

A woman with dark curly hair, wearing a grey long-sleeved shirt and a black wristband with a gold sunburst design, stands with her arms crossed, looking upwards and to the left. She is positioned in the foreground against a large, white, classical-style building with arched windows and a pedimented roof. The scene is captured in soft, warm light, likely during the golden hour.

# HIGHER EDUCATION FOR THE PUBLIC GOOD

views from the South

edited by Brenda Leibowitz

Higher Education for the Public Good:  
Views from the South



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## Foreword

H Russel Botman

**T**raditionally, higher education is said to support the public good indirectly through being a private good to university graduates. The argument goes that every person benefiting from higher education can potentially be useful to society – either in their profession, or at the very least by contributing to the public purse in the form of income tax.

A more critical perspective on higher education places the public good itself centre stage. The work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire falls into this camp. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1996 [1970]) and *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2004 [1992]) he argues that education should play a role in changing the world for the better by stimulating critical thinking and empowering people so that they might free themselves from oppression, poverty, injustice and the difficult task of living peacefully with former oppressors after political liberation.

It is this framework that informs my reading of *Higher Education for the Public Good: Views from the South*. Along the lines of a critical pedagogy, we need to move beyond an individualistic conception of society to one that emphasises collective agency for the public good.

Traditionally, three major pedagogical questions were posed in higher education: ‘Who will be taught?’, ‘What will be taught?’ and ‘How will it be taught?’ This book raises a preceding question: ‘What purpose or interest does higher education serve?’ This question can be restated as ‘Why does the university exist?’

Higher education is not neutral. It is highly political. Universities have a particular place and role in society. From a critical point of view, the university should be a place of relevance. It should play a useful role by serving the needs of society.

Higher education institutions do not occupy some mythical middle ground. They are deeply embedded in society. If they attempt to sit on the fence, they make themselves irrelevant. Society should hold institutions accountable against their contribution to the public good.

The public good is not only about the public; it is also about the good of the public. Higher education for the public good is therefore about the social impact of universities. And this is especially true of public institutions in the sector. This raises fundamental ethical questions which more often than not are about social justice. This is the case especially in societies characterised by gross inequality, where there is a great need for human development to lift people out of grinding poverty.

South Africa is one such a society. The legacy of colonialism and apartheid, compounded by new injustices such as public-sector corruption and insufficient service delivery, sets a clear agenda for institutions serving the public interest.

A few years ago, my own institution, Stellenbosch University (SU), took up this challenge in an important policy document – ‘Strategic Framework for the Turn of the Century and Beyond’ (SU, 2000). In it, ‘the University acknowledges its contribution to the injustices of the past ... and commits itself to appropriate redress and development initiatives.’

This has since been fleshed out into an initiative called the HOPE Project, through which the University is using its traditional strengths – academic and research excellence – to tackle major societal challenges in South Africa and elsewhere on the African continent.

It is fitting for an educational institution contributing to the public good to have a pedagogy of hope. By using hope as a guiding concept, SU is led to ask critical questions about reality, to look at problems in a scientific manner and to use science to make a difference. In this way hope becomes a radical, transforming concept. To create hope becomes the reason why the university exists.

The HOPE Project has five themes guiding research, learning and teaching, as well as community interaction – the core functions of the university. These are to eradicate poverty, contribute to human dignity and health, consolidate democracy and human rights, promote peace and security and balance sustainable development with a competitive industry. These have found tangible expression in some 40 academic initiatives across the ten faculties of the University.

## FOREWORD

It has also led to such initiatives as a colloquium on the contribution of higher education to the public good, hosted in 2010 by SU's Centre for Teaching and Learning. This book is in part a product of serious engagements of this kind with the challenges posed to universities by real needs in society.

Higher education institutions cannot ignore challenges such as addressing poverty and improving the lives of previously disadvantaged members of society. If they do, if they cater only for the rich and smart and privileged, they are elitist. This is not to say universities cannot be elite institutions. That is inevitable if you pursue excellence, which you should because it is a prerequisite for relevance. But unfair discrimination and cold-heartedness are irreconcilable with the pursuit of social justice.

That is why this book is timely. I want to congratulate the authors and those who initiated and organised the project. The book will stimulate the important debate about the transformative role that higher education institutions can play in society.

The book deals comprehensively with the issue of higher education for the public good. Its four sections can be summarised as looking at places (the institution), products (graduate attributes), procedures (the classroom) and people (academics).

The mix of contributors in this book ensures it is well rounded. Chapters from authors attached to Stellenbosch University and other South African higher education institutions are interspersed with offerings by writers based in the US, the UK and Spain. It opens up communication between South and North, which is crucial if we want to be inclusive and representative. The diversity of disciplines dealt with and disciplines informing views on social justice leads to a diversity of styles, and this gives the book a certain richness and pluralism.

The time has come for universities to take sides. They cannot just be players on the field – they need to pick a side. And that side should be the public good.

Emphasising the public good is a choice for the marginalised, for the poor, for struggling communities. If universities choose to follow this route, their influence starts growing because they are no longer just impacting on the terrain of policy but concretely contributing to the remaking of the world.

*Professor H Russel Botman*

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# Introduction: Reflections on higher education and the public good

*Brenda Leibowitz*

## **Why higher education for the public good?**

**T**here is always a potential contribution that higher education can make to the public good. In the twenty-first century specific concerns that require our attention are sustainability and global warming, human mobility and migration and peculiarly contemporary diseases such as AIDS. These can be seen as contemporary manifestations of protean and oft-recurring social and natural ills such as war and conflict, food insecurity and religious and ideological rivalries – phenomena to which higher education applies its collective mind and know-how. The greater the technological advances we make, for example in health provision and communications technology, the greater the frustration that we cannot do more to make the world a better place. Despite the enormous potential of higher education as an institution to contribute to the public good, it does not deliver on this potential, as Saleem Badat, the vice chancellor of Rhodes University, observes:

Higher education holds the promise of contributing to social justice, development and democratic citizenship. Yet, this promise often remains unrealised and universities, instead, frequently continue to be a powerful mechanism of social exclusion and injustice. (2010:6)

Mala Singh, Martin Hall and Crain Soudien elaborate on the reasons why higher education is constrained from delivering on this potential in section one of this book. The rest of the contributors focus on ways individuals and groups have grappled with this challenge.

### **Why perspectives from the South?**

South Africa is in the South geographically as well as politically. So much that is written about higher education in general, and higher education for the public good in particular, stems from the developed North. This provides a distorted vision of what higher education for the public good might entail. Approaches to knowledge are embedded in place and culture – and the periphery has something valuable to contribute to knowledge of the metropole (Connell, 2007). Contributions from the South have a particular value – conditions are different and the particular experience of struggle against injustice and for equality and human flourishing takes on forms which may differ in terms of both content and intensity, from forms in the developed world. By way of example, in her account of teaching postgraduate teachers in Khayelitsha, a township in the Cape Metropolitan area of South Africa, McNiff, a non-South African visitor, described how the experience re-educated her in joyful and painful ways about the quality and purpose of her teaching. Subreenduth, an ex-South African living in Ohio, argues that her experience of living in South Africa makes her approach to issues of difference more critical and nuanced. To contextualise the contents of this volume, some comments about the situation South African higher education finds itself in due to its apartheid legacy and its present attempts to deal with this are required.

Paradoxically, a positive legacy of the struggle against apartheid, characterised by colonial foreign domination and, later, local minority racist oppression, is the collective memory of injustice. Operating in the country for over three centuries – from 1652 to 1994 – the oppression was so overwhelming and extensive that today there exists a widely held belief that the majority of its institutions and society need to be transformed. Von Holdt (2012:202) refers to ‘the symbolic struggle between the popular movement and the apartheid regime’, which ‘laid the basis for the emergence of a new symbolic order centred on the idea of democracy and the transformation of the social structures of racial domination in the economy and society’. This collective belief binds individuals from a variety of political and cultural backgrounds, and helps institutions work towards change and the public good. This belief is held at a very general level, and is not necessarily interpreted in the same way by individuals from varied political persuasions, which is why issues related to equality, such as affirmative action, are highly contested in South Africa.

There are those who would wish to return to the apartheid dispensation but they are firmly in the minority. Whilst the collective aspiration is towards a

public good, there has been a degree of fragmentation of the collective aspiration. According to Chidester *et al*, in post-apartheid South Africa ‘everything is pulling us apart’ (2003:ix). During the apartheid period the enemy was clear and the solutions – at least for those who were politically engaged – were easy to describe, as they were cast in terms of the future and aspirations. Von Holdt (2012:203) refers to ‘new hierarchies and distinction, new interests, and new social distances’. Thus whilst there remains a pervasive sense of public purpose, amongst public intellectuals and educators there is a strong degree of contestation and confusion.

A significant feature of South African society which gives higher education its peculiar flavour and makes transformation so urgent is the relative underdevelopment of the economy. While South Africa’s economy is the largest in Africa it significantly lags behind developed nations, and this restricts the extent to which it can fund public higher education. Furthermore, funding for public higher education in South Africa is comparatively lower than in countries at a similar stage of economic development (Scott, 2009). Expenditure on higher education in the country is 2.7 per cent, as opposed to 3.3 per cent for the rest of the world (National Advisory Council on Innovation [NACI], 2006). This combination of urgency and potential is summed up in the sub-title of Unesco’s Taskforce report on education (2000): *Higher education in developing countries: peril and promise*. A limitation of the sector, as well as a motivating force for change, is the degree of financial inequality between higher education institutions and between individuals. The measure for South Africa of economic inequality between individuals, known as the *Gini-coefficient*, is one of the highest in the world (Bosch *et al*, 2010; Hall, chapter two). The amount of resources a university has, the extent to which it operates within an inclusive and pro-social-justice ethos, and its ability to execute its mission is different for each South African institution. Such variation exists because the South African higher education system is fragmented in terms of funding and institutional autonomy (Council of Higher Education, 2008) – a legacy of the apartheid era perpetuated in the current era. The fragmentation is also perpetuated by the varying leadership, skills base and management cultures at higher education institutions.

A further feature influencing the ability of higher education in South Africa to teach for the public good is the low and skewed participation of the appropriate cohort of 18-24-year-olds. This exists partly because schooling is unable to increase the pool of potential students (Bray *et al*, 2010; Morrow, 2007) and partly because of the elitist nature of higher education itself. In 2009 public participation in higher education was 17 per cent (Council for Higher Educa-

tion Website), in comparison to a global participation rate of 26 per cent in 2007 (Altbach *et al*, 2009). Furthermore, participation rates vary according to various biographical factors, most notably race. In 2009 the participation rate for whites was 57 per cent, whereas for Africans it was 13 per cent (Council for Higher Education website). The participation rate is also skewed according to university type and discipline (Council for Higher Education website), with historically advantaged universities attracting more middle-class, white and even international students than historically disadvantaged universities. The relationship between social inequality and race mirrors the international situation, where participation is skewed in favour of the privileged (Altbach *et al*, 2009). A low or skewed participation implies that too few graduates would be able to contribute to the public good in the future; graduates could arguably contribute in sectors according to preferences influenced by the demographic make-up of the student cohort at any university.

As with other countries in which higher education was founded during the colonial era (Parra-Sandoval *et al*, 2010), South Africa shares an approach to knowledge which is derivative rather than leading. Badat (2009) writes that though South African higher education has transformed to a degree, there have been limited changes to the decolonisation of knowledge. It consumes western theories rather than helping to generate them (de Souza, 2007:135). This is not only due to the peripheral position of the country, the negative effects of the brain drain (Botman, 2011) and poor infrastructure (Ondari-Okemwa, 2011) – the country's knowledge dissemination network is also rather weak. Recent pressure for academics to publish has led more of these studies to find their way into international journals, but not as much into locally published or internationally distributed books. Two notable recent exceptions of publications on higher education, and indications that the trend may be reversing, are Bitzer (2009) and Bitzer and Botha (2011). The size of the South African academic book buying public has a negative impact on the ability to write, publish and disseminate original knowledge. Knowledge practices have not been fundamentally overhauled since apartheid ended.

A further feature influencing higher education in South Africa and its ability to administer to the public good is the depth of the social cleavages based on social class, race and, to an extent, language. This impacts on issues of identity and the sense of inclusion and exclusion for students (Cross and Johnson, 2006; Erasmus, 2006) and academics (Vandeyar, 2010; Hemson and Singh, 2010). The increasingly prominent role of social class in the inter-relationship between race and class and how they influence perceptions and interactions between students is explored by Pattman (2010), amongst

others. Such is the extent of this cleavage – and the challenges it poses to harmony and disharmony as well as to student success at universities – that a ministerial task team was initiated with a report produced in 2008 (Ministerial Committee, 2008). Challenges are posed to educators whose positionality and biography influence their teaching and, moreover, their ability to teach for the public good. Jansen (2009) has a metaphor which aptly conveys how deeply educators' and students' subjectivities are influenced by history and their own educational and social biographies. He terms this 'knowledge in the blood'.

From a policy perspective, two positive features of the present era in South Africa are the progressive and pro-social-justice policy discourse (Lange, chapter four) and an accountability and quality assurance discourse which is less prescriptive and imposing than in many other countries such as Australia or the United Kingdom. All policy statements emanating from the South African state pertaining to higher education stress the imperative to transform higher education so that it becomes more equitable in terms of participation and governance, and so that it contributes to the public good and social justice. There is an emphasis on the need for higher education to have an influence beyond the country with regard to social accountability and the potential of higher education (CHE, 2008). What is significant about policy documents in the post-apartheid period is the emphasis on the role of teaching:

The Task Team is convinced that, if it rests on the South African Constitution, the reformulation of academic freedom promises to yield all round and future benefits. This is because the 'greatest contribution the academy makes to empowering a society ... is ... through what and how universities teach'. (CHE, 2008:20)

With regard to the accountability regime, the country's institutions are subject to steering via a quality assurance mechanism, funding mechanisms and planning requirements (CHE, 2008). However the quality assurance mechanism poses less of a constraint than equivalent regimes in the United Kingdom or Australia, possibly because of the lack of capacity of the system and possibly because of the collective memory and resistance to dominance and prescription which was so prevalent during the apartheid era. In addition to the emphasis on the role of teaching in relation to transformation and the public good, the quality assurance regime strongly emphasises institutional transformation via its particular interpretation of the phrase 'fitness of purpose' (CHE, 2008). This is discussed in detail by Lange (chapter four).

In short, the South African perspective has much to contribute to international debates on the public good for the following reasons: its particular history and the present makeup of its society; the urgency and intensity of the need for social transformation; and its long history and experiences of attempts at teaching for the public good. In his contribution to the Global Poverty Summit in Johannesburg in 2011, Russel Botman argued that with regard to partnerships between the North and South, Africa tends to exist in a relationship of dependency and it is time for Africa to increasingly take on the role of the lead agent (2011). This book is intended to be one small contribution towards this end.

### **What is 'higher education for the public good'?**

The term 'public good' is very broad and can include a variety of ideologically informed positions. In this volume it is described by Bozalek and Leibowitz (chapter five) as a concern with participatory parity and equality, not the privileged and wealthy administering charity to the marginalised. Bozalek and Leibowitz stress the relevance of reciprocity and relationality, with reference to the ethic of care. They refer to the importance of the flourishing of human beings as a valuable end, instead of seeing human beings as instruments of economic well-being. The emphasis on humans and their flourishing rather than on humans as instruments, associated with the capabilities approach, is discussed in the contributions by Hall and Walker. The public good is often defined in material terms, as if it is visible, countable or weighable. In this volume, however, the public good is associated with how people or groups think and behave. Some important components of pro-public-good thought or behaviour are offered for consideration in the book. These are ethical competences (Boni, MacDonald and Peris), reflexivity (Costandius), criticality (Soudien, Subreenduth), care (Bozalek and Leibowitz), humanity (Waghid) and hopefulness (Waghid, Nicholls and Rohleder).

Higher education is often described as a public good in that it generates technological know-how, knowledge in service of professions and a critical citizenry, in both developed and developing countries (Botman, 2012; Taskforce on Higher Education and Society, 2000; Habermas, 1971). Furthermore, higher education can bring material well-being to graduates (Association of Commonwealth Universities, 2011) and may open opportunities for social and educational mobility for those students whose parents were not in 'graduate level occupations' (Hall, chapter two). This is higher education as a public resource which brings material or intellectual benefits to individuals or society – higher education as a public good. The title of this volume – 'Higher

Education *for* the Public Good' – conveys something more intentional and deliberate. It is the idea that we can conduct the three roles of higher education – research, teaching and community interaction – in such a way that we reflect upon who higher education is for, who it can serve, and how.

### **Implications for higher education institutions**

Higher education *for* the public good implies that the institution as a whole be predisposed – via its mission, culture and practices both within the institution and in its dealings with the outside world – towards social justice, inclusion and care for the other (Hartley *et al*, 2010; London, 2003). There should be consistency between the values espoused by the institution and the way it practices these values internally and in engagement with the public. There should also be consistency between the values inherent in the graduate attributes students are expected to acquire and the attributes of the administrators and academics who implement the formal and enact the informal curriculum. The significance of the role of the formal curriculum and the importance of knowledge in cultivating human capabilities for the public good is discussed by Walker (chapter six). As she demonstrates, higher education can make an important contribution to the public good via the graduates it produces. Van Schalkwyk, Herman and Müller (chapter seven) discuss the international literature on graduate attributes in relation to the cold reality of one institutional setting, and suggest that it might be more of a challenge to embed graduate attributes in the curriculum than is expected. This implies the need for overarching change strategies, so that mere intention does not dissipate the potential of higher education to contribute to the public good. Waghid (chapter eight) focuses the discussion on graduate attributes on teacher education in South Africa and, with reference to the work of Martha Nussbaum, on what the politics of humanity and an avoidance of 'shame' might mean in this context.

In order to inculcate graduate attributes for the public good, one requires a curriculum that 'teaches democracy in a democratic fashion' (London, 2003: 25-6). One cannot simply teach about the public good, or for the public good, if one does not provide the opportunity for students to practice these values and attributes and observe them being modelled by others. For this reason, teaching has a special role in developing higher education for the public good (Badat, 2010). There are a number of different ways one can teach for the public good. These include: the use of participatory learning and action (PLA) and encouragement of dialogue (Nicholls and Rohleder, chapter nine); disrupting and resisting stereotypes (Subreenduth, chapter ten); providing



opportunities for engagement with organisations (Boni, MacDonald and Peris, chapter eleven) and teaching reconciliation whilst encouraging an open approach that allows for contradiction and complexity (Koopman, chapter twelve).

It is also clear from this volume that teaching *for* the public good is possible in disciplines as varied as theology, education and engineering. Despite the strong influence on many of the authors in this book of Martha Nussbaum's ideas, which stress the contribution of the humanities, it is noteworthy that citizenship and pro-public-good graduate attributes can be fostered in a variety of disciplines, including those outside the arts and social sciences. Boni *et al*'s study on teaching ethics for engineering students has been included to make this important point. All too often in South Africa one hears academics from engineering, mathematics or natural sciences saying that 'it is all very well to teach for the public good in the arts and humanities, but this cannot be done in our fields.' The study makes an additional important point neglected in the literature: it is possible to use a systematic and rigorous research methodology to show influence of 'pro-public good teaching' on students' attitudes, without having to rely on students' self-reporting.

Many of the contributions in sections three and four are based on research conducted in the teaching of the disciplines, demonstrating that the scholarship of teaching and learning (SOTL) has an important role to play in enhancing teaching for the public good. Contributions from Nicholls and Rohleder, Costandius and Gierdien illustrate the benefits of research on teaching and learning: it encourages a greater systematic understanding and foregrounds student voice, introspection, engagement with the theoretical literature and a deep engagement of theory and practice. It also allows for collaboration amongst academics across boundaries of institution (Nicholls and Rohleder) and disciplinary differences (Boni, MacDonald and Peris). This collaboration permits richer understandings to emerge than would be the case within solitary or parochial settings.

While so much thought is given to the attributes graduates should develop, so little attention is paid to the attributes of the academics who should teach this way themselves (Leibowitz, 2011). Leibowitz and Holgate discuss the kind of attributes that comprise 'critical professionalism', including accountability and agency. The notion of critical professionalism served as the basis of a similarly named project at Stellenbosch University, which became the impetus to this volume. The Stellenbosch project, with its emphasis on interdisciplinary conversations and reflection, is described by Leibowitz and Holgate

(chapter thirteen). Writers which were linked to the project, by Gierdien and Costandius, stress the value of using research on teaching to foster reflexivity and professional growth. Wisker (chapter sixteen) brings the issues raised mainly in South African teaching and learning contexts back to a broader terrain. Using her experience as an academic developer, she talks about current trends regarding performativity. She maintains that the ideas and strategies inherent in critical professionalism projects are applicable in a wider set of contexts besides South Africa and the United Kingdom – notably Iraq. In doing so she contributes to an idea informing this book: that while it is necessary to hear the voice of the South, that voice should enter into dialogue with perspectives from the North.

There is another aspect of ‘dialogue’ that informs this book – namely, that there should be dialogue between the various levels of higher education: the macro, meso and micro. Similarly, there should be ongoing debate and reflection amongst the philosophers, sociologists and education experts; and between the administrators, planners, researchers and teachers. Without ongoing and robust interchanges between higher education professionals across disciplines, levels and spheres of influence, it is not possible to achieve holistic and systematic approaches towards higher education for the public good. With this interchange across boundaries of necessity comes a multiplicity of genres, styles and approaches towards enquiry. If one celebrates diversity of identities, can one not celebrate a diversity of discourses?

### **Note on references to race**

In this book we accept that ‘race’ is a construction, but that it has material effects. We use the terms adopted in South African government policies, namely, white, African, coloured and Indian. When African, coloured and Indian are referred to collectively, we use the term ‘black’.

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# SECTION ONE

## Higher Education and the Public Good

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# 1

## Re-inserting the 'public good' into higher education transformation<sup>1</sup>

*Mala Singh*

### Introduction

This chapter looks at the transformation of higher education systems and institutions, which has been on the agenda of governments and other role players around the world, especially in the last two decades. Claims made about the parameters of higher education transformation have often been linked to a radical and substantive agenda of change (rather than mild reformist tinkering at the edges), but the driving forces, goals and effects of transformation have not been uniform in the different countries and regions where higher education restructuring is underway. Despite the globally homogenising pressure for conformity to particular economic principles, the significant differences in the social, political and moral demands made on the notion of transformation as invoked in the contexts where far-reaching changes in higher education are occurring cannot be ignored. Transformation has been used as much to denote the repositioning of higher education to serve as the more efficient 'handmaiden' of the economy as to signify the drive to align higher education with the democracy and social justice agenda of a new polity, as in South Africa.

An almost universal short-hand explanation for the phenomenon of dramatic change that is altering traditional understandings of the identity of higher education (as of other areas of social life) is the notion of globalisation, under-

<sup>1</sup> This chapter first appeared as a paper in Singh, M (2001) *Re-inserting the public good into higher education transformation*. Kagisano No 5. Pretoria: CHE

stood both as a set of economic imperatives as well as an 'ideology' (see Currie and Newson, 1998). As in the case of many social systems and structures, higher education institutions have been undergoing dramatic reorganisation, often in conformity with principles which converge around the economic costs and benefits of higher education. Such reorganisation is occurring within a context that principally takes the growth and competitiveness of the economy – whether local or regional or global – as its point of departure and yardstick, rather than the social histories and social development priorities of nation states or regions.

It was a long held and powerfully persuasive World Bank view that higher education offered lower individual and social returns than primary education. This led many governments and policy makers, especially in developing countries, to justify drastic reductions in public investments in higher education, with devastating consequences for once stably functioning universities. This view has now been replaced by a new 'common sense' which acknowledges the social importance and value of higher education, but primarily in its role of enhancing national economic competitiveness within a global knowledge-driven economy. The traditional knowledge responsibilities of universities – research as the production of new knowledge, teaching as the dissemination of knowledge, and community service as the applied use of knowledge for social development – are increasingly being located within the demands of economic productivity and its requirements for particular kinds of knowledge and skills. Stakeholder demands for a greater and more visible measure of social responsiveness from higher education are a feature of transformation and restructuring debates in a number of countries. However, the discourse of accountability and responsiveness in debates about the role and value of higher education is shaped primarily by the expected contribution of higher education to the development of social and economic arrangements which will give a competitive edge to country performance in the global market place.

