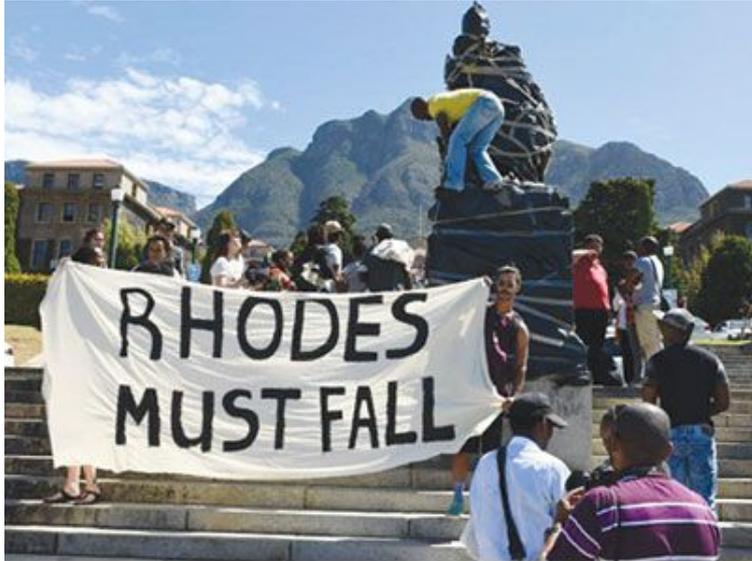
We visited Rice University and spoke with students about their perspectives on free textbooks. Check back tomorrow to see another student's perspective. [#ForStudentsForever](#)

<https://africanarguments.org/2021/06/fallisms-faultlines-the-paradoxes-of-fees-must-fall/>

Open textbooks for curriculum change

2. Culture and representation

#Rhodesmustfall



Cape Town U Must Fall protests

<https://www.educationworld.in/south-af-rica-must-fall-protests-report/>



<https://www.buzzfeed.com/husseinkesvani/oxford-campaign-rhodes-must-fall>

Open textbooks for collaboration and
co-creation

3. Students as partners

Students as co-creators of teaching approaches, course design, and curricula: Implications for academic developers

Article in *International Journal for Academic Development* · June 2011

DOI: 10.1080/1360144X.2011.568690

CITATIONS

470

READS

4,366

3 authors:



Catherine Bovill

The University of Edinburgh

58 PUBLICATIONS 2,653 CITATIONS

[SEE PROFILE](#)



Alison Cook-Sather

Bryn Mawr College

87 PUBLICATIONS 4,581 CITATIONS

[SEE PROFILE](#)



Peter Felten

Elon University

59 PUBLICATIONS 2,614 CITATIONS

[SEE PROFILE](#)

International Journal for
Students as Partners

Volume 1, Issue 1
Spring 2017



Example: Open Textbooks

- Digital, freely available collections of scaffolded teaching and learning content
- published under an open licence
- with affordances for integrated multimedia and third-party content
- published via platforms and in formats that provide affordances for content delivery on a range of devices, print and low bandwidth access strategies
- through **collaborative, inclusive authorship, quality assurance and publishing approaches**
- that can be leveraged in **sustainable models of open textbook production for social justice and transformation.**

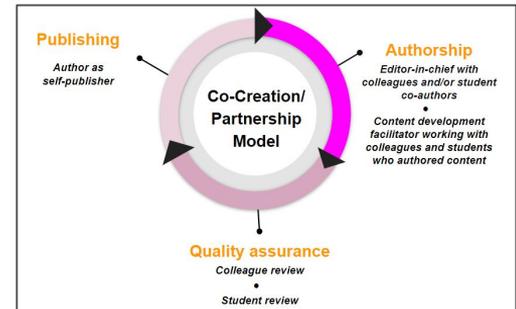
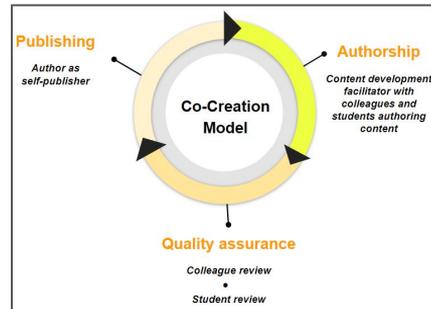
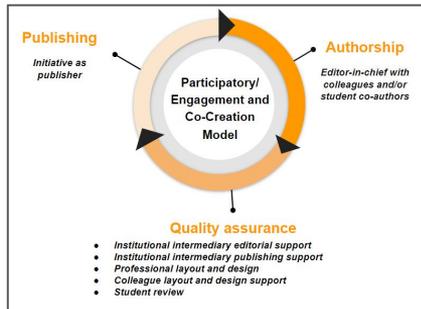
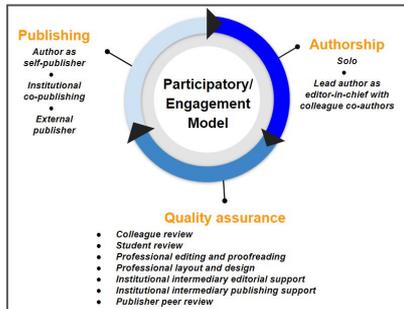
**Open textbooks > Collaboration > Inclusion >
Social justice > Sustainability**