Fiscal discipline, efficiency and cost-benefit optimisation principles from the world of business are seen as the key to the transformation of higher education in the direction of greater responsiveness to society. Within a paradigm that invokes the 'market', the notion of responsiveness is becoming emptied of most of its content, except for that which advances individual, organisational or national economic competitiveness. The concept of an autonomous intellectual or socially emancipatory role for higher education, where it still features, remains largely at the level of policy rhetoric, with little funding or other policy enabling factors in place to give substance to them. The conse-

quences of such a one-dimensional approach to higher education responsiveness are severely impoverishing for the broader social role of higher education. Apart from the general problematic consequences of such a shift, analysts have pointed out that the university 'as business' is not even good for business in the long term if this constrains the free development of new ideas and skills which do not look promising or relevant in the short term, but which may very well turn out to hold enormous applied benefits in the future. Such analyses presuppose a complex and non-linear relationship between the generation of ideas, the production and application of 'usable' knowledge and the development of skills, as well as some appropriate accommodation of all of these in seeking to give effect to the purposes of higher education.

The current drive to make higher education more accountable is a response to a powerful and necessary social demand. Invoking notions of efficiency to make higher education less wasteful and self-indulgent may well produce important pedagogical and social benefits. The concerns expressed in this chapter are not, in principle, directed against notions of higher education responsiveness, but rather against an increasing narrowing of the contexts and contents of their usages and the disturbing implications of such trends for the broader values and purposes often associated with higher education. The university valorised by Von Humboldt or John Henry Newman in the 19th century cannot be the model of the higher education institution of the 21st century, but to lose entirely the vision which exalts intellectual life contained in their perspectives would be an impoverishment for both higher education and society. Even if the values and purposes contained in earlier conceptions of the university have been asserted only rhetorically, or benefited only an elite few, their heuristic value as a compass for the best aspirations of higher education for relevance and social accountability should not be underestimated.

I argue in this chapter that what should be a broad notion of social accountability and social responsiveness in the discourse on higher education transformation is being thinned down and reduced to the terms of market responsiveness. In many instances, this is happening in order to comply with the demands of new regulatory frameworks established by the state itself, whose own discourse of accountability is narrowly but overwhelmingly framed by the drive for economic growth and competitiveness or even economic survival within a global arena. Further, I invoke the multiple purposes of higher education and the connection between many of those purposes and the 'public good' as a means of finding a way back to the idea of social responsiveness conceptualised in a more comprehensive fashion. The idea of the



public good clearly needs more elaboration, both at a general level and specifically in relation to higher education.

For now, it will suffice to indicate it very generally as a set of societal interests that are not reducible to the sum of interests of individuals or groups of individuals and that demarcate a common space within which the content of moral and political goals like democracy and social justice can be negotiated and collectively pursued. What this means for higher education is that transformation, in fidelity to its claimed radical roots, must incorporate goals and purposes which are linked, even if indirectly, to an emancipatory and broad-based social and political agenda. My argument proceeds from the position that the responsiveness of higher education to the general and specific needs of the economy is a subset of a more complex and multifaceted notion of responsiveness. Despite views which argue that the narrow accountability imperative will prevail over all other dimensions (Gibbons, 1998), it is vital that, in a country like South Africa where higher education transformation is part of a larger process of democratic reconstruction, we do not entirely subsume social responsiveness to economic responsiveness.

### **Converging trends in higher education transformation**

Literature on the restructuring of higher education systems in many developed economies in the late 20th century indicates a number of common trends, converging into a new orthodoxy about the societal value of higher education and how it should be managed. Key trends which are bringing higher education in line with other social arrangements, designed to position national and regional economies for global success, include:

- the requirement of higher education to demonstrate efficiency, effectiveness and value for money through business re-engineering drives, integration into public finance management accounting systems, external quality assurance systems and other accountability frameworks designed to accommodate greater stakeholder scrutiny
- declining investments of public funds to subsidise student fees and service costs, and the requirement to 'do more with less' (eg massification of access at existing or reduced levels of funding). This trend is usually accompanied by pressure to diversify sources of operational funding, thus reducing the primary responsibility of the state for public higher education and allowing other large-scale funders to exert self-interested pressures on arrangements for research and training

- the dominance of managerial and entrepreneurial approaches to and within higher education, resulting in the tendency to run higher education institutions like income-generating businesses. Such approaches render more vulnerable fields like the humanities, which have less income-generation potential than other business-related fields
- the privatisation of higher education in encouraged competition with public institutions or within public higher education itself (not only of service aspects like catering or cleaning but also of specialised fields of study like business studies)
- the increasing development of labour market responsive curriculum reforms intended to appeal to employers and students as 'customers' and 'clients', the shift of public and private funding from basic to applied research, increased emphasis on academic/industry links and greater concern with issues of intellectual property rights and the prioritisation of research for product development and commercialisation (including the withholding of or delay on research findings of publicly supported research from the public domain).

The convergence of such trends in new policy frameworks for the restructuring of higher education in developed economies influences more than those economies alone. The new economic responsiveness logic is functioning as a powerful and influential global paradigm which many who work in higher education instantly recognise, regardless of whether one works in Australia, Argentina or South Africa. It is a paradigm shaping higher education policies and practices in many developing country economies, despite huge social, economic and historical differences from their northern hemisphere counterparts and dramatic differences in outcomes and impact. Similar arguments are invoked that the survival of developing economies in a globalising world requires higher education in those countries to produce knowledge and skills relevant to positioning and participation in a global economy, but on a set of fiscal and social terms that largely ignore history and circumstance.

Within such a global paradigm, the efficient reconfiguration of higher education is seen as vitally necessary for the new knowledge and skills base to be produced. The role of higher education in facilitating social benefits is viewed mainly through the prism of responsiveness to the 'market'. The social, moral, political, intellectual and cultural dimensions of higher education responsiveness are coming increasingly under siege in planning for the funding, management and renewal of higher education. The facilitation by higher

education of 'public good' benefits is receding from the scene or being given lip service only. The narrowing down of the multiple social purposes and goods of higher education to economic imperatives is particularly worrying in contexts where democratic dispensations are new or fragile. In such contexts, public institutions of higher education may have broader social development responsibilities than their counterparts in more stable political and economic systems which usually have a range of social institutions and agencies to draw on for the sustenance of a democratic culture.

### **The social purposes of higher education**

The pervasive grip of an 'enterprise culture' on higher education restructuring is leading to an increasing focus on the private goods yielded by higher education in contrast to a range of public goods which are in the common interest of a country or society. Some of the broader social purposes of higher education which could yield public benefits include the facilitation of social justice through enhanced access to higher education for disadvantaged and excluded constituencies. The role of higher education in equalising the life chances of talented individuals irrespective of their social origin or financial capacity could be a powerful lever in the construction of a more just society. Real and substantial access to higher education opportunities will not, on its own, eliminate social stratification but it could be part of a suite of strategies to enhance social justice for increasing numbers of the formerly excluded.

The pursuit of knowledge in a variety of fields is critical to human development, as broadly understood. Undue focus only on applied fields with strong commercial possibilities will seriously threaten the arts and humanities, thus undermining the full range of insights and understandings necessary for balanced social and cultural development. The fostering of ideas in a range of basic and applied fields is a necessary public good, allowing different ideas and their applications to nourish social development in a multiplicity of tangible and intangible ways. It should be possible in higher education to pursue knowledge in ways that could extend the horizon of human understanding and the limits of human imagination without always being constrained by considerations of immediate relevance or adequate returns on investment costs.

This argument about the social necessity for knowledge development in a range of fields applies equally to the development of capacities and skills. Just, democratic and economically stable societies require a complex range of general and specialised competencies where philosophers and poets are as critical to human development as engineers and accountants. It is in the

common interest for societies to be able to draw on a comprehensive spread of capacities from among its educated citizenry in the fashioning of a humane world that can support the pursuit of wisdom through intellectual speculation and artistic creativity as much as the pursuit of knowledge and efficiency for economic well-being.

The possibility that higher education might function as 'critic and conscience of society' has rightly been upheld in the past as being fundamental to the role of a critical citizenry in keeping democracy vibrant and substantive. Social development, especially in developing countries, could become a much more participatory venture for citizens if higher education were to produce and make critical social knowledge more widely accessible, particularly in fields linked to public policy. Such knowledge could be used by specialists and non-specialists alike to arrive at independent assessments of public policies and practices on social and economic development, to be able to engage with those policies as active and informed citizens and to intervene with appropriate social and political choices and actions (Sen, 1999; Barnett, 1997).

Many of these social purposes of higher education are losing their resonance in the rush to make higher education institutions accountable and responsive within the logic of the market. The nature and identity of public higher education institutions is changing dramatically and the possibilities are rapidly eroding for higher education accountability to be conceptualised in more complex and diverse ways. In developing country contexts with fragile public institutions and social development priorities that do not stop at market liberalisation, it is crucial that the 'public good' functions of higher education do not disappear completely. The idea of a higher education institution as a 'social institution' has to be rehabilitated to mediate the impact of the institution conceptualised as business. This is particularly urgent in societies like South Africa where far-reaching social change is underway, where there are huge issues of poverty, inequality and social injustice to be addressed and where democratic institutions and values are new or fragile and in need of reinforcement by major social institutions like those of higher education. It is wholly appropriate in countries with such enormous change agendas that accountability and responsiveness is demanded of higher education. However, the accountability imperative must address the role of higher education in ways that encompass but transcend the needs of economic development, understood in the narrowest self-interested fashion. This will be an uphill battle, since in education, as much in other spheres of social policy, neo-liberalism has re-asserted the 'possessive individualism' articulated bluntly

by Hobbes. C.B. Macpherson (1975:3) has formulated the chilling core of such individualism as follows:

Its possessive quality is found in its conception of the individual as essentially the proprietor of his own person or capacities, owing nothing to society for them. The individual was seen neither as a moral whole, nor as part of a larger social whole, but as an owner of himself ...The human essence is freedom from dependence on the will of others, and freedom is a function of possession ... Society consists of relations of exchange between proprietors.

There has been a fair degree of focus on the rationale for, as well as the impact of, economically driven restructuring on higher education in advanced industrialised societies. A substantial body of literature is already available on the requirements and effects of the alignment of higher education with economic policy in many of those countries. The impact of the globalising economy and its neo-liberal demands on higher education in developing countries – and especially on higher education in Africa – is less well documented and analysed. Recent case studies of dramatic changes in higher education in some African countries show a sharp growth in the number of fee-paying students, the shift to qualifications and courses in fields like management, commerce and information technology and increasing emphasis on income generation strategies and cost efficiency in the restructuring of higher education (see case studies on changes in African higher education supported by Rockefeller and other foundations, Rockefeller, 2001).

More worrying are the trends which show that issues of access have become more difficult for women, minority ethnic groups and the rural poor in a context that is normalising a ‘user pays’ mindset. The line between public and private provision has become blurred, often with fee-paying and non-fee-paying students within the same institution. This causes ambiguity and a weakening commitment to the role and responsibility of higher education in the broader transformation of those societies. The quality of provision is clearly in jeopardy, as large numbers of fee-paying students are enrolled, staff-student ratios grow more unmanageable and non-fee-paying students get less and less attention from staff. The lack of time and attention to research and the shift away from certain fields of study, especially in the basic sciences and humanities, are threatening to the longer term needs of society for stable systems and capacities to generate, absorb and use knowledge in a spread of fields for the benefit of all. The ‘innovations’ which are revitalising those higher education institutions which were on the verge of collapse look largely like survival strategies in the face of fiscal austerity, with the promise

not yet evident of the socially transformative potential of those innovations within the university or beyond.

In South Africa, a number of higher education institutions have sought to reposition themselves in response to the demands of new national regulatory frameworks. A major restructuring process has been underway in the last few years at both system and institutional levels. Within the framework of a reconstructive agenda, economic imperatives appear to have become more dominant than socio-political or intellectual ones. This clearly highlights the impact of very real fiscal constraints confronting the institutions as they seek to give effect to new policy demands. It also signals a trajectory that glosses over critical political and intellectual needs that must be addressed if social transformation is to be about more than narrow skilling or economic empowerment for a small section of the formerly disadvantaged.

Many institutions have adopted a strongly entrepreneurial approach in this restructuring, developing increasing numbers of new, more 'relevant' programmes, expanding distance provision in the attempt to increase their market share of enrolments, outsourcing various internal services to private companies, retrenching staff in the attempt to 'rightsized' the institution, increasing their focus on applications-driven research and research links to industry, converting departments, programmes and faculties into cost centres, setting up campus companies to generate income from their teaching, research and service 'products' and so on. The entry of private providers and increasing numbers of partnerships between public and private institutions has complicated the issue and raised questions about the status and role of public higher education within a broad agenda for social reconstruction as well as about the contribution of private higher education to such an agenda.

These developments mark an increasing disjuncture between efficiency and social transformation imperatives, both of which are signalled in national and institutional policy instruments. The disjuncture is also evident between entrepreneurially driven institutional restructuring and mission statements which continue to reflect a commitment to broad social transformation. The White Paper on Higher Education (Department of Education, 1997) sets out a range of different but what it terms 'related' purposes for higher education which, if achieved, will yield private as well as public benefits for different stakeholders. Labour market responsiveness and the role of higher education in the 'growth and prosperity of a modern economy' is only one among others. However, all of the purposes include a requirement to contribute to

and support the processes of social transformation outlined in the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP).

Without enabling policy instruments – including funding and quality assurance steering – and as ongoing frank debate about whether or how entrepreneurial reconfiguration can achieve the social purposes set out in the White Paper and about the dangers of some of the trade-offs that are being made, the economic efficiency imperatives in the restructuring process are likely to predominate over the other more abstract and possibly more socially contested purposes of higher education. The effects of such a restructuring are likely to be more threatening at poorly resourced and managed institutions mainly serving poor black students and offering a generally narrow vocationalism – possibly of poor quality – for the disadvantaged. Advantaged institutions will be better able to retain and cushion fields like the humanities through some measure of cross-subsidisation, so offering students who can afford their fees more comprehensive opportunities for educational enrichment and also better professional job prospects. The challenge confronting policy and decision-makers at system and institutional levels is to negotiate a conscious and continuous balance between the diverse purposes of higher education as outlined in the White Paper, in order to ensure that higher education transformation does not become captive to the imperatives of narrow economic responsiveness alone and so lose the social justice and social transformation agenda contained in those purposes.

The re-insertion of ‘public good’ concerns into the agenda of higher education transformation, especially within initiatives concerned with the renewal of higher education on the African continent, requires the concerted attention of policymakers at systemic and institutional levels, as well as in organisations like the Association of African Universities and the Association of Commonwealth Universities. Arguments about the contribution of higher education to the public good within the framework of accountability and responsiveness, alongside the need to sustain and support with public funds certain higher education concerns and activities which are socially necessary but not necessarily cost-effective, have to be articulated more explicitly and inserted more consciously into policy planning and implementation. The strategic routes to being able to re-appropriate a broader notion of higher education have to be identified and the agencies and resources that can give effect to such a notion have to be drawn in.

An important starting point is to identify the key policy and research questions which arise with regard to the place and importance of public good

issues in the transformation of higher education, especially in developing countries and with particular reference to higher education on the African continent. Engaging with some of the following issues may make it possible to insert more strategic policy and implementation interventions into higher education restructuring initiatives, which can support social development priorities in countries like South Africa.

The first task to facilitate more strategic action is to establish a sharper analytical foundation for the debate about higher education responsiveness. A number of concepts and ideas have been invoked in this presentation which require clarification so they can be useful to the discussion about higher education transformation. The notion of the 'public good' is, for example, not a self-evident signifier on which one can arrive at a quick and easy consensus, especially in societies divided sharply across lines of privilege, race, gender, language, etc. Calhoun's recent paper on *The Public Good as a Social and Cultural Project* (1998) asks the pertinent question about 'which public' and 'whose good', pointing to the need to problematise the different elements in this notion. Key to his position and critical to the clarification of the 'public good' in relation to higher education is the argument that the 'public' is not homogenous or a singular or 'simple unity' but may embody a number of contesting communities of interest. The 'public good' is, in reality, constantly being negotiated among different social actors with differing claims and interests.

With South Africa's legacy of race and class fragmentation, the poor and unemployed (who are mainly black) could, with powerful justification, argue that the kinds of knowledge and skills that are in the primary social interest have to do with enhancing opportunities for employment, better housing and health care – all of which constitutes a significantly large component of the public good. The more intangible aspects of the public good which are invoked in relation to higher education – for example, academic freedom and autonomy, the pursuit of wisdom and deeper human understanding or the development of self-reflexive capacities to sustain a democratic culture – might well be seen as an indulgence of the middle class or of intellectuals and academics whose life and career prospects are reasonably secure.

Showing the role of higher education in the achievement of the public good requires a demonstration of the interconnectedness and mutual dependence of tangible and less tangible dimensions of this good (even though valued by different actors), showing how the achievement of a just and humane society for all depends on the achievement of some measure of all dimensions of the



public good. Arguing for the re-insertion of the public good into higher education transformation will clearly require a more substantive analysis of who is included and what is encapsulated by the idea of the public good. A clearer distinction will be required between higher education as a public good and the role of higher education in the achievement of the public good. The latter requires a closer identification of the different ways in which the core activities of higher education – teaching, research and community service – could yield public good benefits. Further, arguing for the social benefits that higher education could advance requires closer analysis of the private and public goods yielded by higher education and of the complex and ambiguous dynamic between the two.

Greater conceptual clarity is also needed in relation to the idea of the ‘market’ as the driver of higher education change. Does ‘market’ refer to the increasing dominance of narrowly economic cost-benefit analyses of higher education, or to an undue responsiveness to student or consumer demand which is seen to compromise higher education development? Is it a reference to creeping managerialism and the obsession with outputs within academia, to the increasing reliance on private sector contracts for operational survival or to the need to compete with aggressive for-profit providers of higher education? A better understanding of the different forms and effects of the ‘market’ in higher education – rather than a fuzzy dismissal of it – would make it possible to distinguish between what ‘market’ related dimensions are unavoidable, what should be resisted or mediated and what should be supported within an environment of radical restructuring. Such an interrogation should also include questions on competitiveness and efficiency to achieve what ends and at what costs.

Assuming that the meaning and importance of public good issues in higher education has been more persuasively established, it becomes necessary to identify real strategic possibilities to counterbalance the weakening or disappearance of the public good from higher education transformation. The question that arises here is similar to the one asked more generally in debates about globalisation: is there an alternative route to what appears to be the dominant trajectory of higher education as it seeks to enhance its responsiveness to the knowledge and human resource needs of the 21st century? Is the hegemony of the market paradigm inevitable or can a more complex notion of higher education transformation be meaningfully and realistically asserted, especially within African higher education where political and financial crises as well as a disabling global balance of forces pose almost intractable problems?

Accepting the inevitability thesis undermines the capacity to identify other choices and take appropriate action in order to produce more acceptable social outcomes. If higher education policy and practice are to be coherent and consistent, a rigorous analysis of whether and how it is possible to balance the different requirements of good scholarship, entrepreneurial efficiency and social justice commitments within a broader notion of transformation is absolutely necessary. The other side of this dilemma is about the consequences of not aspiring to a comprehensive notion of transformation, thus courting the dangers of a narrowly economic view of higher education responsiveness, especially for societies still grappling with broader issues of democracy and social justice. On the premise that a more encompassing notion of higher education responsiveness is not only necessary but possible, an exploration is needed of the systemic and/or institutional forms which could support such a notion. How can a 'thicker' notion of responsiveness be operationalised in terms of the real constraints that stem from funding and fiscal sustainability, capacity with regard to programme spread, quality assurance demands, graduate employability and mobility? Proponents of a diversified system argue for the co-existence of different institutional missions within a single higher education system, as a mechanism which could yield a fuller range of the different social, intellectual and economic benefits that higher education is expected to provide. Such views also bear close interrogation to address the following questions: how might the continued dangers of inequality through different elite and mass access routes be offset within a single differentiated system of higher education? And how can the different expected benefits be achieved in small, poor countries where there is only one or two higher education institutions?

The implications of retaining or inserting public good concerns into higher education transformation for leadership, management and governance at different levels of higher education need to be explored in some depth. Can an entrepreneurial and managerialist leadership facilitate the achievement of curriculum related aspects of the public good through, for example, deliberate cross-subsidisation policies which allow for the survival of research and teaching activities which do not lend themselves to income-generation and commercialisation? Strategies also have to be identified to draw in the appropriate social forces, agencies and constituencies which have an interest in, could benefit from and be mobilised on behalf of a more encompassing conception of higher education accountability.

Although there may not be many, it would be instructive to study successful and innovative examples of higher education responsiveness which have

sought to hold on to a broader social notion of accountability. What internal and external factors or preconditions have made their success possible? This question would have to consider the necessary and sufficient conditions for the operationalisation of a comprehensive notion of higher education responsiveness and confront the possibility that some of the necessary conditions may be provided by the choices and decisions of national governments while some of the sufficient conditions may indicate the need for a different global balance of forces. Closer study of the restructuring of South African higher education could yield information about whether there are possibilities or lessons for conceptualising higher education accountability and responsiveness in a way that balances private and public goods and holds together the often conflicting imperatives of social justice and the market. The issues of what further policy or other interventions are necessary within the processes of higher education transformation, by which actors and at what levels will need careful analysis if the primacy of social imperatives in the higher education change agenda is to be re-asserted.

A presumption in my argument is that national states, especially those which are developing, have an irreplaceable role to play in ensuring that the connection is not severed between higher education transformation and issues of public good. This presumption may be naïve or over-optimistic within the framework of the global economy. The extent to which poor countries can mediate the worst effects of globalisation through national policy choices and interventions designed to protect the worst-off and most vulnerable in their societies is not clear. It is equally unclear as to which social force or agency will be able to regulate the worst effects of the market if the state fails or withdraws as the primary guardian of the public good. A small first step in thinking through the connection between the role of the state, higher education transformation and the public good is to interrogate the nature and reality of policy commitment to the public good in the development agenda of the state and its major social institutions. This includes a study of what policy levers and incentives, if any, have been put in place to steer higher education institutions towards a broader notion of social transformation. Such scrutiny may enable us to judge whether the state is fully utilising all options to pursue its own social justice related development priorities while enduring the pressures exerted by a globalised world.

What is the role and responsibility of the donor community and of international agencies in ensuring that 'public good' issues continue to be an integral part of higher education reform on the African continent? The revitalisation of higher education is crucial to the new agenda for social and

political development of Africa. However, supporting 'innovations' which are largely fiscally driven and upholding them as models for higher education reform will be selling short the aspirations on the continent for substantial social and political change that goes beyond market liberalisation. Again, the idea of higher education innovation has to be framed within a larger social development canvas.

## Conclusion

The re-insertion of public good issues into the notion of higher education responsiveness requires the identification of a series of strategic choices for higher education. These go far beyond the expression of nostalgia for some romanticised past. Choosing between justified cost efficiency imperatives and broader social development priorities should not be the only option for countries like South Africa, which is in the process of reconstructing a new social order that is not only economically more enabling than its predecessor but also socio-politically more emancipatory. Making social justice issues explicit and real within the notions of higher education responsiveness and accountability is likely to prove enormously difficult if not impossible. The task requires not only tenacious commitment but also clarity of conception about what is required and the mobilisation of a range of role players around it.

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# 2

## Public good and private benefits of higher education

*Martin Hall*

### Introduction

Over the last few decades levels of participation in higher education have risen sharply in many parts of the world. This in turn has prompted a shift from public funding to an expectation that students and their families should bear a greater proportion of the cost of a university education (Johnstone and Marcucci, 2010). As public policies have been shaped accordingly, this often-contested shift has come to be characterised as a distinction between the public good and the private benefits of education. On the one side of the scale, public goods are seen as the general benefits of a more highly skilled workforce, the advancement of qualities such as democracy and citizenship, and personal development. Weighing against this are the private benefits, which are almost invariably cast in terms either of entry into high status professional employment or as comparatively high earnings, expressed as a 'graduate premium'. In its most instrumental form, the return on the financial investment in university fees is compared favourably with the long-term return that a comparable investment in the stock market would bring.

This tussle between advocates of public goods and private benefits engages with the key issue of inequality and its consequences. In many parts of the world, profound socio-economic inequalities structure educational opportunity from the earliest years of education, whether in the United States, the United Kingdom or South Africa. Considered in terms of family incomes, the

UK and the US are the most unequal of the developed economies – and these levels of inequality are growing.

This chapter explores some of the consequences of inequality for higher education policy and practice. Universities play an ambiguous role here. On the one hand, they operate as gatekeepers, ensuring access to symbolic capital that interprets higher education qualifications as positional goods, in danger of being valued more for the status they confer than for the value they add. But on the other hand, access to higher education contributes to breaking the bonds of poverty traps – self-reinforcing combinations of factors that perpetuate inequality (Hall, 2012).

When the issue of the appropriate balance between the public good of higher education and its private benefits is set against the enduring crises of inequality, some of the general assumptions that drive public policy development seem less secure. Inequality has deleterious consequences for the well-paid (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009), which suggests that elites benefit from investment in the public good to a far greater extent than is acknowledged in narrow concepts of a graduate premium. As participation rates continue to increase, graduate benefits show evidence of declining which also brings into question policies based on market models. In turn, growing doubts that possession of a degree guarantees secure, premium employment, direct attention to the inherent qualities of higher education and new ways of understanding private benefits.

### **Inequalities**

Equality of opportunity is often stated as a self-evident, primary value. It is also frequently assumed that it is a condition easily established and verified. In today's debates about higher education admissions, it may be stated that there is equality of opportunity for any applicant for a place at a university, regardless of their financial circumstances, as long as appropriate, means-tested bursaries are available. An athletic metaphor is often used. Whatever their circumstances, it is claimed, the playing field is level if all applicants wrote the same final examination paper at secondary school.

At the same time, however, pronounced inequalities in life circumstances – household income, employment opportunities, health, housing, education, life expectancy – are increasingly being seen as inevitable. Measured in terms of household income, South Africa is one of the most unequal countries in the world, with the gap between the poorest and the wealthiest deciles increasing steadily over the past two decades. Measured in the same way,

Britain and America are the most unequal of the highly industrialised economies; in these countries also, inequality in household incomes has been increasing. Given the close link between attainment in education and household circumstances, the assumption that there is meaningful equality of opportunity in countries such as Britain, South Africa and the United States is dangerous.

Just as the meaning of equality of opportunity is easy to assume but far more difficult to apply, so the concept of inequality can be understood in various ways. It evidently has a good deal to do with money, but how wealth is measured and reported can vary hugely. Similarly, inequality can be experienced through lack of access to other tangible resources as well as to intangible qualities of life. Amartya Sen has been widely influential in his insistence that our understanding of inequality is extended beyond simple monetary indexes, taking into account what a person is able to do and be through the 'capabilities of persons to lead the kind of lives they value – and have reason to value' (Sen, 1999:18).

Patterns of inequality have a direct effect on children, and thus on education policy and education institutions. This is accentuated by demographic structures. In Britain, the median age is 40 years. Just over seventeen per cent of the population is below the age of fifteen. But in South Africa the median age is 25 and almost 30 per cent of the population is below the age of fifteen (see [www.indexmundi.com](http://www.indexmundi.com)). Given the high levels of household poverty this situation could have disastrous consequences.

Patterns of achievement in the high school matriculation examination testify to this concern. The examination performs a similar function to British GCSEs, A-levels and vocational qualifications in managing the interface between school and employment, further and higher education. In 2007 just under one million young South Africans in the age cohort were expected to write the matriculation examination, 83 per cent of whom were African and seven per cent white. Thirty-five per cent of the African candidates and 64 per cent of the white candidates wrote the examinations and passed. Of these, 34 per cent of the white candidates achieved an endorsement: the minimum grades in specified combinations of subjects to be eligible to apply for higher education. By contrast, only 6 per cent of African candidates achieved an endorsement. In South Africa, an A-aggregate is required for the most selective university programmes such as medicine. One in 11 white candidates achieved an A-aggregate. This was matched by just 1 in 640 African candidates (Servaas van der Berg, University of Stellenbosch, personal communication).



The South African limit case suggests that factors such as household income, unemployment, race and low levels of educational attainment are mutually reinforcing. While there will always be exceptional individuals, it would be futile to propose to the large majority of young South Africans, living with negligible household incomes, no opportunities for employment and no access to schools with any history of educational entertainment, that they should pull themselves up by their bootstraps, Horatio Alger style, and all will be well. Poverty and inequality are clearly part of a syndrome that needs to be understood and analysed as such.

One approach to understanding situations such as these is the concept of the 'poverty trap'. Here, Bowles *et al* draw a distinction with what they term the 'achievement model of income determination' – the assumption that the individual controls their economic destiny. Their approach is rather to look for mechanisms that could cause poverty to persist either in whole economies or in subgroups within economies (Bowles *et al*, 2006). Looked at in this way, South Africa's education system is an institutional poverty trap. The post-apartheid settlement created a complex set of interests that, over some two decades, has perpetuated a trend of increasing and extreme inequality. While a minority across all race categories has benefited from this, a large majority is 'stuck' in a cycle of unemployment, very low household incomes and little access to educational opportunity. These people are the direct descendants of those most discriminated against by apartheid laws. They are overwhelmingly young, and without any evident prospects. Mutually reinforcing factors – poverty traps – militate strongly against their breaking out of inter-generational poverty and inequality – and educational opportunities, from early schooling to higher education, are of central significance.

### **Universities**

Access to different levels of education runs through all considerations of inequality, poverty and poverty traps. Evidently, access to education provides opportunities for individuals in their lifetimes. It is also a primary mechanism for inter-generational economic and social change. The concern here is with higher education as one part of a spectrum of provision and with universities as institutions.

While universities have an avowed progressive role, providing educational opportunities on the basis of neutral measures of merit, their role is also inherently ambiguous. Although they certainly provide life changing opportunities, they also serve as gatekeepers that maintain difference by exclusion and ranking, and contribute to enduring inequalities. This dual role is well

understood from Pierre Bourdieu's compelling sociology of education in France, initially in the mid-1960s and then twenty years later (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Bourdieu, 1996).

Bourdieu showed how selection and categorisation work through the interactions between individual applicants and institutional processes: 'disciplines choose their students as much as students choose their disciplines, imposing upon them categories of perception of subjects and careers as well as of their own skills' (1996:19). The result is that the university, 'with no explicit instructions ... is able to function like an immense cognitive machine, operating classifications that, although apparently completely neutral, reproduce pre-existing social classifications' (*ibid*:52). There are always exceptions – some individuals defy the norm and break into elite institutions, while others do not achieve what is expected of them in terms of their social class. These exceptions support claims of a meritocracy. But rather than a level playing field, Bourdieu sees a competitive dash for the finishing line, the academic cursus, 'that strange racecourse in which everyone classifies and everyone is classified, and where the best classified become the best classifiers of those who will next enter the race' (Bourdieu, 1996:52). Bourdieu showed how this system of classification produced and reproduced what he termed a 'state nobility' – a self-perpetuating concentration of symbolic capital (*ibid*:79).

For potential students from less privileged backgrounds, getting a degree – and thus access to the symbolic capital the university confers – could represent a step-wise change in circumstances. A student from a black South African family, whose parents were denied the opportunity of education beyond the basic level because of apartheid legislation, will earn a significant amount more than their parents on graduation and employment. British men born in the 1950s who gained a higher education qualification earned on average twice as much as men without such qualifications after twenty years in the labour force (Wolf, 2002). In the US, the 'college premium' – the difference in median wage between those who do not have a higher education qualification and those who do – was 72 per cent in 2008 (Rajan, 2010:24). For such students inter-generational social mobility is unambiguous and will in all likelihood be linked to a graduate premium in earnings.

For students whose families are already in graduate-level occupations, however, the benefits of the graduate premium are less clear. In Britain, the Dearing Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education estimated that the rate of return for students' own investment in higher education was between 11

and 14 per cent in real terms. However, the inquiry also estimated that the social return on investment, which calculates the value added in terms of productivity, was between 7 and 9 per cent, against a minimum guideline of a 6 per cent return for public investment (Wolf, 2002). Such figures are the result of the significant increase in participation in British higher education over the last 50 years being so heavily skewed towards middle class families, diluting the transformative benefits of inter-generational social mobility. Put another way:

University degrees are wonderful things; it is the arranging and valuing of them by hierarchy of institution that is problematic, when people study for the label, for the university brand, rather than actually to learn. Because there were so few of them, the forerunners of today's university graduates almost all became part of a tiny elite, governing others and being rewarded with riches as a result. Because there are so many more graduates now, only a very small minority of today's university graduates can become rich at the expense of others. (Dorling, 2010:16)

Although it was apparent since the mid-1990s that the rapidly increasing rates of participation in British higher education were markedly skewed, it is still widely assumed that the continuation of this expansion is both inevitable and desirable. As Alison Wolf put it in her iconoclastic study: 'questioning the automatic value of any rise in the education budget, it seems, places one somewhere between an animal-hater and an imbecile.' Is it plausible, Wolf asked, that education is functioning as something other than a measure of skills? 'Might education not be serving, essentially, as a simple way of ranking, screening and selecting people in a mass society (Wolf, 2002:xi, 29)?'

Wolf's argument is that for the majority of participants in higher education in highly industrialised economies, a higher education qualification is increasingly a 'positional good', whose greater value is for competitive success in the labour market than the inherent qualities a university education confers. Such a positional good might be essential whether or not it also brings a private financial benefit. For most professions, a degree is an entry requirement and a wide range of jobs are only open to graduates, whatever the remuneration. The increasing importance of the positioning power of a degree – equivalent to the significance of symbolic capital in Bourdieu's analysis – is itself a function of widening middle class participation in higher education:

At a certain point in what had been a steady, slow expansion, large numbers of people started to feel that they really had better get a degree, because not doing so would be such a bad move. The first wave set off another, and so on.

And their parents were very likely to agree ... the question becomes less 'does a degree pay well?' than 'can I afford not to have one?' (Wolf, 2002:178-81)

Clearly, then, the need for public policies that address these changing circumstances is urgent. In broader terms, the limits of narrow, econometric assumptions are increasingly recognised. In particular, the World Bank's twenty-year series of Human Development Reports and debates about the value of absolute measures of poverty based on comparative price indices are leading this widening process of re-evaluation (Deaton, 2010). Another example is the report by the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress. Released in 2009, it examined the limits of GDP as an indicator of economic performance and social progress (Stiglitz *et al*, 2009: 9).

The foundation for a different approach to education, and part of a wider concern with issues of equality and inequality, was laid 30 years ago by Amartya Sen. Working within the frame of mainstream economics, Sen showed how neither the concepts of 'opulence' nor 'utility' were adequate in themselves as a theory of well-being. Opulence and utility approaches see either the narrow objective of increasing real income or the fulfilment of interests as both the driving force of development and the appropriate emphasis of public policy, and lead naturally to the assumption that education is a commodity best traded in a market. Sen argues instead for a focus on the 'capability to function' – what a person can do and be on 'the achievement of a person: what he or she manages to do or to be' (Sen, 1999:7). For Sen, access to education and the ability to realise its opportunities is an unqualified good.

Sen's approach has been further developed by Martha Nussbaum (Nussbaum, 1997; 2010). In contrast to Sen, Nussbaum insists on a specific list of 'central capabilities'. These belong 'first and foremost to individual persons and only derivatively to groups ... at times group-based policies (for example, affirmative action) may be effective instruments in the creation of individual capabilities, but that is the only way they can be justified.' Two of these central capabilities play an 'architectonic role' in organising others: affiliation and practical reason (Nussbaum, 2011:35).

Melanie Walker has built on the work of both Sen and Nussbaum to develop a first list of key capabilities and functionings for higher education (Walker, 2006). In addressing the pervasive challenges of inequality, Walker sees it as essential to move beyond 'fairness' – providing opportunity – to ensure that every individual in education has the capability of taking advantage of such

opportunities. This requires a comparison of the experiences of students based on their own, valued, achievements.

Following Sen, a capability is understood as a potential functioning, and the relationship between a capability and a functioning as equivalent to the relationship between the opportunity to achieve and actual achievement. Thus, in the context of the objectives of widening participation in higher education, a school leaver may decide to become a plumber...

even though she has the required grades for university entrance: she has the capability to choose. But another working class student who does not have the

Practical reason	Being able to make well-reasoned, informed, critical, independent, intellectually acute, socially responsible, and reflective choices
Educational resilience	Being able to navigate study, work and life
Knowledge and imagination	Being able to gain knowledge of a chosen subject – disciplinary and/or professional – its form of academic inquiry and standards
Learning disposition	Being able to have curiosity and desire for learning
Social relations and social networks	Being able to participate in a group for learning, working with others to solve problems and tasks
Respect, dignity and recognition	Being able to have respect for oneself and for and from others, being treated with dignity, not being diminished or devalued because of one's gender, social class, religion or race, valuing other languages, other religions and spiritual practices and human diversity'
Emotional integrity, emotions	Being able to develop emotions for imagination. Understanding, empathy, awareness and discernment
Bodily integrity	Safety and freedom from all forms of physical and verbal harassment in the higher education environment

Figure 2.1: Capabilities for Higher Education (Walker, 2006:128)

required grades and chooses plumbing, even though he would rather study engineering at university, does not have the same capability. On the surface, the two students would seem to have made the same decision not to go to university. If one were evaluating only functionings (becoming a plumber) we would view the situation the same. However, if we look at capabilities, we evaluate choices which for one of the students would have been different in other circumstances ... the first student has freedom and rationality; the second student has rationality in choosing plumbing but not accompanied by conditions of freedom ... our evaluation of equality must take account of freedom in opportunities as much as observed choices. (Walker, 2006:28-9. See also Unterhalter, 2003)

In developing a capabilities approach to higher education, Walker places emphasis on agency. This is particularly important for 'adaptive preferences' – situations where people learn not to want things because they are off-limits in terms of gender, race or class, which results in the internalisation of a second class status. In stressing the importance of agency, Walker shows how the capability approach can move beyond the limitations of the idea of *habitus*, and how it can be ruptured and reformed:

The capability approach offers us a means to analyse change over time, recognizing the interaction of the social and the individual and the social constraints on choice such that we might adapt to a given habitus, but also making the possibility for agency central and important. (Walker, 2006:59)

Her provisional list of eight key capabilities for higher education builds on Nussbaum's emphasis on practical reason, affiliation and emotions as central capabilities (Walker, 2006:128-9).

In her work Walker stresses the significant role that institutions – universities – have in providing the conditions that enable the development of capabilities and functionings in individuals. By developing Sen and Nussbaum's broader emphasis on education in this way, Walker builds a bridge between the individual habitus and institutional culture.

A number of studies have drawn out the rich benefits of understanding the complex interplay between personal circumstances and opportunity (Archer *et al*, 2003; Reay *et al*, 2005). *Longitudinal* biographies are of particular value, as the first outcomes from the Inventing Adulthoods project have shown. This work has followed the lives of 100 people, first interviewed in 1996 in four areas of England and Northern Ireland when they were aged between 11 and 17, and then again over the next decade. The four lives from this data set, examined in depth by Rachel Thomson, provide rich and nuanced understandings both of

how education is perceived and experienced and of the intersection of family life and personal relationships, circumstances and opportunities and institutional resources and structures (Thomson, 2009). They illustrate Melanie Walker's point about the significance of individual agency and the ways it can rupture *habitus*. This perspective takes us far beyond the concept of education as market in which competing educational goods are weighed and assessed for their comparative value for money.

In their work with twenty students at the University of Cape Town, Bongani Bangeni and Rochelle Kapp have tracked the longitudinal experiences of young adults as they move through the successive years of undergraduate study and develop agency and identity. Of particular interest is the way Bangeni and Kapp explore the interplay between individual development and the formal curriculum and institutional culture of the university. This study works through the medium of a three year programme in academic writing for students whose first language is not English and who are studying in an English medium environment. The exercises in writing realise key capabilities of practical reason, educational resilience, knowledge, learning disposition and respect and recognition. Bangeni and Kapp write that 'our data show that changes in students' identities and roles over their undergraduate years are intricately related to social boundaries, their emotional responses to the (often traumatic) events in their lives' (2005:16). Their ability to participate in university life – to construct capabilities and realise functionings – was shaped by the double ambiguity between their place in university life and their changing relationship with home.

These personal stories are complex accounts of successes and failures. However, the educational gain – the realisation of capability as functioning – is evident. Here, Sisanda describes how her approach to argument construction shifted over the course of three years:

First year to me essays were about reporting what I have learnt which was obviously not a good idea ... Second year, to make things easier I told myself I will read and either support or critique the author in addition to reading ... In constructing my arguments [in third year], not only do I discuss and support/critique the authors, I compare and differentiate their views to build on my own opinions and views that I include in the paper as some point of departure or recommendation. (Kapp and Bangeni, 2009:590)

And here is Andrew, from a socially and economically marginalised working class suburb of Cape Town, Afrikaans speaking, and the first in his family to attend university:

In an unsolicited preamble to his reflection paper in his final year, Andrew wrote: '... I am in an academic discourse where it is required of one to act/or to be the discipline, this is what I have come to realize over these past years. It is one thing to be in the discipline and another 'to be' the discipline. And each day I find more and more evidence within myself that I am at that point where I moved from being in my discipline, to where I am my discipline. This is evident in my speech, thought, and ways I approach certain things, whether in academic or formal setting.' Andrew's analysis, as well as the language in which it is expressed, reflected a growing awareness that he was not only learning the skills and content of the discipline, but was also entering into new subjectivities. (Kapp and Bangeni, 2009:591)

## **Conclusion**

Equality of opportunity is often stated as a self-evident, primary value. However the evidence for pronounced inequalities in life circumstances shows this to be a chimera. A significant factor in rising levels of inequality are the poverty traps; self-perpetuating factors such as household income, unemployment, race-based inequalities and low levels of educational attainment that reinforce one another. While these are more apparent in the South African limit case, they are in evidence in many parts of the world including Britain, where inequality continues to rise. Given this, educational opportunities, and the public policies that enable them, are critical. As Amartya Sen demonstrated, educational attainment enables poverty traps to be broken and inter-generational social and economic mobility (Hall, 2012).

It can justly be claimed that universities have played, and continue to play, a progressive role in contributing to educational attainment and its benefits. But, as Bourdieu showed us, universities are also inherently ambiguous, operating at the same time as gatekeepers that advantage and protect elites and their concentrations of symbolic capital. Taken in the context of the extensive increases in higher education participation over recent decades, this is leading to a complex set of circumstances in which the possession of a degree as a 'positional good' remains essential for access to high value segments of the labour market at the time when the 'graduate premium' – the lifetime earnings advantage of a graduate over a non-graduate – seems to be declining.

This hollowing out of the value of a university education – circumstances in which the brand and status of an institution becomes more important than any transformational benefits of university attendance – is mirrored in a broader, growing concern with more general econometric measures of the quality of life. The World Bank's emphasis on measures of human develop-



ment that are far broader than indices dominated by income is well established; other studies and commissions have questioned the value of the use of GDP as a measure of national success and individual benefit. When over-emphasis on such narrow indices drives public policy, the consequences may be damaging. The argument here is that higher education policies that fail to address inequality and its consequences, and that measure the benefits of higher education in narrow econometric terms based on the model of a financial market, are both damaging and at risk of implosion, as graduate earnings decline as an inevitable consequence of increasing rates of participation.

The foundation for a different approach to education, and part of a wider concern with issues of equality and inequality, was laid by Amartya Sen thirty years ago, and has been further developed by Martha Nussbaum and others. Here, Melanie Walker's provisional list of eight key capabilities for higher education is particularly valuable. Capabilities and functionings are a different sort of private benefit – they return to the transformative value of education, for the individual, for the community and for the general public good.

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# 3

## The promise of the university: what it's become and where it could go

*Crain Soudien*

### Introduction

**T**he university is an evolving idea. Around the world there are dozens of manifestations of what it could be: large, small, tied to corporates such as Microsoft, underwritten by foundations such as the Aga Khan Foundation, focused on single professions such as medicine, business or engineering – all of these present themselves as universities. In these forms the university has moved a long way from the classic medieval institution that one saw in Bologna, Oxford or Paris. Multiplied in character as it has, the critical questions to ask, however, are: ‘What makes a university a university and what, moreover, makes it a *good* university?’ These questions are particularly important in the South African context where the different legacies the university has inherited pull it in a range of contradictory directions.

I make the argument in this chapter that as a modern social institution the university is distinct in that it is *not* set up for the purposes of social, cultural and economic reproduction. It is, of course, often a vehicle for the transmission of particular forms of power. But in the way in which it is constituted, in the ways in which the disciplines are structured to interrogate meaning, it has within it the potential for disrupting social, cultural and economic orthodoxy. This capacity is underpinned by its constituent elements. It is the one institution that rehearses the practices and modalities for the deconstruction of knowledges that authorise the disciplines – but also the methodologies for the reconstruction of self and community.

To illustrate this argument this chapter shows how inescapably the challenge of the modern university is about the management of the contradictions that surround its constitutive character. These contradictions are fundamentally about defending and cultivating the status it holds in society while, simultaneously, fulfilling its obligation to be open and accessible. How it cultivates its distinctiveness from the structures of domination in the society in which it finds itself is a basic tension with which it is constantly confronted. In being a place which deliberately selects its members it has to ensure that its selectiveness does not default to and come to reproduce the social elite in whichever place it finds itself.

In the South African context this tension takes a particular form. At its heart is how it produces a self-conscious intellectual elite that is, firstly, acutely aware of the hierarchies of nation, people, community, race, class, gender, language, region and religion that surround it and give it its character, and that, secondly, is prepared through its commitment to intellectual freedom to struggle against those hierarchies. And so a question that is asked in this chapter is how is the university able to resist attempts to appropriate it for the reproduction of domination? How, when the very history and sociology of those who teach and learn within it are implicated in the making of political and economic hegemony, do these ‘citizens’ of the university refuse to avail themselves for that purpose or, minimally, come into the challenge of that space fully aware of the role they can play?

The challenge is intense and involves a re-imagination of the university, and particularly what it believes to be its mission, its ‘natural’ ambience, the intellectual ether on which it subsists. How it does this in the South African context, I argue, is by deliberately seeking out and imagining identity possibilities – languages and frameworks of self-description beyond the vocabularies of race and hegemony – that are not yet known, that are yet to be described and that await construction.

### **The formative elements of the modern university**

To understand the power of the idea of the university it is important to describe the developments that took place around it in the late 1800s. A key moment leading up to these developments was the establishment of the University of Berlin by Wilhelm Von Humboldt in 1810. Humboldt’s idea was that the university should have both a teaching and a research focus. Up until then the old universities of the world such as Oxford, Cambridge and Paris essentially prepared men for the priesthood. Their focus was the *trivium* – grammar, logic and rhetoric – and the *quadrivium* – arithmetic, geometry,

astronomy, music and science, and at higher levels, law, medicine and theology. Important as this curriculum was, it was approached in an entirely reproductive way. Debate was limited. The university was essentially a place of socialisation into the dominant conceits of the day. It was with the University of Berlin, and the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore in 1867, that the idea evolved that the university could be a site for the production of knowledge.