Collaborative open textbook production models

Aim: Provide open textbook creators with sustainable models of production that manifest “parity of participation” as the just end point of social justice

DOT4D context: Four models reflecting varying levels of student and colleague collaboration

- Participatory/Engagement Model
- Participatory/Engagement and Co-Creation Model
- Co-Creation Model
- Co-Creation/Partnership Model



Bovill (2020) terms of inclusion

(adapted by DOT4D)

Participatory design	Stakeholders contribute to the design and development of initiatives, including curriculum; students are “testers or informants” and don’t have a high level of agency
Engagement	Activities to motivate and interest students; can include engagement in teaching and learning
Partnership	Collaborative; contribute equally; some pedagogical conceptualisation and decision-making; implementation and analysis

Bovill terms of inclusion (cont.)

Co-creation	Contribute new pedagogical ideas; empowerment; meaningful engagement; students construct understanding and learning resources
Representative	Elected role, small group representing whole group
Consultant	Students selected and paid to collaborate
Co-researcher	Collaborating meaningfully on teaching and learning research or subject based research
Co-designer	Sharing responsibility for designing learning, teaching and assessment

New findings: Open textbooks and
students-as- partners

Current case studies:	Terms of inclusion: Students		<i>Model</i>
	Authorship	Quality assurance	
Author 1	Co-creation: co-researcher Co-designer, representative, consultant	Participatory design	<i>Co-Creation/ Partnership Model</i>
Author 2	Co-creation: co-researcher	[Ongoing: Engagement]	<i>Participatory/ Engagement and Co-Creation Model</i>
Author 3	Co-creation: co-designer/ representative	Engagement	<i>Co-Creation Model</i>

Current research focus: Interviews with 3 authors

Author 1: Three students (one withdrew): one student worked on designing questions/quizzes for open chapter, another worked on a technical platform (students were **paid** for this work- consultants)

Author 2: Various levels, **whole class participation**, tutors and co-teaching

Author 3: Students made videos (**assignment**) and wrote chapters (invited whole class but not everyone co-creating)

How do academics experience working with students in OT production (what are the benefits)?

Author 1: “Overall positive”, “fairly freeform” “hands off approach”

Benefits: second and third year students... you have a positive impact to play within the department. I think that in and of itself is a very powerful thing. So I think for me, the fact that we say we as these sort of lofty academic say, hey, we need you, you have a real role to play here to improve things, something that we on our own are unable to do.

Author 2: “Satisfying because the students respond really well to the idea”

Benefits: I wouldn't be able to do it if students didn't do the work, because there's is a lot of the legwork.

“Whole class, same level”...” And I think it's important to involve all of them at the same level because you just get a lot of work out and it's just rich”.

Author 3t's fantastic. It's very interesting,..

Benefits: they are actually mentoring me a lot more than I'm mentoring the students. They are so inspiring to me because they are on a completely different frequency..

we need to do is basically have that interaction that is ongoing and dynamic to be able to adjust the content creation and information at a good pace

What are the challenges?

Author 1: **Strike a balance:** 'any time that they spend working on something like this is time taken away from their actual studies.'

'The workload for students is really enormous'

One student didn't contribute: They just felt like the normal bumps along the road that one expects.

Author 2: **Group work is always challenging**

Author 3: **Time pressures on students**

Challenges on stepping back from traditional roles:

Author 1: Not really. Give them complete freedom than to be sort of trying to hold the reins. I'm always here if you want to talk, but you know. But I I think you have what it takes.

Author 2: Not really, because I've kind of been working like this for a long time.

some people call me control freak, but I find that there's some places where its useful for me to be really pedantic and in control and other places where I can let go

Author 3: The challenge was not to step back...because its also you getting the buy-in.

just my only fear that by giving up authorship of chapters youre obviously handing it over to the students and saying 'write something' and by doing that you might actually slow down quite a bit because you don't know how the student's gonna write

What values/attitudes do academics and students need to have to work as collaborative partners?

Author 1: Mastered the material, really excellent students, freedom, creativity, I think the academic needs respect for that independence and creativity of the students.

and a sort of a belief that they have what it takes

I think that somebody who wants to do a project like this necessarily has to have these sorts of values. So you know it certainly entrenched these values in me even more.

Author 2: enthusiasm for the material and for the subject matter.

generosity of spirit. for students not to value everything in terms of credit values or marks.

a community of like-minded peers.

one student say that this was the most significant course for her because it gave her so much that she could use elsewhere.

Author 3: curiosity on both sides, equality.in terms of how you see the other person. YOU can't collaborate by forcing

'do you want to come and do this with me?' that's more co-creation. They have the choice to say yes or no.

Reflections/would you do this again?

Author 1: **Would love to have more time and try and help students with writing (Mathematics)**

And there's a bit of a barrier there between if I think 'shall I write it or shall I get them to write it?' In the knowledge that I can write it very quickly and I know that it's going to be of a certain quality.