Critically, Cardinal John Newman was making his great argument about the university at about the same time. Reflecting on what the university should be, he argued presciently that it is a 'place of concourse, whither students come from every quarter for every kind of knowledge' (Newman, 2001:1). He went on to say:

If I were asked to describe as briefly and popularly as I could, what a University was, I should draw my answer from its ancient designation of a *Studium Generale*, or 'school of universal learning'. This description implies the assemblage of strangers from all parts in one spot – from all parts; else, how will you find professors and students for every department of knowledge? And in one spot; else, how can there be any school at all? Accordingly, in its simple and rudimental form, it is a school of knowledge of every kind, consisting of teachers and learners from every quarter.

The global order into which Newman presented this idea of the university was quite extraordinary. It was a time of both productive and retrogressive social upheaval in the world. In the wake of the industrial revolution the emergence of influential thinkers such as Marx, Freud and Nietzsche brought the ideas of the Enlightenment to a head. Behind many of their arguments was the large question of the nature of human subjectivity. Marx's *Jewish Question*, Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo* and Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* had embedded in them a curiosity about the nature of being and the sociology and psychology of what makes human beings human.

It was also the period of colonialism and imperialism. The immensely important Congress of Berlin in 1878 saw the great powers sitting around a table and arrogating to themselves sovereignty rights over lands acquired by conquest, supposedly in the name of keeping the peace. On the back of an intense period of economic, military and naval expansion Great Britain assumed leadership of the globe. Accompanying these developments, and interpreting them, was a group of entrepreneurial scholars – archaeologists, natural scientists, historians and anthropologists – whose foundational works were to provide the basic explanations of the nature of the world; of native culture in Africa, India

and elsewhere; and of European civilisation and the progress it represented. Often, though not always, projecting a curious mixture of brilliance and narrow-minded gendered and racial nationalism, they came to lay down some of the central approaches to explaining the ontological (the nature of being) and epistemological (ways of knowing) questions of the modern world.

It was in this contradictory space that the university had to work out its identity in terms of who it admitted and what it researched and taught. New disciplines like anthropology and sociology developed whose primary objective was the explanation of human difference. In the wake of neo-Darwinist understandings of evolution, especially early genetics and ideas of the survival of the fittest in particular, they came to account for human life essentially through a biological lens. There was at the same time a profoundly contradictory development: the existentialist framing of *Dasein*, the nature of being in the work of Heidegger who, as he was attempting to unfold the deep question of being, committed himself to the racist project of Nazism.

These simultaneous developments highlight the overwhelming contradiction that defines the modern university. As the preferred place for knowledge production – for the making of new knowledge – there is recognition that the university, as a site of education and learning, is different to other formative institutions. It is a place of excellence. On this ground it has to be vigilant about whom it admits into its ranks. It is, therefore, a place for an elite group of people. At the same time, however, drawing on discussions taking place in many parts of the world about the nature of what it means to be human, it is not a place one can search to find people deemed worthy of being a member of the university on the basis of pre-determined biological, cultural, linguistic, religious or gender attributes. The ability to excel, to emphasise the point, is not the preserve of particular groups of people. They do not, moreover, have in their traditions of thinking and deliberation sole access to higher order thinking. Capacity and intelligence are neither national nor racial in their essence, nor are they intrinsically linked to any gender, class or caste. Exclusive though the university is, it cannot base its membership on the dominant social categorisations and habits of thought which give the societies in which it finds itself their particular character.

In reviewing the history of the university, it is striking that hardly any country anywhere is able to produce this kind of institution. Important initiatives are taken in key parts of the world where intellectuals bring into being universities that are both excellent and open. Among these is Antioch University, established by the philosopher Thomas Mann in the United States. The single

moment where a systemic solution was forced was in China during the Cultural Revolution of 1966-1976. The country's Communist regime had made the democratisation of higher education one of its principle tasks – to 'dismantle the elitism that had survived in the Chinese university system' (Beteille, 2010: 52). The idea was essentially to level the social landscape. The regime's motives, however, were entirely political. The system was effectively turned into a vast ideological factory.

Progress has been made around the world with the establishment of open universities, which have led to important breakthroughs in terms of access. Participation rates among young people have increased dramatically in countries such as the United States, where up to 70 per cent of young people find their way into higher education. But what makes a university a good university remains an intensely difficult question to answer. In the West, where the great modern universities are to be found, and increasingly in emerging economies such as China, India, Brazil and South Africa, the question of quality is dominated, and in some ways resolved, by two developments: the emergence of quality assurance agencies and a global preoccupation with university rankings. Both have their supporters and detractors.

Supporters of rankings base their defence of quality on the development of objective criteria such as the number of scholarly citations associated with an institution. That many of their conclusions are dependent on reputation in the market-place is, however, a weakness identified by many. Quality assurance agencies, on their side, develop a set of bench-marked instruments for assessing the presence or absence of minimum standards in institutions. Such standards emphasise efficiency and effectiveness. For the most part the university is projected and understood in terms of a broad, liberal, human capital approach. Politically progressive versions of this approach – and South Africa's model is globally significant in these terms – have a strong human rights orientation. In more general terms, however, quality assurance in these approaches is essentially a procedural question that pivots on *what* there is in the university, not on what that which is deemed to be important amounts to. There is little in what is promoted that *actually* explains what quality or excellence are.

It is against these developments and their ubiquity that I argue for the defence and even the development of Newman's idea of the university. Readings (1996:21) remarks about the easy way in which we have slipped into the language of 'world-class' and 'excellence' and urges that we deconstruct the terms we use and how we use them. His central thesis is that excellence is an



empty signifier based on key performance indicators that themselves depend only on activity: 'all that the system requires is for activity to take place, and the empty notion of excellence refers to nothing other than the optimal input/output ratio in matters of information' (1996:39). The university, he says, has now lost all content (*ibid*). It has become another bureaucratic corporation. What remains, he argues, is the need to pay attention to the 'preservation of the activity of thinking' (1996:192).

This thinking, Readings argues, is an ethical responsibility. If the university is to preserve anything it is the necessity of ensuring that 'thought takes place beside thought, where thinking is a shared process *without identity or unity*' (*ibid*) (my emphasis). Wortham (1999:9), writing in the wake of Readings' provocation, takes the discussion further. To Readings' 'ruins' he proffers the idea of the university as an institution that has never historically been in symmetry: 'I shall argue, however, that disorientation (his emphasis) is the condition, the starting point, of a leverage by which such orientation is sought.' In Readings' account the new university stands at a moment of intense disorientation. The process of globalisation has dislodged it from its traditional anchor – the state. For Wortham, projecting the state as the anchor of the university is an overstatement which underplays the persistent disorientation on which the university has historically depended – its 'deep structure' (1999:10).

Bowden and Marton (1998:280) argue that a way to engage with this question of its structure is for the university to come to know itself. It has to be constituted as a place which understands the acts and processes of the different kinds of knowledge formation within the various domains of knowledge (1998: 287). How it operates as a site of knowledge formation enables the university to become 'aware of [how] one's (own) way of seeing opens up other options ... Taking other perspectives than one's own is vital in the university's dealings with the community' (*ibid*:293). This awareness, I suggest, is crucial. But how do South African universities stand in relation to this issue?

### **What the South African higher education landscape looks like**

The American sociologist Michael Burawoy recently described the South African higher education system as the 'jewel of Africa'.<sup>1</sup> A frequent visitor to the country, he expressed a sense of amazement at the vitality of the system, remarking that the sector's preoccupation with questions of equality and the future of humanity made it distinctive in global terms.

It is important to note what Burawoy is saying. There is an intensity in the South African discussion which is not as evident in many systems elsewhere. The South African discussion engages questions that arise in other universities but takes its intensity from its deeply conflicted history. How can it fulfil its promise and at the same time be a place which is inclusive? Can it be outstanding in terms of the new knowledge it produces and also be inclusive?

When thinking about inclusivity, South Africa is obliged to focus on access. Access is important because South African history contains the reprehensible reality, morally, politically and economically, that in terms of talent and how the education system has come to understand talent, it can actually only take to graduation 5 per cent of the cohort of black children entering school in any one year. This stands in contrast to the situation for white children. More than 60 per cent of young white men and women who enter the university are able to graduate each year.

Such statistics contain the nuances and shades of structural discrimination and the economic and social conditions that have made South Africa the difficult society it is. How, in a social and economic climate that has systematically failed to prepare particular groups of young people for university, does it include representatives of these groups in ways that promote the objective of excellence? What does this mean for the nature of the contemporary South African university? Must it re-calibrate its mission towards inclusion and wait for this inclusion to produce its own excellence in time? Should it force all its institutions to move in one direction? Should it differentiate itself in such a way that some universities will maintain their standards while others reconfigure their missions around their teaching obligations? How does one prevent differentiation becoming a mechanism for the entrenchment of race and racialisation?

How are South African universities managing this discussion? I suggest that the discussion is mired in its small and limited areas of interest and has become somewhat occluded. This occlusion is evident in the internal organisation of the system, its languages of self-description and its capacity for re-imagining itself. I suggest that the institutions work with the legacy of apartheid in ambiguous ways. They are both repelled and seduced by it. They seek to divest themselves of it but are struggling to develop intellectual frameworks that will take them beyond it. What post-apartheid has made possible is the unmooring of institutions from their racial pasts. There remains, however, an inability within institutions and their academic disciplines to create the conditions by which the higher education system as a whole will begin the process of re-imagining both access and quality.

Reviewing the organised work around change and reform that exists in the country, a conclusion to which one is forced to come is that the academy has side-stepped the issues placed in front of them and looked in the other direction. Aside from a proportion of vice chancellors at a number of universities who have explicitly committed their tenure of leadership to the issues of transformation, aside from a small and articulate group of young scholars who have organised themselves into a grouping called the Anti-Racist Network, and aside from individual groups of intellectuals who have inserted provocative new questions into their disciplines and academic practices, in its teaching, writing and professional organisation in societies the academy has been less responsive to the question of race and racism. It has chosen not to prioritise the explanation and description of the nature of the racial challenge, or, indeed, the ways that it forecloses the discussion of excellence and quality, nor has it afforded the undoing of that challenge its due importance. In relation to inclusion and exclusion its gestures have been deferential, submissive and at virtually every turn, unreflective. At the very moment when the formal procedures of epistemology have become available for the purpose of deconstructing reality, it has, one might argue, submitted instead to its wiles and seductions.

This submission is evident in the practice of disciplines and fields such as sociology, history, anthropology and education, where a form of complicity is evident in the very reproduction of the reality these disciplines were intended to uncover. The central accusation one can make of these disciplines' disciples is that they fail to see how the very social constructs they invoke in their teaching continue to circulate in their practices. Of these, the single worst example must be the *Ubuntu* class at the University of Pretoria that Jonathan Jansen (2009) refers to in *Knowledge in the Blood*. In such examples versions or interpretations of what is out there are presented as the truth.

Less offensive but no less egregious is the debate in much current sociology concerning the nature of South Africa's social reality. Strikingly, the discussion either accepts categories such as race at their face value or seeks simply to efface race from the situation. Many who operate from the latter position often seek to reduce the status of race to an epiphenomenon of class. Neither is able to engage with the complexity of racial ideology which characterised the landmark work of the 1980s when Wolpe (1988) and Alexander (No Sizwe, 1979) sought to generate theory that would explain the nature of modern South Africa.

Why this situation has arisen is, I suggest, because the university has struggled to make an argument for itself. Instead, it has succumbed to limited explanations of what its purpose is. Two such explanations have contended for the high ground in South Africa and while discursive hybrids of them undoubtedly exist, the two represent the boundaries that demarcate the landscape. I have described these two explanations elsewhere as the outside-in and the inside-out views. Both are fundamentally about the social formation of the academic, about the making of the academic's identity.

The first view – the outside-looking-in view – sees the nature of the South African university, and particularly its racialised and racist practices, in terms of the university being merely another site of social practice in the country. The university is a social mirror of the broader society, made in its image. It is no more or less than any other site of public activity. In its everyday practices it provides a way of understanding the South African society. In this view the subjects of the university are *sui generis* – South African subjects. They have, therefore, all the attributes of the everyday subject. Racialised as those subjects are, the university therefore amounts to a racialised space.

The second view – the inside-looking-out view – presents the university as a space that is ontologically defined outside of and independent from the wider society. The university takes its rules and modalities of formation not from the society in which it is located but from the shaping and habit-forming discourses of the disciplines which constitute it. Subject formation in the university thus sets its citizens apart from the citizens of the everyday. The university subject, particularly its high priests and professors, are therefore a community apart, inured from the dross, the contumely, the prejudice, the venality, the myopia of the everyday world. Their internal rules of formation have protected them from the world of race and racism. They are above it.

Predictably, the first view seeks, as it does for the wider society, the de-racialisation of the society. In this view the university is a project which is in need of reform or revolution. The second view denies that it is in need of any kind of reform. It is the outside world that is broken. It understands its own project best and any form of outside interference is a threat to its sacred rules of formation. Furthermore, it is the role of the university to take its holy knowledge to the outside. It is the obligation of the university to reshape the broken nature of the outside world.

Neither of these views, I suggest, is able to recognise the multiple social contingencies that enter our processes of making meaning, including our own investments in these positions. Neither is able to grasp the distinct and

specific position which the university occupies in the modern era, much less the role of the university in the turbulent space of a world which is subject to rapid and constant change. The first urges the university to take its mandate from society. It presents the university as being out of step with developments in society. Mandated by the change that has taken place outside it, the university must now reform like the society itself. The second view asserts that the university has a non-negotiable autonomy from society. Society, constituted on the authority of everyday knowledge, cannot begin to comprehend the nature of the specialist knowledges which exist within the university and therefore cannot have any jurisdiction over it. The university must manage itself according to its own internal rules and regulations.

### **Towards a new space**

To move to a more self-conscious theoretical position, one which is aware of how we take a position within the structures and narratives of our own social analyses, we need to develop a social criticism that is alert to the shifting relationship between cultural difference, social authority and political discrimination and that can deal with the dominant rationalisations of self and other. Such an approach would need to be aware of how much the ways in which we speak, our theories and languages of description are mobilisable for the dominant project of race and class. It has the potential to open up forms of seeing that take us beyond the stereotypical ways in which difference is understood. Critically, it unmask the arbitrary ways in which the mark of the stereotype is assigned to each of us, particularly the racial, class, cultural and gender values that are supposed to define who we are. It has the potential to help us work in new productive spaces where we are able to confront processes of social and individual meaning-making – culture – in our lives and can recognise how those processes, in their innovativeness, continually produce new forms of oppression and emancipation. It can also permit us to see how – and this is an important point – each of us is implicated in these processes. From such a position we can develop a project of emancipation that is fundamentally conscious of the complex ways in which we are positioned and position ourselves. We can begin to see each other in our heterogeneity and deal with, and not disavow, the proclivity within us to ‘other’ as we socially identify. The power of such an approach is to force us to realise the limitations of consensual and collusive theories of community embodied in notions of race, class, gender, culture and so on.

What options are open for the system to deal with the issues of access and quality, openness and excellence?

### **Where are the opportunities?**

A number of initiatives that have materialised seek to engage the twin questions of access and quality. I have elsewhere described the range of developments that have emerged in the universities around the identity question (Soudien, 2011). Whilst these are important, they do not look at the issues of access and excellence together. I draw attention to the following initiatives aware that others may exist. Two that are key include:

- The admissions debate at the University of Cape Town (UCT)<sup>2</sup> which is fundamentally concerned with managing the twin demands of excellence and redress
- The discussion on some campuses such as the University of Fort Hare (UFH)<sup>3</sup> for the need of a compulsory foundation programme for all students which will raise their levels of social awareness around social justice issues.

In each situation there is some possibility, though both are encumbered by unresolved issues. I address some of these briefly.

The admissions debate at UCT has been extensively covered in the popular media. The debate was the result of the University's decision to develop an admissions policy that dealt fairly with apparently contradictory requirements of excellence and social redress. The purpose of the policy was to continue placing a premium on excellence while, simultaneously, acknowledging the persistent effects of inequality on the performance at the school-leaving point of disadvantaged students. In including affirmative action based on race in this policy, and thereby operating a policy which set the admissions' points benchmark at a lower level for black students than for white students, the University was criticised by some for returning to what was described as an apartheid approach. It raises, however, a question which India has been grappling with for the last thirty years – that of affirmative action. In India the question has been forcefully put by some commentators in a way that possibly sounds reactionary: is it the university's business to be admitting students, irrespective of their social status in the wider society, who have no prospect of succeeding within it, or of taking onto the professoriate individuals who do not bring to the job of a professor the appropriate kinds of qualities? The argument being made is that affirmative action (Beteille, 2010) has almost irrevocably damaged many institutions. In India and South Africa key scholars are arguing that the kind of affirmative action used in the two spaces – quotas in the main – only serve to reproduce caste and racial stigma, and neither caste nor racial affirmative action understand the sociological

processes for bringing these forms of hierarchy to an end. What is needed, so the argument goes, is the fundamental improvement of the school system to ensure that anybody from within the society can enter the university on a non-contingent basis. The point remains, however, that within the discussion lie important opportunities for thinking about rights and redress and, at the same time, for excellence.

The grounding programme at the UFH is an important initiative which aims to provide all of its students with the intellectual tools to interrogate questions of equality and citizenship. The programme is based on intensive introductions to both the country and the world's major social issues and the frameworks that are used to make sense of them. In terms of access and excellence it is a significant initiative. While the UFH, unlike the more select institutions in the country, has not needed complex admissions policies and procedures, and in these terms has not had to problematise access, it is by definition a relatively open access institution. It is in terms of excellence that the grounding programme presents the country with an important model of how, in its form, the questions of excellence and access can be resolved.<sup>4</sup> The programme begins with the recognition that students do not have all the reading skills to manage a university programme and then deliberately constructs a reading, writing and presentation preparation course over a year which appears to bring them to high levels of cognitive engagement with major social issues.

To assess these initiatives in terms of how they suggest a way forward for the universities to be both open and excellent would require a great deal more time. Nonetheless it is crucial that the country is engaging with the questions. This engagement is yielding important insights and bringing to a point of clarity difficult sociological puzzles. One such puzzle, for example, arises from the insights being generated at the University of Cape Town in its debate around social class and race in admissions. The two are so tightly bound that one needs to be constantly pushing the analysis of the social subjects to understand clearly what a class, as opposed to a 'race', effect is and to avoid the ideological confusion that follows when they are conflated.

The gains, however, are essentially in the nature of clarification of the issues and a clearing-of-the-ground. More needs to be done to bring institutions to the point where they understand themselves more consciously and can see how they are implicated in the reproduction of privilege. Until this is done and is specifically articulated in policy and followed through in practice, the university will continue to be trapped within the logic of either the patriotic or the republic-of-letters discourse. The discourse it needs is a brand new one that re-imagines the university on terms that are self-critical and courageous.

## Notes

- 1 Comments made at the Department of Higher Education and Training Summit on transformation, Cape Town, 7 April 2010.
- 2 UCT is a traditionally white institution.
- 3 UFH is a historically black institution.
- 4 I had the benefit of conducting interviews with key students and staff in the programme in September 2010 and am basing my assessment of the programme on that visit.

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# 4

## The public purposes of the university: a historical view, 1995-2010

*Lis Lange*

### **Introduction**

**S**ince the 1950s the benefits of university education have been extended to an ever larger number of people, with some countries achieving mass and universal higher education (Trow, 1973; Scott, 1995) while others still struggle to make access to higher education a reality (Altbach, 2009). On the eve of the 21st century the definition of universities as engines of development (Castells, 2001) led both the World Bank and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development to revise their position on the role and purpose of universities in the developing world. Much has been researched and written about the roles of the university in delivering global competitiveness and innovation and in informing public policy and therefore supporting social change.

National policies and supranational frameworks have also identified the role of higher education in the life of democratic societies and specifically in the education of citizens (DoE, 1997; World Bank, 2001; Watson and Amoah, 2007). The declaration of the last UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education in 2009 unambiguously identified higher education as a public good precisely on the strengths of its role in the advancement of society. Interestingly, higher education has, at the same time, been regarded more and more as an allocator of individual opportunity, expected to deliver direct economic benefits to both society and the individual within a short-term frame (Boulton and Lucas, 2008:15-20). In many respects the public character of the university seems to be simultaneously stretched and narrowed, depending

on the manner in which different national higher education systems relate to the state and a variety of other stakeholders and how these relations shape the core functions of higher education.

Against this background this chapter looks at the post-1994 stated purposes of public higher education in South Africa and argues that there is an identifiable sequence in the implementation of these purposes by the successive ANC governments. The chapter takes a closer look at the role of higher education in the development of citizenship and argues that of all the purposes and roles allocated to higher education, this has been the least foregrounded at the level of implementation due to its deep roots in teaching and learning. It is organised in three sections. The first section analyses the notion of the public university in South Africa as presented in both the policy texts and the reflections and interpretations of those texts in the context of implementation. The second section articulates a tentative sequence of the focus of policy implementation by looking at the circumstances that conditioned the privileging of some purposes over others. The third looks into the purpose of higher education which was least developed in the policy framework: the development of citizenship.

### **Defining the purpose of public higher education in South Africa**

Unlike in other African countries, universities did not emerge in South Africa as a sign of the independence of the new country, nor as an instrument of the state in shaping postcolonial society. South African universities were either part of a settler society, performing a variety of social, economic and ideological functions in the colonial context (historically white universities) or they functioned as essential pieces for the reproduction of a system of racial domination (historically black universities) (Cloete *et al*, 2005; Sehoole, 2005; Mamdani, 2011). By the time of the inauguration of the first democratic government, South Africa did not have a higher education system but 36 public higher education institutions created by acts of government. Constituted of 21 universities and fifteen technikons – higher education institutions offering vocational education – in 1994 the institutions that comprised South Africa's higher education sector were divided along racial, ethnic, linguistic and geographical lines. Add to that their role in society and their varied relationship to the state and it is difficult to talk about a system of public universities. In fact, South Africa's very notion of the public was narrowly defined to fit a variety of socio-political and economic contexts in the overall architecture of apartheid, one of whose bases was restricted citizenship. One of the tasks of the new democratic government was to broaden the notions of

public and citizenship in all spheres of life in the country. In higher education this needed to be accompanied by the creation of a single, coordinated and diverse higher education system. The difficulties encountered in the process of doing this – the political constraints, choices and compromises made by successive governments, as well as their role in shaping the current reality of the higher education system – have been discussed by several authors (Badat, 2008; CHE, 2004; Cloete and Moja, 2005; Schoole, 2005).

South Africa's current higher education system was defined and constructed against the backdrop of apartheid; it had to support the concrete eradication of the legacy of apartheid within its institutions and in society itself. As transformation became the supra objective of all reform in the country, the term became the conceptual shorthand that defined the nature and direction of this change (Singh, 1992; Motala, 2005). As an indication of its ubiquity within higher education policy discourse, consider the title of the report from the presidentially appointed National Commission on Higher Education and the subtitle of the Higher Education White Paper (hereafter White Paper): *A framework for transformation and a programme for transformation*. Despite their lack of legal status, the fact that both the National Commission report and the White Paper are among the most cited documents in higher education policy shows the role these documents played in influencing visions of higher education at both a system and institutional level.

To discuss the purposes of higher education, in this chapter I focus particularly on the White Paper. A close reading of the White Paper shows a conceptual architecture in which the purposes, principles, values and an overall vision for the higher education system are interlinked. Indeed one of the characteristics of the call for change in the document is the strong sense of urgency and simultaneity (DoE, 1997: Preface, 1.1. and 1.2.). The White Paper proposed four purposes for higher education, eventually assimilated into the Higher Education Act:

- to meet the learning needs and aspirations of individuals through the development of their intellectual abilities and aptitudes throughout their lives
- to address the development needs of society and provide the labour market with appropriate high-level skills
- to contribute to the socialisation of enlightened, responsible and constructively critical citizens
- to contribute to the creation, sharing and evaluation of knowledge (DoE, 1997:3:1.3).

These purposes, shared by other higher education systems, were contextualised through the characterisation of South African higher education as unable to match the needs of a society in political, economic, social and moral transition (DoE, 1997:1.4). The definition of the principles informing the vision of a new higher education system – equity and redress, democratisation, development, quality, and effectiveness and efficiency – speak both to the specificity of the local problems and the challenges faced by all mass higher education systems.

The definition of higher education as simultaneously a private and a public good is subsumed in the conceptualisation presented in the White Paper. From the perspective of current discussion about this topic (Calhoun, 2006; Jonathan, 2001; Singh, 2001) it is important to note the extent to which the paper looks at individual redress (private benefit) from a social perspective. The narrowing of the distance between the private and the public in the process of transformation needs to be understood against apartheid's explicit subjugation of the individual as subject and agent and of the group as a social category. In this regard it is noteworthy that the White Paper not only refers to abolishing unjust differentiation, it also seeks to implement measures of empowerment for individuals and institutions (DoE, 1997:1.18). In other words, it was not enough to dismantle apartheid: apartheid had to be replaced with a system able to undo its effects.

The purposes of higher education itself had to be seen in the context of the needs for reconstruction and development. Higher education was regarded as both a condition and an agent for changing the social relations which characterised South Africa under apartheid, and this bedevilled the political choices that needed to be made at both government and institutional level in order to facilitate change. This task was not made easy by the competing and equally urgent national needs.

Moreover, from the point of view of policy implementation, the purposes of higher education were translated into twelve system- and six institutional-level goals which spoke to the concrete actions that needed to be taken to bring the higher education system into line with its new purposes.

As Badat (2008) has pointed out, all these goals had to be achieved simultaneously and the tensions and paradoxes derived from the apparent contradictions between equity, redress and quality and equity and development had to be made explicit. Despite this, the political rhythm of higher education transformation had its own priorities and stages.

### **Sequencing the focus of change**

It could be argued that since 1994 the transformation of higher education has seen a sequence of priorities, punctuated by the national political juncture and the macro-economic policy of the government. At the same time, however, research on higher education illustrated the range and depth of the problems identified in the policy, which therefore refocused implementation. The impact of this research needs to be taken into account. The identification of new issues did not imply that new priorities replaced old ones. On the contrary, each new focus added another layer of complexity to the understanding of both the policy goals and their concrete implications.

The White Paper constituted symbolic policy (Cloete *et al*, 2005; Lange, 2005) aimed at a clear ideological break with the past. This was consistent with both the government approach and the expectations of society in the initial stages of political transition. As a new state bureaucracy was set up and government established (Sehoole, 2005:67-96), the first focus was on equity, redress and democratisation. The concept of cooperative governance, introduced by the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE), was taken up in the White Paper and made its way into legislation that transformed both the structure and decision-making processes in higher education institutions as well as the legal relationship between institutions and government (Hall *et al*, 2002; Cloete and Moja, 2005).

Equity and redress constituted the other central focus during this period. Increasing the size of the higher education system and changing its demographic composition was the fundamental priority between 1997 and the early 2000s. Government reports, debates about the development of monitoring systems and performance indicators and the establishment of the Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS) within the Department of Education were largely geared to measuring how the higher education system was performing in terms of these two values. The concern with individual equity, however, was far clearer and more constant than the attempt to address issues of institutional equity derived from the history of historically black universities under apartheid. The fact that targeted predictions made by the National Commission on Higher Education about the expansion of enrolments were not met made the focus on equity and redress all the more urgent. A fundamental development in relation to the focus on individual redress was the creation of the National Students Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), which has been operating with a growing budget since its establishment in 1996.

The preoccupation with equity was not naïve, however. While the genuine increases in black student enrolments across the higher education system were seen as sign of progress, the hidden inequalities between men and women and the different racial groups in the distribution of the enrolment across disciplinary and professional fields warned government and higher education institutions that equity and redress would be a constant priority (CHE, 2004; 2009). Concern with equity and redress was not restricted to enrolments; it also included academic staff as well. While the demographic profile of students was changing rapidly, the change in the staff profile was much slower and, moreover, the country was facing a crisis in its attempts to replace the current generation of academics (CHE, 2004; 2009).

Efficiency and effectiveness, the second level of reform priorities for institutions and the government, were foregrounded around 2003 with the introduction of the new funding formula which came to support attempts to plan enrolments in relation to the academic profiles of institutions. According to the White Paper, effectiveness was the achievement of the desired outcomes and efficiency referred to the lack of duplication and waste. Special attention was paid to the revolving door syndrome that affected higher education and the performance of institutions in relation to their outputs. Institutions were graduating too few students: while most took inordinately long to complete their degrees, a very large proportion was abandoning their studies due to a combination of financial and academic reasons. Insufficient graduates were being produced in identified areas of need in the country, such as science, engineering and technology. Efficiency and effectiveness were also among the issues around which the logic of restructuring the higher education system through mergers and incorporation was built. The restructuring was the initiative of the National Working Group appointed by the Minister of Education (CHE, 2000; DoE, 2001a; DoE, 2001b; Bunting and Cloete, 2004a).

The third level of reform was the development of a national system of quality assurance by the Council on Higher Education's (CHE) Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC). The concern with quality of provision became particularly intense with the roll-out of the HEQC's institutional audits from 2004. The thick conceptualisation of quality proposed by the HEQC incorporated the tensions between equity, redress and quality, and addressed whether higher education institutions were fit for purpose in their own right as well as in relation to national development priorities under the banner of transformation (HEQC, 2001).

When a study based on the first throughput figures of the 2000 class was published in 2007 (Scott *et al*, 2007), concerns about equity and redress and effectiveness and efficiency were refocused into the specific problems of the core functions of teaching and learning, raising the alarm as to the limits of the system's achievement in terms of equity. Equity of access was not accompanied by equity of success. At the same time, another study on institutional culture and success – initiated by the Council on Higher Education in 2008 – began to show that equity and redress figures, although seemingly encouraging, were in fact blurring unresolved problems, not only in relation to success but also with regards to conflicting race relations inside higher education institutions and the impact these had on students' experience of higher education (CHE, 2010). The first reports of the HEQC's institutional audits confirmed the existence of such problems and showed the extent to which these issues were also affecting relations among staff (Executive summary of audit reports 2004-2007 on [www.che.ac.za](http://www.che.ac.za)).

The fourth level of reform – development – was introduced in the policy under the rubric of responsiveness and development. Responsiveness was defined as the ability of higher education to meet the needs of an increasingly technologically oriented economy, to deliver research, highly trained people and the knowledge to address national needs and to participate in the global economy. Development referred to the ability of the higher education system to contribute to the common good of society through the production, acquisition and application of knowledge, the building of human capacity and the provision of lifelong learning opportunities (DoE, 1997:1.13 and 1.20). These concepts entered higher education hand in hand with the skills debate in the country and were formulated in terms of the inability of higher education to produce the number, type and quality of required graduates (Kraak *et al*, 2003). Although the production of appropriate high-level skills was unequivocally included in the higher education policy framework, the urgency in relation to skills development came through national initiatives driven by the presidency.<sup>1</sup>

This sequence of priorities does not mean these were the only preoccupations concerning higher education during this period. The restructuring of the system of public higher education through mergers and incorporations brought to the fore a variety of specific issues about funding, infrastructure, capacity, administration, programme offerings and the overall fitness for purpose of institutions. In many respects these issues represent institutional variations on the national policy objectives.



From the beginning of higher education reform the need to measure progress and change in the system concentrated the minds of the Department of Education, the Council on Higher Education and research-focused NGOs like the Centre for Higher Education Transformation (CHET) (CHE, 2003, Bunting and Cloete, 2004b). While CHET made a conscious attempt to develop indicators for non-quantifiable goals, such as the democratisation of higher education governance, not much attention has been paid to the incommensurable aspects of higher education (Calhoun, 2006). The necessary and unavoidable logic of policy implementation decided that institutions should concentrate on the individual components of their performance, postponing the question about the extent to which higher education institutions were being universities: were they making students think, grapple with uncertainty, understand context and question interpretations (Boulton and Lucas, 2008:30)?

Aside from the impact of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), programme reform was not a focus of attention at national level. The concern with teaching and learning was mostly restricted to the funding of extended and foundation programmes by the Department of Education and later to the introduction of earmarked funding to develop teaching at higher education level. Community engagement, as the unfunded function of higher education, was subject to a short spurt of attention in 2005-2006 but for a variety of reasons was not followed up. No concerted and coordinated attention has been paid to this area of research – the Department of Science and Technology and organisations like the South African Academy of Science have been the most active in providing direction in this area. Here, as in relation to teaching and learning, the demands of implementation and policy choices have precluded an evaluation at system level of the ability of the South African higher education system to respond both to long-term knowledge needs and those we do not yet know exist.

Despite the pursuit of goals and objectives that characterised policy-making and implementation between 1995 and 2010, there has not been a systematic reflection on whether higher education is fulfilling its purposes. This seems to have two main explanations: on the one hand, for reasons of political accountability, the need to measure change in relation to discrete objectives, the available data and the urgency to respond to ever greater demands for higher education have all precluded a concerted and systematic reflection on the purposes of higher education from an aggregated perspective; on the other hand, the permanently delayed conversation about institutional and system differentiation and the parallel topic of each institution's fitness for purpose

has restricted the discussion about the purposes of higher education to the quantifiable surface of the problem.

Returning to the purposes of higher education provided in the White Paper, although the least mentioned, measured and invoked the development of critical citizens entered the national consciousness in 2008 through the report of the Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education (Ministry of Education, 2008:89). The Committee was appointed by the minister of education in the aftermath of a particular incident of racism at the University of the Free State.

### **The other purpose of higher education**

Of the four purposes of higher education defined in the White Paper, the socialisation of critical citizens has received the least attention at both a system and an institutional level.<sup>2</sup> The National Plan on Higher Education (2001) left citizenship education out of the implementation equation, and none of the steering instruments – funding, planning and quality assurance – focused even partially on this purpose of higher education. In the context of the simultaneous demands on higher education, access, efficiency and effectiveness may well have been regarded as preconditions for universities to start considering how to deal with this highly ‘political’ and less conceptualised role. Furthermore, the lack of focus on both teaching and learning and curriculum *per se* may have stood in the way of gaining greater understanding of what it means for universities to educate citizens.

The idea of citizenship proposed in the White Paper makes the following assumptions: that citizenship is not an automatic state or quality but rather that individuals are socialised into it; that citizenship has specific properties, ie it is critical and responsible; and that citizenship has as its purpose the reflection, evaluation and renewal of current thinking and practices and behaviour for the common good (DoE, 1997:1.3).

Despite the complexity of the ideas, it is not clear in the White Paper whether higher education is supposed to transmit a specific curricular content which will produce critical citizens as its outcome, or if there is a particular way of undertaking teaching and learning and research that will transmit citizenship values as a ‘practice’. In this sense South Africa’s policy framework is no different from the British one, with the Robbins (1963) and Dearing (1996) reports pointing to the transmission of standards of citizenship as one of the duties of higher education (as discussed in Ahier *et al*, 2003:1) and yet not specifying the manner in which this is to be done.

Research done at British universities suggests that higher education helped students develop a sense of sociality and mutuality – that is, university life forced students to engage with one another and created the space to develop a sense of reciprocity which was focused not only on the peer group but extended to family and community and sometimes even society, broadly understood. Underlying the emergence of sociality and mutuality among university students, the authors found the principles of fairness, respect, responsibility and altruism (Ahier *et al*, 2003:135).

Ahier *et al* argue that university space structures the mode in which students socialise, but this is not solely dependent on the extra-curricular activities to which they are exposed. The authors maintain that the values, skills and qualities which emerged in the interviews they conducted with students are included in the formal procedures of academic life. The idea that citizenship, as both a socio-political identity and a set of competences, skills, values and dispositions, can surface in the act of teaching and learning is an interesting notion in the South African context and, as several chapters in this book show, could be used to add a further layer of complexity to the notion of epistemological access (Morrow, 2007; 2009). Put differently, students who cannot access the means to participate in the discourse of the disciplines offered in higher education and feel, as research has shown (Boughey, 2002; 2005; CHE, 2010), alienated from the lecturer, subject and other students, must, perforce, experience teaching and learning as non-democratic and are therefore unlikely to be taught citizenship. In 1997 the White Paper acknowledged the unfulfilled responsibility of higher education ‘in helping lay the foundations of a critical civil society, with a culture of public debate and tolerance which accommodates differences and competing interests’ (DoE, 1997:1.4). In all probability it is likely that the writers of the White Paper did not have the classroom experience in mind when they wrote it, and yet the diagnosis seems fitting enough to the kind of problems institutions are experiencing to a greater or lesser extent fifteen years later.

Various studies conducted before the appointment of the 2008 Ministerial Committee have provided evidence to the effect that higher education institutions were generally not being successful in creating the appropriate curricular and extra-curricular spaces to prepare students to live in a non-racist and non-sexist democratic society (CHE, 2010; HEQC Executive Summary of the institutional audits conducted between 2004-2008). The outcomes of the CHE study on institutional culture and access suggest that there was very little in the relationships among peers and between students and lecturers that could transform the classroom and the curriculum into tools for the development of

students' socio-political identity as citizens. Many of the students and lecturers interviewed for this research at three very different South African higher education institutions gave examples of the opposite: how the tacit principles of academic scholarship generate social de-structuring and confusion among students. Misunderstanding, tacit expectations, unrealistic expectations, the lack of a common language, resentment and discomfort were among the feelings experienced by some of the lecturers and students interviewed. In many respects this demonstrates that the realisation of the responsibility of higher education in the area of citizenship cannot be separated from its ability to fulfil its role in the area of access, equity and redress.

### **Conclusion**

The South African policy framework established purposes for higher education that were not all that different from those chosen in other higher education systems. However, the burden of the country's history gave these purposes a different sense of urgency. The need to deal with all areas of performance of higher education while simultaneously managing tensions and contradictions between them points to the difficulties with which institutions and government officials had to grapple in the formulation and implementation of higher education policy. In this context the inner workings of higher education – that is, the manner in which it dealt with curricular content and the manner of its transmission – were not the focus of systematic attention at institutions themselves and neither was this kind of reflection directly supported. Given this, it is unsurprising that the most 'symbolic' of purposes of higher education – the education for citizenship – has been seen as among the least urgent.

### **Notes**

- 1 CHET has recently published three studies on universities and development from a broader perspective.
- 2 This does not mean that individual institutions have not focused on this issue and that citizenship has not become an area of interest among higher education researchers in South Africa.

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## SECTION TWO

# Within Higher Education

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## 5

### An evaluative framework for a socially just institution

*Vivienne Bozalek and Brenda Leibowitz*

*it's like one time I had to realize I'm not like other students and I felt like it was unfair for my lecturers to treat me like the rest of the other students and no one knows and no one cares you just have to adapt and be whatever you need to be. (Lindi)*

#### Introduction

Lindi arrived at a privileged South African university from rural Kwa-Zulu-Natal, having been top of her class most of her life. She suddenly found herself unable to participate as an equal in her new environment. This is the situation many South Africans find themselves in when coming to university for the first time, or when starting a postgraduate course at a new university. In this chapter we consider what institutional arrangements would be necessary for students to participate as equals in higher education regardless of – or in fact *taking into account* – social class, race, gender, sexuality, ablebodiedness, language or religion. We view higher education as both a valuable process and an outcome. But what does this mean in contexts of severe inequality? How do we achieve education as a public good, and how do we know when we are achieving it? To answer these questions, we make use of a normative framework which assists us in examining the values that underpin higher education policies and practices. We regard this as an important stepping stone in building visions of what may be possible in higher education institutions. It allows alternative discursive spaces to be opened up for public debate and policy development in higher education.



A comprehensive and dynamic approach towards achieving higher education as a public good can, we suggest, be achieved by combining three important contemporary normative frameworks:

- the capabilities approach of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, which has been applied to higher education by Nussbaum and Melanie Walker, amongst others
- the social justice approach of Nancy Fraser, which emphasises the complementarity of a politics of recognition, representation and distribution
- the political ethic of care approach, based on the work of Joan Tronto.

Rather than providing explanations for why inequalities exist, these approaches are normative frameworks – they help us to interrogate what we do about social justice in higher education and how we judge or evaluate it. We provide examples from our experience as educators and from our research in higher education in order to elucidate the various approaches. Our final intention is to use the three approaches to suggest an institution-wide framework that takes into account the various dimensions of the university as an institution so that it can indeed live up to the question asked by Soudien in chapter three: ‘What options are open for the system in dealing with the issues of access and quality, openness and excellence?’

### **The capabilities approach**

As Martin Hall stresses in chapter two, the value of this approach lies in its conception of higher education as less instrumental and more transformative. Walker (2006) sees the purpose of university education as including both intrinsic and instrumental purposes, and as involving personal development, economic opportunities and becoming educated citizens. The capabilities approach thus provides a view of higher education as ethical as well as instrumental, producing skills for economic development alongside human beings who are capable of critical thought and connection (Unterhalter, 2009). Nussbaum (2002:302) stresses the formative value of higher education in producing critical and empathic individuals able to consider what it means to be human, ‘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’. Amartya Sen (2005; 2006) also emphasises the importance of critical thinking and public debate as well as the inclusion of subjugated knowledges and marginalised voices.

Capabilities are opportunities to flourish or achieve well-being in the form of functionings, which means to be and to do what a person has reason to value. In the context of higher education, examples of functionings are graduate attributes, such as being critically literate or numerate or ethically and environmentally aware and active (Alkire and Deneulin, 2009; Unterhalter, 2009; Walker, 2010). Conversion factors refer to the ability of the individual to translate resources into desired functionings and are conceptualised in three categories: personal or internal conversion factors such as genetic predispositions; social conversion factors such as higher education policies and power relations (gender, race, class); and environmental conversion factors such as the physical or built environment (Robeyns, 2011).

For Walker (2010a:898) social justice requires the 'equality of capability for diverse students and not just those whose backgrounds and cultural capital are taken for granted'. She continues: 'the practical question that follows is how universities address pedagogical obstacles to student achievement and develop student capability. It leads us to ask questions such as: Are valued capabilities distributed fairly in and through university education? Walker's approach encourages us to think about what resources need to be put in place if individuals are to benefit from them and realise the capabilities as 'functionings'.

Despite the importance of removing 'pedagogic obstacles', often referred to in the literature as 'unfreedoms' (Deneulin and Shahani, 2009), a capabilities approach sees agency and structure as functioning alongside each other (Walker, 2006). Walker refers to Sen on the point that being free depends to a significant extent on the choices of others:

... for example, university teaching and a university's arrangement to support equality of capabilities for all students. While the idea of opportunity to choose a valuable life is central, the individual is not viewed as a freely choosing subject as in neo-liberal thinking; social dimensions of choice are acknowledged. (Walker, 2010a:904)

Robeyns (2011) alerts us to three specific ways in which the capabilities conceptual framework can be used in higher education: the assessment and evaluation of individual well-being, through social arrangements and via social interventions including social policies.

Attention to capabilities and the conversion factors needed to achieve functionings cannot be the sole responsibility of the pedagogic realm. It also pertains to the professional and intellectual abilities of students and academics

as teachers, educational arrangements, university conditions and social arrangements (Walker, 2010b). Walker (2006) refers to Sen on the importance of having a participatory and inclusive process to ascertain what capabilities are important in a particular setting. She stresses the value of the human capabilities approach as a framework to assess the purpose of higher education, diverse individuals' needs and what they would require to achieve these capabilities. The framework is intended to assess the needs of the general and the particular; in other words, both global and local contexts. An example of this would be the functioning of critical reflection: is the student provided with the conversion factors to achieve this functioning, not only by being provided with physical resources such as texts to read, but, furthermore, with the opportunity to engage with these texts in a critical manner, via interactive and supportive teaching methods? We should consider not only what resources are provided to the student and what their needs are, but what conversion factors exist for them to acquire that functioning.

To illustrate the relationship between capabilities, conversion factors and student needs, which are influenced by their biographies, we take two examples from a study conducted on student and academic biographies at the University of Stellenbosch entitled 'Identity, Teaching and Learning'. Riana, a white Afrikaans professor in the Linguistics Department, practised forms of academic debate in the home which, she argued, were appropriate in her disciplinary setting:

Through the way in which we were brought up I did get a lot of ... a lot of academic debate ... you have to articulate your argument clearly ... if things are different then you have to show that they're different and not start muddling things ... and that part of being educated [is typical] in this department. (Leibowitz, 2009:269)

With regards to conversion factors, Riana required no particular institutional arrangements to support her achievement of the more academic capabilities because of her home background. A different set of conversion factors was indicated by Lindi, a black IsiZulu speaking postgraduate student studying soil sciences. Lindi grew up in a rural area (physical environment), and because her parents were well off compared with her classmates at school (social conversion factor of class), she saw herself as privileged and came top of her class. However she could understand no English when she finished primary school and because the standard of education around her was low, she was ignorant of how little she knew in terms of the dominant discourses: 'Because you know you are one of the best students and you are from a rural

area, you think you are the best but actually you are not and that was very obvious.'

When Lindi arrived at university she felt a measure of panic: 'I could do the maths but when it came to writing I would just panic and remember nothing.' To acquire the functioning of academic literacy, Lindi required institutional arrangements that would support her acquisition of English and Afrikaans as academic languages. She achieved this with the support of additional one to one mentoring, as well as strong moral support and encouragement from the Dean of the faculty. She was, however, instructed to register for an extended degree programme, completing her first year over two years, and this upset her greatly. One could argue that the institution, assuming what her needs were, believed they could be met through resources such as additional time and support to study in the sciences. Her particular need, however, was for more support with learning English and Afrikaans for academic purposes. This points to the need for greater care when establishing what an individual's needs are in relation to conversion factors, as is stressed by the capabilities approach.

In the next section we consider Fraser's views on social justice, which focus more directly on what 'participatory parity' might entail.

### **A three-dimensional view of social justice**

Nancy Fraser sees the major goal of social justice as 'participatory parity', by which she means being able to interact as peers in an equitable way in social life. In an important contribution to the idea of equality of opportunity, she posits the idea of the complementarity of three dimensions necessary for participatory parity: the distribution of resources, the politics of recognition (2008a and b) and the politics of representation and belonging (2009).

Redistribution of resources at the level of higher education could refer to resources such as access to computers, mobile phones or even being able to afford meals, which some students may not be able to do. How an inadequate distribution of resources, such as financial aid and access to transport, affects a student's ability to participate in university life is demonstrated in this example taken from research conducted at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) on student needs:

My financial aid does not adequately cover my fees and puts additional strain on financial constraints at home. And I have to worry about finance for the following year which impacts on my concentration and exam results. (Bozalek, 2010)

Recognition is concerned with how people are regarded in relation to the social markers or distinctive attributes that are ascribed to them. Misrecognition, in terms of a lack of respect for individuals on the basis of their social markers – race, gender or religion, for example – prevents people from interacting as full partners or in an equitable manner with others. In the research on student needs conducted at UWC, much of the commentary came from students complaining about instances in which they perceived themselves to be misrecognised because of their race. There were also reports of additional instances where students felt misrecognised at the university because they were from other parts of Africa:

I'm a male Nigerian that was not supposed to be at UWC and was expected to drop my academic quest to go and sell drugs. Not just at school but at the hospital where I do my clinical hours. (Bozalek, 2010)

Rather than assume that one has to conform to dominant norms, a social justice perspective aims to redress misrecognition by replacing values that impede parity of participation with ones that foster or enable it (Fraser, 2000). The range of ways it does this include institutional and policy changes, since it holds that if institutional practices have led to institutional harms then these require redress. The practices which are normalised and appear to be universal should be exposed for their distinctiveness. In other cases their distinctiveness requires de-emphasis. An example of a distinctive practice that needed to be recognised and dealt with comes from the Identity, Teaching and Learning research we have previously referred to. Newly appointed at Stellenbosch University, Nothemba, a black psychologist whose first and second languages are IsiXhosa and English respectively, attended a one-day orientation programme at the University. The entire event was conducted in Afrikaans and she found the experience 'traumatic' and did not participate at all.