Author 2: I mean this experience for me has been absolutely amazing. It's probably the best thing that's happened to me in my life at UCT. I wouldn't do it differently.

And so for me, the thing that comes out of it is don't do things on your own. Just don't try and do things alone. The best thing to do is to do them with other people. So it's been for me an absolutely amazing, amazing experience. It really has.

Author 3: **Its not something that goes quickly and its not something that should ever stop. Transformation is not like a finish line. It's a continued thing.**

“Inclusivity is a key dimension of both social justice and sustainability, in that multiple voices are required in order to achieve more equal epistemic representation” (Cox, Masuku and Willmers 2022a)

Last word:

Author 3: Not siloed categories, fluidity

Steps: engage, participate and the goal is co-creation
(goal- to have the most impact on student learning).

Cant count on all students being fully engaged

What's next?



The student experience

‘Students as partners’ in open textbook production: Power, identity and the reconceptualisation of content and practice

Image: Wikimedia Commons (CC BY)

References

Cox, G., Masuku, B. & Willmers, M. 2020. Open Textbooks and Social Justice: Open Educational Practices to Address Economic, Cultural and Political Injustice at the University of Cape Town. *Journal of Interactive Media in Education*, 1 (2):pp. 1–10. Available at:

<https://open.uct.ac.za/handle/11427/31887>

Cox, G., Masuku, Cox G, Willmers M and Masuku B (2022a) Sustainable open textbook models for social justice. *Front. Educ.* 7:881998. doi: 10.3389/feduc.2022.881998

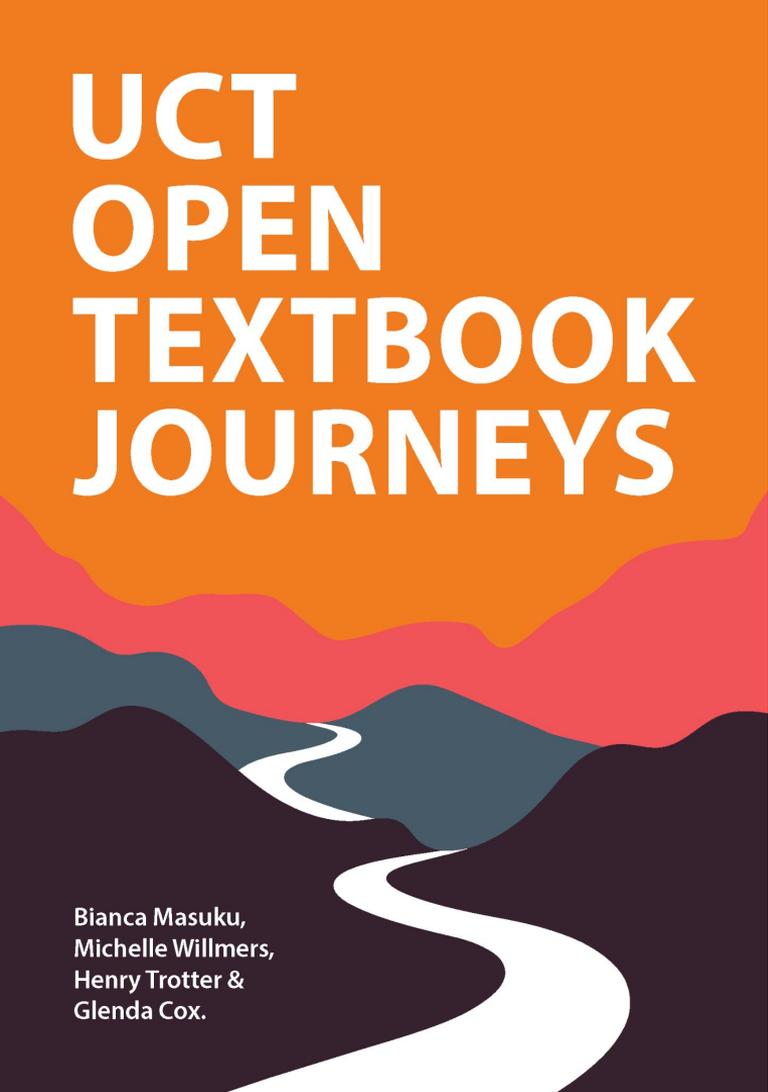
DOT4D. 2021. Open Textbooks in South African Higher Education: Action Brief. Cape Town: Digital Open Textbooks for Development.

Available at: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1_BFNLHPRcPP1f94GyR9EiZ98HKKu54f1/view?usp=sharing

Fraser, N. (2005). Reframing justice in a globalizing world. *New Left Review*, 36, 69–88. Retrieved from

<https://newleftreview.org/II/36/nancy-fraser-reframing-justice-in-a-globalizing-world>

UCT OPEN TEXTBOOK JOURNEYS



Bianca Masuku,
Michelle Willmers,
Henry Trotter &
Glenda Cox.

Read about the journeys these academics went on in developing their open textbooks; including their motivations, challenges, insights around working with students and sustainability factors.

<https://openbooks.uct.ac.za/uct/catalog/book/37>