The political dimension refers to social belonging and provides a frame for determining who counts as a social member. It also concerns whose voice will be heard as legitimate and who thus has a right to access and structural arrangements for support and care. Fraser writes:

Far from being of marginal significance, frame setting is amongst the most consequential of political decisions. Constituting both members and non-members in a single stroke, this decision effectively excludes the latter from the universe of those entitled to consideration within the community in matters of distribution, recognition and ordinary political justice. (2009:19)

The value of the distinctions between the three dimensions is evident when we analyse attempts of transformatory educational practice. One such attempt is an educational design project which the authors of this chapter were part of. This project is discussed in detail by Nicholls and Rohleder in chapter nine. The course was extremely successful in getting students from contrasting universities – University of the Western Cape is more working-class than the ‘exclusive’ University of Stellenbosch – to engage across boundaries of social difference, which for many was a first-time experience (Rohleder *et al*, 2008; Leibowitz *et al*, 2010; Bozalek *et al*, 2010). Thus whilst issues of recognition and misrecognition received much attention in the dialogue of the students, issues of distribution and maldistribution had not been sufficiently taken into account and planned for. Examples of this include the difficulties students from UWC sometimes had in accessing computers; the fact that students from SU were more likely to have transport to sort out group preparation for presentations; and the greater access students from more privileged backgrounds had to powerful literacies such as use of powerpoint or traditional academic texts. In the third iteration of the course the social work students from UWC were each issued with their own laptops as part of another scheme. The positive impact this had on their participation was striking.

The three dimensions are not only significant in relation to an individual’s participation in present educational situations; they inform students’, academics’ and administrators’ biographies. This implies that while institutional arrangements to achieve participatory parity must take into account how aspects of the three dimensions influence the current phase of an individual’s trajectory, they must also consider how individuals came to function as they do. Examples of students’ biographies affecting their academic experiences are provided in Leibowitz (2009).

When considering how to encourage the participation of individuals or groups in higher education, not one of the three dimensions of social justice can be ignored. The dimensions interact in a complex manner over time and their impact will vary for each individual. In each higher education setting, one cannot simply legislate or categorically predict which individuals or groups will require this or that structural arrangement – and surely, one could not imagine a university with millions of permutations, each arranged per individual! How individuals’ needs are considered within a broader political, ethical and philosophical framework is the focus of the next section.

### **The political ethics of care**

Tronto's political ethics of care approach (1993) sets the terms for the dialogue required to develop a strategy for caring institutions and the nature of the strategy itself. For Tronto, aspects of care 'need to be worked out consciously ... become more visible and require a deliberate, political process to enact them' (2010:162). Furthermore, she argues that we require formal practices to review and evaluate how well we are meeting these obligations.

Care, according to Tronto, is 'about meeting needs' (1993:116). Referring to Nussbaum's work on capabilities she says that 'humans need the help of others in coming to develop their capacities' (1993:140). Care should be considered as a practice rather than an emotion or disposition, as this allows us to take the full context into account, including the needs of the care-giver and the care receiver. Tronto also discourages the tendency to sentimentalise or privatise care and to view it in a larger social and political context as well as that which is more personal (1993:137). For Tronto, there are four elements of care as a practice. The first is attentiveness: noticing the needs of those around us; the second is responsibility: making certain that the needs are met; the third is competence: the hands-on work of care-giving; and the fourth is responsiveness: how care receivers respond to the care. The example Tronto provides for competence is apposite:

Imagine a teacher in an inadequately funded school system who is ordered to teach mathematics even though he does not know mathematics. Isn't there something wrong with morally condemning a teacher who does his best, since the fault is not of his own making, but of the inadequacy of the resources? (1993:113)

This comment suggests that care involves more than one institution: it involves a strategic approach across the system as a whole. It further suggests that it is the responsibility of institutions, and of individuals within them, to collaborate and share with each other, including across North and South divides.

Care also involves an acknowledgement of one's vulnerability and dependence. Lindi, for example, requires care from the other students or academics, while Deans are dependent on cleaners of their offices in order to work competently, just as they are on faculty administrators and tutors to take care of their students in small groups for additional learning opportunities.

One danger associated with the practice of care that Tronto (2010) warns us against is paternalism: deciding on behalf of others what their needs are.

Thus, the decision that Lindi needs an extra year of study in her content areas can be viewed as a form of paternalism. A second danger Tronto (2010) identifies is parochialism, where one restricts care to a very localised level and becomes too concerned with those in their immediate caring context and pays no attention to those at a distance. This takes us back to Nancy Fraser's notion of representation and belonging, where an institution may be very caring but only for those whom it regards as having a right to be there and as belonging to the institution.

In Tronto's view, the practice of care does not imply that the self is subsumed in the caring relationship and that 'to fail to care for oneself impairs one's capacity to function as a fully responsible moral agent' (Monchinski, 2010: 98). The lecturers of first-year students who neglect their own professional development and only pay attention to the needs of the students is just as likely to face burnout as they are to become resentful towards colleagues who are promoted ahead of them because they did not care so much for students. This affirms the requirement for an institutional approach in which the needs of all are negotiated. Further, the political ethic of care, like the capability approach, sees an important role for agency: 'an ethics of care is a flexible ethic responsive to context and communities and demands autonomy and agency from individuals' (Monchinski, 2010:82). The system should therefore not patronise students as helpless victims and deny them the opportunity to exercise agency.

While students are care receivers they are also care-givers – for others in their homes, families and communities and in the classroom or the residence. From this point of view their active participation in a dialogue about all aspects of their educational experience becomes essential. This calls for curriculum design that encourages the emergence of graduate attributes such as dialogue, collaboration, agency and engagement with the 'other'. In the project discussed by Nicholls and Rohleder in chapter nine, in which we collaborated, we placed students into groups of six or seven, ensuring a mix of educational and disciplinary backgrounds within each group. The students reported that they established ground rules for working together collaboratively. They did this spontaneously, as they had learnt to negotiate caregiving in their previous three years of study in the human service professions. We contend that learning to work collaboratively and practicing care in relation to the learning of fellow students is an essential element of the undergraduate experience that all students should undergo – and not only in the health or caring sciences.



How, then, does an institution ensure that it is a caring institution? Tronto outlines the three aspects of care that should be worked out:

a clear account of power in the care relationship and thus a recognition of the need for a politics of care at every level; second, a way for care to remain particularistic and pluralistic; and third, that care should have clear, defined, acceptable purposes. (2010:162)

Elements of care that are normally taken for granted or go unspoken should be made explicit. The political ethic of care takes into account the need for a discursive space in which the needs of all within an institution can be understood, negotiated, allocated and evaluated. By 'particularistic', Tronto means that each person or setting may be different. By 'pluralistic', she means that there is more than one way to achieve an end, and further, that people may enjoy trying out different ways to achieve specific ends. Tronto acknowledges that caring for different needs and at different levels can be immensely complex and difficult to negotiate. For this reason, how the politics of care is negotiated, and thus how organisations make their decisions, becomes extremely important: 'non-family care can be outstanding in its quality, but only if organisations that provide care also care about their own ways of working (Tronto, 2010:169).

## **Conclusion**

Writers on all three of the frameworks have provided models or lists of questions for institutions to use to examine whether the institutional arrangements they provide enable flourishing, equal participation and allow people to live as best as possible. Pointers towards such a schematic representation that can serve as a heuristic for universities to reflect and design backwards are provided with regard to higher education by Walker *et al* (2010:8). Tronto's 'seven warning signs that institutions are not caring well' (2010:163ff) also provides a useful set of possible indicators. Our synthesis of the three approaches can be summarised in the list of questions for each institution to ask itself. This list demonstrates that education for the public good is based on attention to process as well as to outcome. By indicating the overarching and interrelated nature of all the dimensions that have to be considered, it demonstrates that attention to social justice requires attention to budget, will and effort.

We stress the importance of explicit, ethically informed and democratic dialogue at all levels at higher education institutions about what we want to achieve and how to go about it. The importance of democratic dialogue is

emphasised in all three normative paradigms that we have expanded on in this chapter. To quote Fraser (2008b:290): ‘what could once be called the ‘theory of social justice’ now appears as the ‘theory of *democratic justice*.’

**Questions for each institution to ask of itself:**

*From the capabilities approach*

What is the stated purpose of our teaching? What capability-based graduate attributes do we aspire to produce?

What unfreedoms or pedagogic obstacles exist at the institution and for our students (and, for that matter, our lecturers?) (These are personal, social and environmental)

What conversion factors or institutional arrangements have we put in place for students (and lecturers) to achieve these as functionings? (These may be in relation to individual well-being, social arrangements and interventions).

*From Fraser's tri-valent view of social justice*

What aspects of maldistribution require attention?

What aspects of misrecognition require attention?

Are all students (and lecturers) seen as legitimate ‘citizens’ in an institution and given a voice?

*From Joan Tronto's political ethics of care*

Do we have formal practices in place to review how we are meeting our caring responsibilities as an institution?

Are we attentive to the needs of students (and lecturers)?

Are we responsible in meeting the needs of students (and lecturers)?

Are we competent in meeting the needs of students (and lecturers)?

How do students respond to our teaching and learning?

How do we approach needs and care? Do we assume for the other what their needs are? Are we caring for the needs of present and potential citizens? Is there a discursive space in which needs can be negotiated? Who gets to define needs in the institution?

Are students and lecturers given the opportunity to practice and receive care?

We have brought together three key normative frameworks from development and education, politics and philosophy to set the basis for proactive discussions on the public good in higher education institutions. Whilst we have focused our study on the individual institution, it is clear from the discussion that many aspects of social justice require a broader gaze at the educational system as a whole (Bozalek and Boughey, 2012) and at society more broadly, since educational institutions are also a product of the socio-cultural and economic phenomena that envelop them. They are influenced by broader societal influences, which include issues such as recognition and distribution in the public domain. What learners are able to do once they graduate depends not only on what happens in their institutions, but on how their achievements are recognised socially and in the professions, thus the 'rules of exchange' and 'enabling conditions' (Luke, 2008:350) existent in society.

Several key elements are evident in all three approaches. Most importantly, any attempt at working towards social justice in higher education is necessarily complex, and must be seen within a broad, systemic approach. This approach involves attention to the needs of students, academics and administrators, and the at times conflicting needs that require negotiation and dialogue – as Nancy Fraser (1989:116) puts it, 'the politics of needs interpretation'. Attempts to meet the varied needs should be planned for proactively, but not in such a manner that these are taken for granted and bureaucratically catered for. Three important aspects of the process are the process itself, the need for an explicit evaluative framework against which to measure how well the institution is meeting needs, and a clear sense of the purpose of higher education. Interventions based on these evaluative frameworks would include educational and social arrangements. It would consider the policy environments as well as material arrangements and cultural practices. Responses to needs vary in terms of quantity and nature. Consequently, the institutional arrangements to meet the needs of Lindi would vary significantly from those to meet the needs of Johann, Riana or the student from Nigeria. Finally, these needs are not to be seen as commodities or as fixed in nature (Fraser, 1989; Tronto, 2010), but as needs generated via the misrecognition, misrepresentation and maldistribution in our unequal society. These forms of injustice require attention and engagement by all roleplayers in higher education, and they require attention to the needs of all roleplayers. This requires a measure of agency so as to achieve the human flourishing and participatory parity that higher education can deliver, the 'promise' that it should measure up to.

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# 6

## The role of curriculum: advancing capabilities and functionings for a public good education

*Melanie Walker*

A discussion of the capabilities approach is provided by Hall (chapter two) with reference to the purpose of higher education and by Bozalek and Leibowitz (chapter five) with reference to the social justice in the institution as a whole. This chapter considers how curriculum should focus on human development (Haq, 2003) and, more specifically, form graduate functionings and capabilities – that is, support diverse students’ opportunities to be and to do in ways they have reason to value (Sen, 1999; Nussbaum, 2011) as a matter of social justice in higher education. A focus on curriculum re-inserts but also problematises the ‘knowledge’ bit in the knowledge economy and knowledge society. Knowledge is important both in dominant human capital approaches and also for human capabilities, but in rather different ways. On the one hand, there is the development of knowledge – often thought of as skills – for employability and financial gain; on the other, there is the development of knowledge for cultivating critical and creative intellectual capacities for meaningful lives. These differences are explored in the chapter, and the argument made for human capabilities as the superior approach for curriculum.

### **Knowledge and curriculum**

Knowledge is central to the higher education project but for particular reasons. Curriculum foregrounds knowledge, the criteria for its selection and inclusion and how it is mediated pedagogically and acquired by learners.

Curriculum determines the selection of what counts as valid knowledge (Bernstein, 1975) and, more expansively, the range of formal learning opportunities available to students. Importantly, statements about what should be included in a curriculum exemplify what things powerful groups in a society think students should learn and thereby promote particular student identities. Knowledge carried by a curriculum logically has significant effects and projects forward into anticipating and preparing for the future (Young, 2010). Thus a curriculum encapsulates value judgements about what knowledge is considered important; for example the ethical dimensions of biotechnology advances, or the equal importance of exposure of all students to arts and science knowledge, or which literatures are studied. But a curriculum further indicates what attitudes and values students are expected to emerge with in respect of the knowledge and skills they have acquired, for example how to use scientific knowledge or historical understanding. Curriculum is thus a statement of intent; though there may be practical gaps between what is intended by those constructing the curriculum, implementing it in action and what is actually learned by the students who experience the curriculum.

Moreover, debates, conflict and disagreements about curriculum are at root cultural, social and political (Karseth, 2006), turning on knowledge – what is worthwhile, what to put in, what to leave out, how to structure a programme, to whom it is distributed, who decides and so on – and directly affecting learning opportunities. Curriculum has wider consequences for how knowledge, carried by individual graduates, is distributed in society and has an instrumental ‘role in making a particular form of society’ (Young, 2010:21). Barnett and Coate (2005) have pointed to the surprising absence of curriculum studies in higher education. Although a growing body of work is emerging (for example, Bovill *et al*, 2011), not all of it focuses on research. There has been a major overhaul of the undergraduate curriculum at the Universities of Aberdeen, Hong Kong, Melbourne and Macquarie, to take just four examples, that aimed to change practices and align graduate outcomes with the demands of the 21st century. However, what is envisaged in each case is not necessarily something different from dominant neoliberal policy; it may well even aim at a closer alignment with marketised discourses and practices, and may include concerns to maintain elite rankings in global measurement tables and shares of the lucrative international student market.

From a research point of view, where curriculum in higher education is studied it tends to focus on the contestations between a discipline-based model and a vocation or professional model and how these are being challenged by a market-led discourse which emphasises flexibility, mobility and

employability (Karseth, 2006; Young, 2010) and/or policy convergences, such as Bologna in Europe (Karseth, 2006). A version of this debate for South Africa is explored by Ensor (2004), who identifies two key curriculum discourses driving change: a disciplinary discourse and what she describes as a credit accumulation and transfer discourse located in market-led pressures of globalisation up against local reform initiatives. Similarly, in their comparative study of Indonesia, Nicaragua and Vietnam, Mason *et al* (2001) argue that credits and curriculum measures in higher education are linked to market-driven economic systems. While disciplinary discourses still emerge as having power, this is being eroded by interdisciplinary approaches on the one hand and market-led public policy and discourses of flexibility and employability on the other (Mason *et al*, 2001). As a consequence instrumental aims are overtaking the intrinsic goods of knowledge, curriculum and learning.

However, study of a different kind is also emerging, one which attempts to 'bring knowledge back in' (Young, 2010; Muller, 2012) alongside the 'possible selves' (Clegg, 2011) that curriculum enables. To take just a few examples, Barnett (2009) has written recently about curriculum and the links between knowledge and student being and becoming, while Nussbaum's (1997) study of liberal arts education in the USA addresses curricular reform and the core values of liberal education in considerable depth. Clegg (2011) connects curriculum, context independent, socially powerful knowledge, social class and widening access. She raises the problem of reducing knowledge to social positions and thereby ironically constraining the identities produced for disadvantaged individuals and groups.

Meanwhile, an especially robust study of curriculum in South Africa (see Shay 2011 for cited papers) is linked in part to the country's policy concern with 'epistemological transformation' (Shay, 2011) as well as to an older tradition influenced by its apartheid past. University researchers were concerned with how curriculum knowledge entrenches or transforms power relations, and who gets to limit or enable socially powerful identities. The best of the current work explores the fine-grained working out of knowledge and pedagogical relations, and raises tough questions about well-meaning curriculum reform which seeks to make knowledge accessible but may have outcomes quite contrary to those intended. Particular difficulties are posed for students from weaker academic backgrounds (see Case, 2011).

Notwithstanding such challenges, a focus on curriculum change offers the crucial possibility of making more sustainable shifts than might come from the characteristic focus on teaching and learning, where so much rests on



individual teachers. In curriculum reform, we find a powerful combination of curriculum structures, which are institutionally embedded and persist over time, and individual efforts aligned with these and evaluated against them. Thus attention to curriculum as a university-wide project holds considerable – and sustainable – transformative potential, and the possibility of inclusively mobilising a university community about worthwhile education from a human development perspective.

### **Human capital or human capabilities**

Since there is no space to explore the range of noted curriculum debates, here I focus on the ‘space’ in which these contestations around knowledge and identity formation can be worked out. I draw on principles shaped by human development (Haq, 2003) and capabilities (Sen, 1999; 2009; Nussbaum, 2010; 2011) to try and connect knowledge, identities and valued ‘functioning capabilities’ with normative models of curriculum reform and understandings of what it means to be human.

It is worth restating that universities play a special role in society through their core activities of advancing knowledge and scholarship and educating students and professionals. Habermas (1989), for example, argues that universities constitute a space for the ‘lifeworld’ to flourish, where the moral-political liabilities of the age can be addressed against the colonising effects of the ‘system’ (money and power) which distorts communicative rationality. Looking internationally, the Talloires Declaration (2005) affirms the civic and social roles of universities; there are hundreds of signatories from universities across the globe. Similarly, the research, policy and practice of the Global University Network for Innovation (GUNI) (eg 2008) describe the new dynamics of social responsibility for universities. These are hopeful positions.

Yet in contemporary times higher education is most commonly presented globally as the key arena for turning a country into a competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy, capable of combining economic growth with greater social cohesion and the public good. These are arguably incommensurable goods; for universities to reconcile economic growth with human flourishing will be more difficult in practice. Moreover, where policy is strongly oriented only to human capital and economic growth outcomes, as is the case in England, any reconciliation seems often unattainable. Martha Nussbaum (2010) describes this as the insatiable thirst for economic growth and human capital outcomes driving education policy around the world.

Human capital as the dominant driver of higher education policy involves the idea that a university education is an instrumental means to something else – human capital. It is assumed that individuals invest rationally in themselves to improve their own economic returns through career advancement or better earnings (Keeley, 2007), an assumption that underlies the view that time spent in university education is supposed to pay off in the future. Credentials rather than critical knowledge are what counts. Better-educated countries also tend to be wealthier, or become so, which further reinforces the economic link between the economy and education (Keeley, 2007). As long as economic growth is proceeding, the problem of an uneven distribution of human capital and uneven labour market opportunities for people with equal amounts of human capital – women, migrants, the disabled, and so on – is left unaddressed. Seen as an end in itself, economic development is prioritised over social inclusion, which, if mentioned, is ‘thin’. It is assumed that other improvements will follow human capital expansion so that in the first instance economic growth is traded off against quality of life. Growth is then put forward as the dominant normative framework for development; other activities like higher education are justified in so far as they foster growth. Human capital remains philosophically and normatively wedded to seeing people first and foremost as engines of economic productivity, so students are educated to become economic producers, consumer-citizens and entrepreneurial selves. In human capital terms this is the underpinning philosophy of what it means to be human.

Yet the links between economic growth and human development are not automatic: even where there is high economic growth, valuable lives can prove elusive. Even in most developed countries (OECD, 2008) increased economic growth has not eradicated inequalities, nor has human capital generated jobs and opportunities. In countries like Spain unemployment among the under-25s has now reached 52 per cent and there seems little point in studying further (Tremlett, 2012). Brown *et al* (2010) point to the dysfunctionality of the human capital model as higher education increasingly fails to deliver opportunities to students in the West and knowledge jobs migrate to lower wages in the East. Moreover, as Wendy Brown (2011:23) argues, transformations or ‘conversions’ in the direction of academic human capital in universities ‘interpellate the subject only as speck of human capital, making incoherent the idea of an engaged citizen, and educated public, or education for public life’.

Knowledge in a human capital model has become the currency of the powerful. Science and technology may also contribute to the problems societies face today, for example in the manufacture of chemical and biological

weapons (Vessuri, 2008). Knowledge has become another tradable commodity and higher education a service industry included in the scope of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) (Vessuri, 2008). The emphasis on human capital and status further shapes and reshapes knowledge. As academic career advancement increasingly turns on investing most of one's human capital in research activity (Brown, 2011), instead of transferring knowledge through dedicated undergraduate teaching, research ironically becomes less relevant to teaching, the public good and making a better world.

It is not that human capital is bad as a goal for universities: fair economic opportunities, a productive business environment and reducing human insecurity are central to human well-being. Integration into economic life matters if people are to participate fully in income generation and secure fair and remunerative employment. But income alone cannot capture the full range of plural contributions to a state of well-being in a person's life: work, life, community and relationships also count. We need a richer set of goals and aims for university education and a curriculum which imagines ethically inclusive and humanly rich goals for development and pays close attention to the practical effects of higher education on the lives of human beings.

Sen's (1999) capability approach and its development by Nussbaum (2010; 2011) could provide a more comprehensive perspective and attractive normative approach. By acknowledging human capital but also subsuming it within an approach which values human well-being, it sees each person as an end in themselves and not as the means to some other end. Sen (2009) rejects the view that improved lives can only follow from economic growth: a range of valued human ends ensure that being a better producer is not the only evaluative end for human lives. The key purpose of development, he argues, is *human* development. While income and economy would still matter, the purpose of educational development should be to enlarge all worthwhile human choices.

University education can contribute to what Sen (1999) calls 'capabilities': the freedoms to choose and develop valuable beings and doings – what he calls 'functionings' or achievements – which enable us to live in ways that are meaningful, productive and rewarding both to society and to ourselves as individuals. Nussbaum (2012:128) explains capability as the modern form of what Aristotle termed *dunamis*, meaning, 'very generally, that condition in virtue of which one is *able* to do something'. For Nussbaum, capabilities are external opportunities – the capability of voting, for example – and internal capacities – such as making political choices. For both Sen and Nussbaum,

society is evaluated not according to how much income and wealth it provides people, but to the extent that it has made them capable of various important activities – mobility, for example, or ‘access to political life’ (Nussbaum, 2012:252). Capabilities are thus ‘substantial opportunities for choice’ (Nussbaum, 2012:404). We are enjoined to ask: what are people actually able to do and be? What opportunities and genuine choices do they have to attend a university, to be healthy, to be creative, and so on? Capabilities are these real and actual freedoms that give people the power to do and be what they value being and doing.

As noted earlier, a capabilities approach to curriculum should be embedded within human development theory, along with its associated development dimensions as explained by Gasper (2002):

- empowerment and participation in the expansion of capabilities
- equity in opportunities to form capabilities
- sustainability of opportunities to freely exercise one’s capabilities
- community membership – belonging
- human security.

Crucially, human development is concerned that all should have the opportunity and means to live long, creative and fulfilling lives so these dimensions operationalise this inclusive and public good interest in educational aims and decisions. One needs to ask how capabilities are distributed in and through higher education, to whom and why, and who is left out? Being human would then involve a capacious life of human flourishing, dignity and agency. The goal of education would be to provide the curriculum and pedagogical conditions in which graduates’ capabilities could develop, even though how such capabilities are exercised would then depend on the choices individuals make. Nussbaum (2010:88) writes that ‘once the stage is fully set, the choice is up to them’. The two questions for universities that follow from this are as follows: can curriculum and pedagogy be operationalised to enable the formation of dignified relationships and social cohesion and will this allow public good values to inform each person’s post-university decisions? What one is choosing between is important, and curriculum might form the appropriate commitments and values that are enriching and fulfilling for both the individual and society. Moreover, if democracy requires conviction it is then the role of education and curriculum to help people arrive at those they deem worthwhile (Tawney, 1966).

### **Curriculum and capabilities**

For Sen (Dreze and Sen, 1995), the kind of education that forms human capabilities is rich and ‘thick’; it has both an instrumental and an intrinsic value that is multi-dimensional as well as transformative potential. Crucially, education affects the development and expansion of other capabilities so that an education capability expands other important human freedoms. Sen (2009) offers some indirect curriculum and pedagogical guidance when he ascribes a central role to our powers of ‘public reasoning’ as a moral and political imperative. The advancement of justice depends on democracy – deepening democracy depends on discussion and collective reasoning that injects more information and knowledge, diverse perspectives and plural voices into debates. This process of public reasoning facilitates through open debate continuous scrutiny and assessment about how a society (or university) and its members are doing, and includes debate about values and principles and the curriculum.

Critical enquiry and discussion practices in universities should produce justice or at least reduce injustice, for example by developing graduates with critical knowledge, critical self-reflection and the capacity to act in the world. This learning process – what Habermas (1989) calls ‘argumentation’ – is connected to healthy democracies and is what universities should do. Clearly, if universities claim to develop critical and communicative reasoning, they ought to play a key role in forming public-reasoning capabilities. Curriculum and pedagogies of implementation are then central to how such directions might be realised. Open, critical and scholarly discussion in universities is essential to this education project; in the sphere of education it is key. ‘It constitutes a human world, and it is itself educative ... Discussion is the principal way in which humanity is cultivated’ (Morrow, 2009:10) and therefore has a central role in human life.

Further guidance is offered from Sen’s (2009) emphasis that capability is a kind of power and a central concept in human obligation. Agency through curriculum must then include ‘other-regarding’ goals and obligations to use one’s power on behalf of other human beings. By reason of our shared humanity we are enjoined to bring about the changes that would enhance human development. Sen emphasises that if someone has the power to make a change that they can see will reduce injustice in the world, there is a strong social argument for doing so.

Unlike Sen, Nussbaum is in favour of a list of ten central universal capabilities (Nussbaum, 2010) and education is implicit and explicit in the development

of these. Although highly contested (see Crocker, 1995 and Gasper, 2002 for this debate), her list adds content to the abstract notion of capabilities which can be formed through education: for example to be knowledgeable; to use one's knowledge in worthwhile ways; to be interculturally aware and sensitive, and so on. Nussbaum is thus educationally helpful – even if one does not agree with her priorities. For example, her capability of 'senses, imagination and thought' is defined in this rich way:

Being able to use the senses to imagine, think and reason – and to do these things in a 'truly human way', a way informed and cultivated by an adequate education, including but by no means limited to literacy and basic mathematical and scientific training. Being able to use imagination and thought in connection with experiencing and producing self-expressing works and events of one's own choice, religious, literary, musical and so forth. Being able to use one's mind in ways protected by guarantees of freedom of expression with respect to both political and artistic speech, and freedom of religious exercise. Being able to search for the ultimate meaning of life in one's own way. Being able to have pleasurable experiences and to avoid non-necessary pain. (2010:78-9)

More specifically, Nussbaum (1997) has identified three education capabilities for both quality in education and the formation of democratic citizens. Her first is a focus on the examined life, which involves the capacity for self-awareness and autonomy developed through searching ('thick') critical thinking in which one asks: 'what do I want to stand for and for what am I personally accountable?' Such questions are exposed to searching scrutiny, evidence and argument. Students learn to deal with differences among themselves and their disagreements; they take responsibility for their own reasoning and debate ideas with others in an atmosphere of mutual respect for reason. The second capability is being able to see oneself as a world citizen. Nussbaum's global citizens are bound not only to a local community but interconnected to distant human beings by ties of equal dignity and genuine curiosity about the lives of others. This requires us to think about the glaring inequalities in the world and the defects in models of global development based on GDP and incomes. In this way students acquire the understanding that increases the likelihood of solving common problems in the world, since these are everyone's problems and not just those of one group or country. The third capability is that of 'narrative imagination', by which Nussbaum means the ability to understand intelligently how the world is experienced by someone different from oneself, their emotions, desires and vulnerability. It requires empathy and a genuine and humble attempt to understand the lives of others.

More recently, in arguing for the arts and humanities in higher education, Nussbaum (2010) has proposed a number of specific capabilities worth fostering:

- develop students' capacity to see the world from the viewpoint of other people, particularly those whom their society tends to portray as lesser, as 'mere objects'
- teach attitudes towards human weakness and helplessness that suggest that weakness is not shameful
- develop the capacity for genuine concern for others, both near and distant
- undermine the tendency to shrink from minorities of various kinds in disgust
- teach real and true things about other groups, so as to counter stereotypes
- promote accountability by treating each [student] as a responsible agent
- vigorously promote critical thinking, the skill and courage it requires to raise a dissenting voice. (see p45-6)

How curriculum does this is then the educational development question.

It is important to note that the territories of human development, capabilities and functioning are multi-dimensional – the development of one supports the development of the others so aims, pedagogies and outcomes would need to be aligned with each of them separately. Aligned with human development and Nussbaum's and Sen's capabilities and guidance on education, such a model to guide curriculum discussion and practice might include the following (see Table 6.1 opposite).

### **A curriculum example**

In a recent research project exploring the contributions of professional education in universities to reduce poverty in South Africa (Walker *et al*, 2010), curriculum emerged as both a recurring theme and a key element in appropriate 'public good' educational arrangements across fields of law, engineering, public health, theology and social work. The work curriculum can do was exemplified by the social work education provided at one South African university, included in the project case study sites. In this department, social work lecturers face the considerable challenge of educating diverse young people who may not have been exposed to the hardships many South Africans face. Students need critical exposure to a curriculum which enables

<b>Curriculum values</b>	<b>Indicative capabilities</b>	<b>Knowledge</b>	<b>Pedagogies</b>	<b>Identities and functionings</b>
empowerment, participation equity sustainability community human security	knowledge, intellectual development & critical reasoning respect imagination & empathy obligations to others less advantaged cosmopolitan citizens	interdisciplinary approaches, ethics, global processes scrutiny of inequalities human interconnection & natural environment	Socratic methods discussion and dialogue critical thinking reflexive practices inclusive & intercultural methods	disciplined and independent thinker having multiple perspectives on the world open- minded aware of moral and ethical debates and questions courage to decide what one stands for and for what one is accountable respect for the natural environment decent humble curious and respectful towards all others

**Table 6.1: Curriculum, human development and capabilities**

their understanding of the structural factors in society that cause and perpetuate poverty and inequality. Thus one lecturer explained that if students ...

don't understand root causes they're going to be working on symptoms and perpetuating the inequalities and inequities of the past, the imbalances, the critical development challenges, they're going to be part of the problem and not part of the solution. They're going to be putting on band aid strips as opposed to understanding where the leverage needs to come in order to make shifts in power and in access to resources and access to opportunities, etc. So they will never be able to help people increase their capabilities and capacities if they are unable to see what the blocks are to that actually happening.



She argued that for students to play a transformative role in their own professional lives, they need to have values and principles based on social justice. Lecturers therefore aim to develop in students an understanding of social justice, as embodied in the South African Constitution, so that it comes to underpin their professional work. They felt students should acquire a knowledge and understanding of historical inequities, as well as policies and programmes which aim to transform society so that people's rights would be realised. Social work graduates need to understand global trends which affect South African society because

it's critically important to understand the forces that are at play from the level of global trends, globalisation of the economy, the impact of trans-national companies, the impact of everything that's happening in the economic sector on the country and right down to the level of individual people who are poor and unemployed and why they are poor and unemployed and in the situation that they are in'.

Thus this lecturer wanted students to be able to understand the links between micro, meso and macro contexts and between the local and global. In this way – through curriculum – the social work department sought to educate particular kinds of graduate professionals, oriented to critical contributions to society and the public good.

The approach captures both the concern with epistemological access to critical social theory (noted earlier) and so on, and the concern with the work curriculum can do to transform unjust power relations and form identities of 'public-good' professionals, equipped with the knowledge and values to work for wide and deep social change in South Africa.

### **Concluding thoughts**

Acquiring critical knowledge matters in higher education both intrinsically and instrumentally for social change. As Sen puts it: 'public reasoning is quite central to democratic politics in general and to the pursuit of social justice in particular' (2009:44). Grounded in human development, capabilities and functioning achievements, curriculum could form rich human beings so that teaching and learning and graduate formation is then one site where we can work to advance justice or reduce injustice in the world (Sen, 2009). The capability approach could contribute to curriculum, teaching and learning for rich human understanding and connections. Students would then learn not only a curriculum of knowledge and skills, but the difference between simply having knowledge and skills on one hand and, on the other, having the

commitment and values to use these to the benefit of others. Additional theories may be required for a fine-grained look at how curriculum works to enable development, and the capabilities approach is sufficiently flexible to accommodate additional theories where these are well aligned with the core normative concerns for freedoms and well-being and agency achievements.

In a world of growing inequalities, it ought not to be beyond the imaginative reach and responsiveness of universities, and ourselves as the people who work in them, to harness the wealth, creativity and power of humanity in the 21st century to create a better world than the one we currently have. The alternative may well be what Rabindranath Tagore, quoted by Nussbaum in *Not for Profit* (2010:1), warns of as a 'shrinkage of the soul'.

In the end it matters for sustainable lives and future persons that we in universities ask ourselves: What could public universities be doing and what should they be trying to achieve? What curriculum would convert the resources of public education into actual benefits for students and society?

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# 7

## Graduate attributes for the public good: a case of a research-led university

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### **The spotlight on graduate attributes**

**H**all (chapter two) and Walker (chapter six) stress the distinction between higher education as a private asset and as a public good. Previously, Walker (2002:43) argued strongly that universities have a role to play in the promotion of democracy and in inculcating the sort of ‘cultural capital, values and knowledge’ in its graduates that will contribute to a more just and equitable society. This debate is tightly linked to a growing focus on the nature of the attributes students leave university with, including how these attributes will equip graduates for future employment (Barrie, 2007: 439). In South Africa the need for graduates who will be able to participate in growing the national economy was emphasised in the National Plan in Higher Education some ten years ago now (DoE, 2001). More recent mandates emanating from the Department of Higher Education and Training – for example the guidelines provided for aligning programmes with the Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF) – have also included issues of citizenship and social justice (Government Gazette no 30353 2007).

The term ‘graduate attributes’ appears to have achieved fairly widespread acceptance in recent literature reviewed (Barrie, 2006, 2007, 2009; Hughes and Barrie, 2010), as well as in the South African context (Griesel and Parker,

2009). Understanding exactly what graduate attributes are, and when and how they ought to be 'developed' is, however, less easily resolved. Bowden *et al* (2000) have described graduate attributes as 'the qualities, skills and understanding a university community agrees its students should develop during their time with the institution.' Here the focus is on process and a development over time as the student moves from first year through to graduation. For others, however, the emphasis is towards ultimate employability, where 'generic skills' are described as 'the skills, values and attitudes which potential employers might find desirable' (James *et al*, 2004:2). Graduate attributes are seen to 'include, but go beyond, the disciplinary expertise or technical knowledge...' They are the qualities that also prepare graduates as agents for social good in an unknown future (Bowden *et al*, 2000). According to Barrie (2004: 262-3), graduate attributes encompass more than 'skills and attitudes'... and should result from the 'usual process of Higher Education', thus via a relevant curriculum which is responsive to the needs of their immediate community, their country and their continent (Jansen, 2009). Students emerge as global citizens (Killick, 2008) with a distinct awareness of the interconnectivity of and networks within the worldwide knowledge ecology (Barnett, 2011:142). Inherent in these understandings is another tension that builds on the competing discourses around the role of the university discussed earlier. From these seeming contradictions, questions emerge: how do (or should) universities respond to the different demands being made on them? What is the impact of these responses, if any?

The way academics understand or interpret graduate attributes is fundamental to any institutional conversation on these issues. Here the work of Barrie (2006:224) is once again instructive. He argues that different conceptions of graduate attributes stand in a hierarchical relationship to one another, with each new conception merging to some extent with its predecessor. He describes 'additive' conceptions which see generic graduate attributes as precursors to university entry – ie what students enter with – or as being complementary to disciplinary learning. On the other hand, he suggests there are transformative conceptions of graduate attributes, where these are seen to interact with other university learning outcomes to facilitate the application of disciplinary knowledge and/or enable learning and knowledge creation. This latter understanding echoes notions of transformative learning – 'learning that transforms problematic frames of reference – sets of fixed assumptions and expectations (habits of mind, meaning, perspectives, mind-sets) – to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective and emotionally able to change' (Mezirow, 2003:58). Similarly Waghid, writing

from a South African perspective, describes the role of university teaching as ‘opening students’ worlds to critical judgments ... [where] students could perceive things as they could be otherwise’ (2005:138). Clearly these understandings would foster graduates for the public good.

However, the diversity that exists across institutions inevitably influences the way in which individual universities are positioned to respond to this mandate. A university’s culture, structure, focus and resources (particularly funding) all impact on the way the teaching function is carried out. The attributes that graduates leave an institution with – those that will determine how they enter the world of work and will guide the way they participate in society – are a function of both the university and the individual themselves. Understanding how the individual sees their own development provides an important piece of the puzzle, and we will return to these student perspectives later in this chapter.

Hughes and Barrie (2010:325) have cautioned that graduate attributes must not be seen as additional learning outcomes but as ‘inherent in core university and teaching and learning experiences’. Lists of decontextualised skills, they argue, run the risk of being ‘perceived ... as having little to do with the type of learning normally associated with higher education’ (*ibid*).

Desired attributes in graduates have been defined on a number of levels. In South Africa, the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) formulated a set of ‘outcomes deemed critical for the development of the capacity for life-long learning’ (1997). These include being able to think critically and creatively, work in a team, use science and technology effectively and recognise the world as a set of interrelated systems where problem solving contexts cannot exist in isolation. Known as the critical cross-field outcomes (CCFOs), they also referred to developmental outcomes that envisage all learners making an economic and social contribution to society. Typically today, many universities have lists or statements of the attributes they would wish to see in their graduates which, to a greater or lesser degree, mirror what is implied with the CCFOs.

In the previous chapter Walker refers to the crucial role the curriculum plays in advancing human potential and the public good. But how easy is it to execute this transformative role? To explore the variety of perspectives and understandings that have been discussed more directly, we look at Stellenbosch University as a case study. We consider the University’s policy statements in relation to graduate attributes and how students’ perceptions of these have been experienced by them in the undergraduate curriculum.

### The Stellenbosch University context

It could be argued that Stellenbosch University (SU) has a healthy learning culture, with many well-established support initiatives that encourage reflective, scholarly teaching and the scholarship of teaching and learning amongst lecturing staff (Van Schalkwyk *et al*, 2012). Student feedback data, graduate survey information and lecturers' programme reviews appear to point to a positive and meaningful learning experience. As might be expected given that it annually attracts applications from the top academic candidates across the country, the University retains a top position nationally in terms of its undergraduate success rates (DoBE, 2010). It also positions itself as a research-led institution and in recent years has made specific strides in this regard<sup>1</sup>.

SU's vision for teaching described in its Strategic Framework (SU, 2000) reads as follows: 'a university characterised by quality teaching, by the constant renewal of teaching and learning programmes, and by the creation of effective opportunities for learning/study'. Embedded in the learning and teaching policy (SU, 2007a) is the profile of the SU graduate – the outcome of these 'effective learning opportunities'. Accordingly, a graduate of this institution is a person who:

- is well rounded and whose potential has been enhanced to the fullest
- is competent and equipped for professional life
- is adaptable and equipped for lifelong learning
- can play a leadership role in society as a responsible and critical citizen in a democratic social order
- is capable and equipped, through the application of their high-level skills, to play a constructive role in the responsible and sustainable development of the country and society, and who, in so doing, contributes to the wellbeing and quality of life of all people
- is equipped to function effectively in a multilingual context.

The policy adds further substance to one of the central elements of the University's vision: 'gaining national and international standing on the basis of producing graduates who are sought after for their well-roundedness and for their creative, critical thinking'. Additional University policy echoes these sentiments. For example, at SU learning materials 'should serve to assist the development of the required graduate attributes, ... broaden students' knowledge and challenge their abilities with reference to the outcomes of the module and programme' (SU, 2007b). More recently, in a draft document entitled *Hope as guiding concept for Stellenbosch University* (SU, 2011a), hope is described as a *leitmotif* for the activities of the University in total, inclusive of

the creation, transfer and application of scientific knowledge to the benefit of and in interaction with the community...’

It is evident from these examples that the University recognises its responsibility towards its graduates and society. Nevertheless, as a ‘historically advantaged’ and ‘historically white’ institution it can influence the way those both within and without the University interpret these intentions. Furthermore, evidence of the manifestation of these ideals is sometimes difficult to find. A recent review of documents submitted as part of a programme renewal process at the institution – which specifically requested that academic departments address aspects of citizenship in their curricula – suggested that engagement with, or even an understanding of what this would mean for curriculum renewal, was limited, as was the awareness as to how to go about it (see also Willey and Gardner, 2007).

### **The graduates’ perceptions**

As part of an institutional initiative to revisit the profile of the SU graduate ten years after its compilation, we sought to gauge graduates’ perceptions about the outcomes of their studies at SU. An analysis was conducted of the data generated by an annual graduate exit survey. Known as the Omega questionnaire, the survey was completed electronically by 591 graduates – 17.5 per cent of the total graduating cohort – at the end of 2010 (Du Plessis, 2011). The questionnaire was not originally designed as a test for measuring graduate attributes, and only relevant items were selected for this analysis. This selection was guided by our review of the literature and the existing profile of the SU graduate. The distribution of respondents could be regarded as representative of the University in terms of diversity. Faculty representation was slightly skewed. The grouping of the aggregated responses to the selected questions was conducted according to the six statements in the profile, which provided a student perspective on the extent to which undergraduate studies at the University were promoting the development of the different attributes.

### **Statements 1-3**

The profile describes graduates as individuals who are ‘well rounded and have their potential enhanced to the fullest’; who are ‘competent and equipped for professional life’; and who are ‘adaptable and equipped for lifelong learning’. According to the results, while being able to work in a group is generally regarded as a key feature of being equipped for professional life, less than half of the respondents (47%) reported studying in groups during their final year. This figure varied amongst faculties too: in one, 75 per cent of students seemed to



be doing a considerable amount of group work, while 43 per cent in another larger faculty indicated that they never did group work.

Reflecting on their growth during their period at the University, 90 per cent of graduates said they were now able to see the 'bigger picture' and realised that problems cannot be resolved in isolation. Although extremely positive, this statistic is contradicted by the words of an employer in response to a routine follow up conducted by the University's career office (see Leibowitz, 2011):

Students are quite sheltered, especially coming from small town universities [such as SU] and don't tend to be very savvy. They don't seem to be very informed of how they can apply their studies once they have graduated and struggle to answer questions relating their theoretical knowledge to some of the business questions that ask.

Of the entire group, 97 per cent indicated that their ability to think critically had improved, while 96 per cent reported they were now better able to gather, analyse and organise information. Self-management also appeared to have improved, with over 80 per cent of respondents reporting they had better organisational and time management skills.

Although SU positions itself as a research-led institution, only 20 per cent of the graduates who completed the survey indicated that they often had the opportunity to participate in research activities, while 37 per cent stated that they were never given such an opportunity. In the group as a whole, approximately 50 per cent indicated that it was only sometimes that they had been faced with intellectual challenges.

#### **Statement 4**

According to the profile, graduates 'can play a leadership role in society as a responsible and critical citizen in a democratic social order'. In response to the survey, 72 per cent of the graduating students indicated that they had not participated in any student leadership structures during their years of study, despite the fact that 45 per cent had attended some form of leadership training and 34 per cent reported being satisfied with the leadership opportunities available on campus. Becoming a leader in their respective communities was not something these students seemed to aspire to. Forty-three per cent indicated that this was not important to them while only a small group – 7.45 per cent – felt it was critical. As an indicator race appeared to be significant on several of the responses, and it is notable that becoming a community leader was more important for African and Indian students than for white and coloured students.

**Statement 5**

The profile describes the graduate as ‘capable and equipped, through the application of their high-level skills, to play a constructive role in the responsible and sustainable development of the country and society, and who, in so doing, contributes to the wellbeing and quality of life of all people’. In response to a question about their awareness of social challenges facing their community, 77 per cent indicated that they were now more aware of these issues than when they had arrived at the University. Although 82 per cent reported that they were now more aware of social concerns facing South Africa, it was only the theology students – 37.5 per cent – who were involved in voluntary community service to any significant degree, though 75 per cent of all the students indicated that they believed it was important for them to do so.

Eighty three per cent of graduates reported a greater understanding of global issues, with African students proportionately representing the highest number in this group. The same number of respondents felt they became more responsible for the environment – 46 per cent of African students said they had a much higher ability to take responsibility for the environment they live and work in, while 50 per cent felt it was vital for them to become involved in environmental clean-up programmes.

While 86 per cent of students felt it was important to influence social values, 42 per cent of African and 38 per cent of Indian students indicated that it was of the utmost importance. Similarly, all Indian students and 88 per cent of African and coloured students emphasised the importance of helping people. It is interesting, however, that 56 per cent of all students had not acted as a tutor or mentor for fellow students during their final year, and 39 per cent felt they would not really want to be responsible for others in the workplace.

Political awareness, responsibility and participation were seemingly less important issues for the graduates who completed the Omega questionnaire at the end of 2010. Forty three per cent regarded participation in political structures as ‘unimportant’, while only half of the respondents indicated that they sometimes discussed politics and even fewer felt it was important to stay informed. Forty two per cent had never participated in student elections, although such participation was more important to African students than the others. The unfortunate conclusion that can be drawn is that students are not prepared to be the change they want to see.

**Statement 6**

The profile describes the graduate as ‘equipped to function effectively in a multilingual context’. This final statement relates specifically to issues of language. Nevertheless, in the South African context issues of language are often interlinked with those of race. We therefore address both of these issues under this heading.

Despite the University’s emphasis on multilingualism, 56 per cent of graduates reported no improvement in terms of using different languages. The fact that only 46 per cent indicated that they had often engaged socially with people from different race groups – a probable statistic given the relative lack of diversity on the University campus, where over 75 per cent of undergraduate students are white – may account for this. Nevertheless, students appeared to recognise this anomaly on the SU campus and close to 83 per cent disagreed with the statement that racial discrimination is not a problem in South Africa. In recognition of this, 42 per cent of African students felt it was vital for them to contribute to racial harmony, in contrast to 41 per cent of white students who regarded a contribution in this area to be only of some importance.

It should be noted, however, that 44 per cent of students thought their ability to get on with people from different races and cultures had improved during their time at SU. In the parallel study referred to earlier, interviews were also conducted with a select group of graduates from previous years (2008 and 2009) and a number of these respondents voiced concerns about this issue (Leibowitz, 2011). The following quote, translated from Afrikaans, offers much insight:

Not at all, definitely not enough cultural diversity. Maties<sup>2</sup> are at a serious disadvantage in the workplace as far as this is concerned. Young, wonderful, intelligent Maties are sent into the world without having ever expanded their horizons in terms of race and culture. They are not necessarily racist, but they are definitely uninformed. I am worried that we are at worst, defensive, and at best, uncertain in multicultural environments. We simply must find a way to address this.

**Academic opportunities towards certain graduate attributes**

A number of items in the Omega questionnaire refer to academic opportunities or attributes that are closely linked with frequently cited graduate attributes. We report on some of these.

Eighty one per cent of graduating students indicated they were satisfied with the quality of teaching at SU. This percentage is fairly consistent across all

faculties and races. However, when specific aspects of the teaching and learning experience are teased out, some unexpected trends emerge. For example, while 65 per cent of students reported having to write between one and four reports of more than twenty pages in their final year, these responses were clustered among students in the social sciences and humanities.

All students said their writing skills had improved during their years at university. Similarly, students in the humanities report on average 80 per cent enhanced public speaking skills, while in faculties more oriented towards mathematics students felt their mathematical and numerical skills had considerably improved. Interestingly, however, 50 per cent of students in one of the health, science and technology-related faculties felt their mathematical and numerical skills were now poorer than when they had arrived at university.

Finally, 54 per cent of respondents reported that their computer skills were better than when they arrived at university. The activities students performed while working with their computers were not identified.

The graduate responses to the first three statements in the profile highlight notable variations between graduates from different faculties with regard to perceptions of being equipped for professional life and lifelong learning. Leadership and social and political awareness, which form part of statements four and five of the profile, appear to be areas where a great deal of work can be done, particularly if an institution aspires to deliver graduates who can contribute to the public good. The fact that almost half of the respondents had attended some form of leadership training and yet three-quarters said they had not participated in a leadership role suggests a dissonance that requires further investigation. Statement six of the graduate profile deals with language and, in this case, diversity issues. From the students' responses one might argue that graduates are not being exposed to many broader social issues. Finally, the students' responses point to academic experiences that are generally solid, such as those alluded to earlier in the chapter, although some of the faculty differences are of interest and indicate further avenues for enquiry.

While there are many points of congruence, it is clear from this analysis that there are also gaps between the intended graduate outcomes at SU, as formulated in the profile of the University's graduate, and students' perceptions of what they have learned and the opportunities they had. It is further evident that statements of intent such as the University's mission statements and policy documents remain hollow if they do not manifest themselves more

overtly in relevant, responsive curricula and concomitant co-curricula activities. Equally, it remains incumbent on the institutions themselves to track their graduates as they enter the world of work and citizenship. Such tracking would provide greater insight on the extent to which stated objectives are being met and would enable these institutions to respond appropriately.

### **Implications**

Musil (2011) has suggested that a university education has the potential to deliver both a private and a public good since students derive personal benefit whilst also contributing to the community. Musil has also argued that 'educating students for generative citizenship cannot be accomplished without recalibrating the curriculum, its pedagogies and the boundaries of faculty work' (2003:8). Graduate attributes are about the learning experiences of students and the objectives we set for our teaching.

As a research-led institution, SU needs to define what this particular identity implies for the graduate attributes of its students. Research-led teaching and involving students in research-like activities are important components of delivering the type of student – an enquiry-focused learner – that is implied in the profile. According to Barrie (2011), one solution to this dilemma might be to have students approach their learning in the same way a researcher approaches their research: actively and critically, questioning and enquiring.

Teaching for the public good then becomes the heart of the institution, its academic programmes, research and faculty work – and thus the defining concepts according to which we teach and learn (Palmer, 1987). This requires a paradigm shift in the way an institution thinks about graduate attributes (knowledge), which leads in turn to a different kind of awareness (attitude/responsibility) and hereafter to a different way of approaching (action) graduate attributes: the so called 'head, heart, hand approach' described by Johann Pestalozzi (in Soetard, 1994). When lecturers embrace and embed *for the public good* within their everyday activities of teaching, research and community interaction, it becomes necessary for them to act as role models for their students as civically engaged and thoughtful educators (Levinson, 2011).

### **Way forward**

As the landscape of higher education changes nationally and internationally and socio-economic and political realities remain, it is opportune for universities, particularly in South Africa, to revisit their role. Re-imagining the sort of graduates a university desires to produce and realigning curricula accord-

ingly is an important lever in this process. Establishing a renewed or revised set of graduate attributes – specifically those that would contribute to the public good – is clearly only the first step in the process towards producing graduates who actually portray the desired attributes. Inculcating these attributes into the teaching and learning ethos of the university will be a further, equally critical, step. For transformative learning to take place, current programme development activities need to create the space for students and their teachers to critically engage with questions of how graduate attributes are developed during the course of their programme, and which are important in their particular discipline. A shared understanding of what attributes we value in lecturers, how ‘hopeful’ pedagogies can be developed and what research-led teaching might look like is essential.

But what does this mean for a university that positions itself as research-led? In a commentary on the dearth of African universities in the Times Higher Education Rankings (<http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/world-university-rankings/2010-2011/africa.html>), Goolam Mohamedbhai, a former secretary general of the Association of African Universities and former president of the International Association of Universities, argues that given the challenges facing the African continent, there is no room for universities to focus on rankings: they must direct their attention to research outputs that address the specific needs of the continent. The commodity in which higher education trades is that of knowledge, often generated through research, and it is this that defines the path of a university. The essence of such knowledge, however, is of relevance here. Palmer (1987:22) has argued that ‘the way we know has powerful implications for the way we live’ and ‘every mode of knowing contains its own moral trajectory, its own ethical direction and outcomes’, whether these be utilitarian or liberating (Carr, 2009) or anywhere in between. Such is the knowledge that needs to be shared if we are to encourage graduates for the public good.

## Notes

- 1 Refer [http://www.myvirtualpaper.com/doc/stellenbosch-University/research\\_report/2011031001/#0](http://www.myvirtualpaper.com/doc/stellenbosch-University/research_report/2011031001/#0) for details
- 2 Maties: a colloquial description for Stellenbosch University students

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## SECTION 3

# The Disciplines and the Classroom

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## 8

### Hopeful teacher education in South Africa: towards a politics of humanity

*Yusef Waghid*

#### **Introduction: Post-apartheid teacher education**

In this chapter I offer an account of Nussbaum's politics of humanity to show how teacher education programmes can be remedied as the country's universities endeavour to address the poor quality of teacher education programmes. Since the demise of apartheid education, the development of policy in relation to teacher education in South Africa has undergone major adjustments, and yet credible change in teacher education remains elusive. By far the most prominent conceptual and pragmatic change to which teacher education has been subjected points towards the cultivation of teachers who can enact their professions as democratic citizens. This implies that teachers ought to engender in learners a spirit of democratic citizenry that can imbue in them the virtues of dialogical engagement, connecting caringly with the other, and performing their tasks in a responsible manner. So it happens that current policy on teacher education accentuates the 'roles' of teachers in a post-apartheid dispensation along the lines of such democratic virtues.

I do not wish to restate the extensive amount of writing about teacher education by internationally renowned South African education theorists such as Shirley Pendlebury and Penny Enslin, but rather to imagine what Nussbaum's 'politics of humanity' (2004) has to offer teacher education in South Africa. I want to explore what it means to be a teacher who does not practise disgust and shame and their implications for humane learning. In this way, I hope to

extend the calling of a teacher beyond the confines of democratic citizenship towards an understanding of teacher education that resonates with a politics of humanity. If universities intend to contribute seriously to hopeful teacher education, their programmes have to be aligned with what it means to cultivate humanity.

More than a decade ago, two central – and connected – features of the Norms and Standards for Educators (Department of Education, 2000) were the seven roles teachers (educators) were supposed to perform and the competences they had to display for assessment and qualification purposes. The following seven roles are closely reminiscent of those in the Norms and Standards for Educators:

- learning mediator
- interpreter and designer of learning programmes and materials
- leader, administrator and manager
- scholar, researcher and lifelong learner
- community, citizenship and pastoral role
- assessor
- learning area/subject/discipline/phase specialist.

Teachers are expected to perform these roles as part of their contribution to the reconstruction project of South African society (Pendlebury, 1998:33). Each role is constituted by the following three competences: practical competence, foundational competence and reflexive competence. ‘The seven roles and associated competences for educators for schooling provide the exit level outcomes. They are in effect the norms for educator development and therefore the central feature of all initial educator qualifications and learning programmes’ (Department of Education, 2000:12). In the role of interpreter and designer of learning programmes and materials, an educator (teacher) is supposed to ‘understand and interpret provided learning programmes, design original learning programmes, identify the requirements for a specific context of learning and select and prepare suitable textual and visual resources for learning’ (Department of Education, 2000:13). Whether teachers were actually equipped to do so, however, remains a question for debate.

Another criticism of the Norms and Standards for Educators (Department of Education, 2000:10) relates to the expectation that teachers ought to be reflective practitioners. Given many pedagogical practices, including the standard format for examination question papers in many subjects which fostered the habits of ‘teaching to the exam’ and rote learning of textbook

summaries, lecture notes and model answers (Pendlebury, 1998:337), this has not always been achievable. The Norms and Standards for Educators have always been silent on how the competences, and the 'flexibility of mind' to apply these competences, should be developed in student teachers and in-service teachers. The latter policy document only states that all 'the competences must be developed in all initial educator qualifications ... They may be developed in different ways, with different emphases and at different depths. Providers have the responsibility to decide how this should be achieved...' (Department of Education, 2000:11).

This absence of clear guidelines perpetuated the status quo and hindered the transformation of South African teacher education. Clear guidelines were necessary since many South African teachers in the apartheid era, and perhaps still, were subjected to rote learning of teaching methods while studying at the Department of Education and Training (DET) and other colleges (Pendlebury, 1998:344). These colleges stressed subject facts at the expense of 'principled knowledge and the development of critical discernment and independent judgement' (Pendlebury, 1998:337). This situation, in turn, always required that teachers be 're-educated' to become reflective practitioners, since change did not happen automatically.

It is now common knowledge amongst the vast majority of South African educators in schools and universities that the country's institutions ought to be committed to the cultivation of democratic citizens – specifically, teachers and learners who can act as democratic citizens. A democratic citizen embraces the virtues of listening, talking, reaching consensus, disagreement and critical engagement, and simultaneously extends their responsibility towards society. Likewise, a democratic teacher is a critical-reflective practitioner who seeks to cultivate social justice through pedagogical actions (Samuel, 2010:5).

In a recent study, Arends and Phurutse (2009:43-5) found that 'beginner' teachers in South Africa 'are thrust into classrooms without the necessary support and mentorship'; their [teachers'] expanded roles involve 'more administrative duties instead of increased instructional time'; and school managers 'may not be critical and reflective enough about their staff and this poses serious challenges to school improvement initiatives', such as 'schools located in economically depressed areas ... [producing] poor results'. Most disconcerting about their findings, however, is that 'violence is increasing both inside and outside of schools,' making it practically impossible for beginner teachers to cope:

In South Africa, many learners are also exposed to, or are themselves victims of, physical and sexual abuse, extreme poverty and HIV/AIDS. As a result of HIV/AIDS some young learners become heads of households. It is in such situations that teachers feel inadequate as effective educators, as the classroom and school situation demands more of them than teacher training prepared them for. (Arends and Phurutse, 2009:44)

With the aforementioned in mind the Council on Higher Education (CHE) produced the Report on the National Review of Academic and Professional Programmes in Education in 2010. This highlights some of the biggest problems facing teacher education in the country: the poor quality of teacher education programmes; the fact that teacher education programmes are not cost-effective; and the fact that policies for the supply, utilisation and development of teachers are driven by the wrong incentives (Council on Higher Education, 2010:11). One of the fundamental weaknesses identified in the teacher education programmes relates to the inappropriate blend of theoretical, practical and experiential knowledge and the incapacity of teachers to manage learning in diverse social and educational contexts (Council on Higher Education, 2010:102). And, if initial teacher education programmes do not sufficiently produce teachers who can integrate different forms of knowledge as well as manage diverse learning situations, it seems highly unlikely that teachers who can deal with the challenges faced by teacher education, in particular the issue of violence in and beyond the school, will be produced.

What I found unhelpful about the National Review of Academic and Professional Programmes in Education is its failure to pinpoint the conceptual problems relating to the teacher education offered by South African universities. It is simply not enough to claim that teacher education programmes lack integration between theoretical, practical and experiential knowledge. It is also very vague to argue that there seems to be a lack of theory in the programme offerings. One can include more theory in teacher education programmes, but if it does not contribute towards reducing violence in and beyond the school environment then this theory would be of little use. The argument is that integrating theory into a teacher education programme should effect pragmatic change, such as combating different forms of violence. Neither would an argument for enhancing the relevance of programmes be meaningful if such relevance remained disconnected from producing teachers who are adept at negotiating issues of social justice in and beyond the school classroom. It is in this regard that Nussbaum's 'politics of humanity' has much to offer.

### **Towards a politics of humanity**

My reading of Nussbaum's *Hiding from Humanity: disgust, shame, and the law* suggests that a politics of humanity is constituted by at least two acts of being human: not to act with disgust and not to bring shame. Disgust and shame can undermine the quest to be human. The 'core idea of disgust is that of contamination to the self; the emotion expresses a rejection of a possible contaminant' considered as a pollutant to the human (Nussbaum, 2004:99). And to express disgust at someone or something is to suggest that someone or something deserves one's revulsion or repudiation, because the human self reacts to stimuli that (s)he finds offensive (Nussbaum, 2004:87). Nussbaum explains disgust as follows:

My own experience of moralized disgust takes the following form. When my politics proves too gross and vile, I imagine, and sometimes seriously entertain, the thought of moving to Finland, a nation ... I imagine ... as a land of clear blue lakes and unsullied forests, and, at the same time, as a land of social democratic virtue, unsullied by greed, aggression, and corruption. In short, my fantasy is an escape fantasy, having more to do with back-formation from current discontents than with constructive engagement with Finnish society. Anger at US politicians tends in the direction of protest and constructive engagement. Disgust at US politicians leads to escape and disengagement. (2004:105-6)

Nussbaum's point is that if one shows disgust, one becomes discontented with and disengaged from others in society; that is, disgust rules out the possibility of 'constructive engagement' because 'its core idea of contamination basically wants the person out of sight' (2004:106). So if a person feels disgust at racism, sexism, gender inequality, homophobia and xenophobia, the person considers such acts by people as offensive and repulsive and wants to disengage from such acts. A politics of humanity does not entertain the idea of disgust in this sense: people should not escape the realities of untenable human relations primarily because escaping such acts would result in further marginalisation and victimisation of those whom one might consider as worthy of rejection and alienation. For instance, showing disgust at bigots would not necessarily resolve the problem of bigotry, because one disengages from something that one is discontented with. However, showing anger at the situation without turning one's back on remedying the societal ill that causes it proves to be far more undignified since one does not tackle the problem head on. To show disgust at school violence would not address the situation at all. It would be better to engage with the issues that undermine school discipline, as turning one's back would merely exacerbate abuse and anger at

school. Thus acting without disgust would give one a real chance to remedy an unsatisfactory situation – a matter of embarking on a politics of humanity.

A politics of humanity demands that people engage with others as human beings, without showing discontent with, disengagement from and revulsion towards situations or people they dislike; doing the latter would, in turn, lead to further alienation and victimisation of people in society. If teachers do not attend to bullying in schools, bullies would merely be marginalised and excluded, without such unbecoming human behaviour being remedied. In essence, to practise disgust is to hide from humanity because one excludes oneself from the problems that beset society.

Secondly, shame is an emotion that responds to society's 'disapproval of the offender': that is, certain groups and individuals are marked off as 'abnormal' – they look different from others, possibly through deformities such as being mentally and physically handicapped, and are socially ostracised and disapproved of (Nussbaum, 2004:174-5). Put differently, shame is 'potentially linked to denigrating others' (*ibid*, 2004:209). For instance, during apartheid South Africa the 'ideal' race of white people was closely aligned with the disparagement and hatred of black people, who were depicted as shameful, degraded and humiliated and consequently denied the franchise. A politics of humanity aims to protect citizens from shame because it refuses 'to take part in actively stigmatising ... vulnerable people and groups' and is committed to protecting the vulnerable against discrimination (Nussbaum, 2004:282-90).

While some forms of shame can be positive – shaming a corrupt politician is a way of disapproving of their offence, for instance – to shame a person because of their religion, sexuality or disability does not gain society's 'approval' and is in fact a constructive form of exclusion of the other. Similarly, to shame a student just because they come from an economically disadvantaged community is in fact to stigmatise others with the intention of excluding them from the pedagogical process. This brings me to a discussion of what it means to be a teacher who does not practise disgust and shame.

### **A teacher who hides from disgust and shame**

I articulate my argument as follows: a teacher who engages others and does not stigmatise them will create opportunities to engage learners. Now, after a cursory glance at the Department of Education's (2011) 'minimum requirements for teacher education qualifications', in particular the basic competences of a 'beginner' teacher, the following competences for newly qualified teachers are identified:

- a sound subject knowledge
  - knowledge of how to teach subjects
  - knowing their learners and how they learn
  - knowing how to communicate effectively
  - possession of highly developed literacy, numeracy and information technology skills
  - being knowledgeable about the school curriculum
  - understanding diversity
  - being able to manage classrooms
  - being capable of assessing learners reliably
  - having a positive work ethic and displaying appropriate values
  - being able to reflect critically with their professional community.
- (Department of Education, 2011:56)

My interest is in the beginner teacher's competence to 'display appropriate values'. Taking into account that some beginner teachers' weaknesses include the application of poor teaching methodology and planning, a lack of experience, an inability to control large classes, a preoccupation with rights and labour issues and laziness (Arends and Phurutse, 2009:34), it seems hardly likely that the 'appropriate values' referred to by the Department of Education relate to the broader issues of undermining disgust and shame. I want to show how repudiating disgust and shame can offer possibilities for beginner teachers to exhibit appropriate values and, at the same time, address some of the weaknesses mentioned earlier.

Firstly, a teacher only gains experience through teaching, which implies that they ought to repudiate ills such as laziness, bad planning and inadequate teaching methodologies. What follows is that unlike disgust – which disconnects one from others – and shame – which stigmatises one – a politics of humanity requires teachers to become active and engaged beings. In doing so, they acquire experience in choosing appropriate teaching methodologies and constructively planning their teaching. By moving away from disgust and shame, a teacher actually commits themselves to others – that is, to colleagues and learners – and invariably improves on their teaching approaches and lesson planning. Likewise, a teacher who resents shame isolates themselves also from activities that can be shameful, such as not planning their lessons, not selecting appropriate teaching methodologies, not marking learners' tasks, not giving feedback to learners on tests and not doing prac-



tical work. These shameful acts will always disconnect teachers from learners, and staying away from what is shameful is in fact to enact one's humanity.

Secondly, if some teachers hope to address their inability to cope with large classes they become intent on including learners in pedagogical activities without shaming them – that is, without stigmatising learners for occasionally achieving inadequate performances and, perhaps, test scores. Instead, learners are encouraged, motivated and supported to do well, allowing trust to develop amongst teachers and learners which can contribute towards more favourable pedagogical moments. By not showing disgust towards learners for poor performances, the learners are spared experiencing humiliation and undignified pedagogical moments, which augurs well for learning and, eventually, for teachers' control and management of large classes. The issue of learner indiscipline would also be minimised, since disruption and rowdiness often happen as a consequence of learners' exclusion, albeit voluntary, from pedagogical activities.

Thirdly, the claim that beginner teachers are more concerned with rights and labour issues is perhaps not as debilitating as it might at first seem. For beginner teachers to be concerned about rights and obligations would be apposite to treating learners and colleagues with dignity and respect. Together with the learners they can become co-participants in teaching and learning processes. This would entail neither teachers nor learners showing anger and resentment towards each other and, in turn, not embarrassing and humiliating each other in the school. In a way, both teachers' and learners' professionalism would be enhanced if they shied away from treating one another with disgust and shame. Showing disgust towards a learner will invariably exclude them from learning – for example by dismissing learners from classrooms. Similarly, shaming learners, such as by insulting and humiliating them in front of their peers, would undermine their confidence and their enthusiasm for learning. Furthermore, teachers act together with learners, if we consider that they should expect to learn with the learners and from them, and they should feel less threatened when they sometimes need to admit that they do not know or understand everything. In this way, teaching itself becomes a form of learning anew with others, where the teacher acts as listener, questioner, instructor, guide and responsible and caring leader and shows a sense of moral maturity and refinement. Only then will learners feel able to make mistakes or offer ideas that might appear muddled or confusing.

Through their actions, teachers accept as conditional that classroom practices are meant to explore and construct, and make allowance for erring. In this regard I agree with Burbules (1997:73), who makes the point that our attitudes as teachers should include acceptance as a condition of exploration and discovery, with the occasional state of being lost, confused and unsettled. When teachers do not align themselves with such attitudes, the possibility of disrespecting and therefore shaming learners becomes highly likely, because shame would find making mistakes suitably reprehensible. However, when learners and teachers disconnect themselves from disgust, constructive interaction amongst them becomes likely and the possibility for disagreement quite acceptable, as the learners are not prevented from exercising critical reflection and imagination regarding pedagogical matters.

Fourthly, laziness, such as teachers arriving late, leaving school early or exhibiting regular absenteeism, would undermine the pedagogical process. While we have to show disgust at teachers who do not fulfil their obligations towards the school community, especially towards the learners, overextending our disgust towards them would further alienate some teachers and might cause their malpractices to worsen. Similarly, while shaming learners might be necessary at times, such as when they play truant, the shaming should not be extravagant else the learners will become too disaffected and give up on their schooling altogether. Here I am thinking specifically of authoritarian principals who treat learners too harshly for misdemeanours that perhaps are not terribly serious. For instance, expelling a learner for playing truant, which perhaps is not such a serious offence as, say, violently assaulting another learner at school. And if teachers can find ways to include learners, act in their best interests and make them feel that they belong, it would be far removed from shaming and treating them with disgust.

Fifthly, resenting disgust and shame could go some way in dealing with violence in and beyond schools. I am thinking specifically of those in poor communities that are marred by gangsterism and drug abuse. We find that gangsters roaming the school premises, intimidating learners and even insulting teachers frequently has violent and occasionally catastrophic consequences, such as a learner being stabbed or violently assaulted in the school playground. What the politics of humanity demands is for us not to react violently towards aggressors, since that would lead to further recriminations and even revenge attacks – as is often the case. The offender should be engaged, even if it means curbing one's hatred and dissatisfaction with them. Trying to avoid disgust and shame would therefore go some way to addressing violence in schools, as it would allow for potential dialogue.

## **Conclusion: Towards an extension of democratic citizenship education**

Thus far I have argued that teacher education that encourages the teaching and learning of values that are incommensurate with disgust and shame could foster certain competences required by beginner teachers in the new South Africa, and simultaneously assist them to minimise and curb their pedagogical weaknesses. However, such a politics of humanity would be incomplete if not lived in conjunction with a radicalised democratic citizenship education agenda. Perhaps it is in this area of democratic citizenship education that the newly promulgated minimum competences for beginner teachers fall short. The beginner teacher is supposed to be critical, yet the policy does not pay adequate attention to this competence. Democratic citizenship education can contribute towards enhancing the critical competence of a beginner teacher and a politics of humanity can be extended.

The policy on teacher competence is fairly vague when it suggests that teachers should be critical. Considering the expectations and demands of our new democracy, teaching teachers to be democratic citizens is one way to contribute towards building a post-apartheid society. Why? When teachers are initiated into discourses of deliberation and iteration – that is, taught to listen to others, dispute with others and offer points of view that will enable others to adjust their own points of view – they will learn what it means to be critical. And initiating them into a discourse of democratic citizenship implies that teachers will be taught what it means to connect with learners hospitably, and thus create more opportunities in pedagogical activities for learners to take more risks and to do the unexpected. Galston (1991:221-4) aptly posits that democratic citizenship education is constituted by four types of civic virtues:

- general virtues: courage, being law-abiding and loyal
- social virtues: independence and open-mindedness
- economic virtues: work ethic, capacity to delay self-gratification, adaptability to economic and technological change
- political virtues: capacity to discern and respect the rights of others, willingness to demand only what can be paid for, ability to evaluate the performance of those in office, willingness to engage in public discourse.

Many of these virtues are to be required by beginner teachers – particularly the ability and willingness to question pedagogical authority and engage in public discourse about matters of teaching and teacher education policy –

since they are precisely what is required to enact deliberation. It is for this reason that Kymlicka (2002:293) cogently claims that a deliberative model of citizenship requires people (teachers) to act with a profound sense of deliberation:

Democratic citizens [including teachers] must be not only active and participatory, critical of authority, and non-dogmatic, but also committed to seek mutual understanding through deliberation rather than exclusively seeking personal benefit through bargaining and threats. Without citizens [and teachers] who display these virtues, liberal democracy cannot fulfil its promise of justice, and may indeed slowly succumb to undemocratic or illiberal forces.

The upshot of this is that democratic citizenship education will engender opportunities for engagement with the other – an avenue for becoming critical. Given that a politics of humanity creates possibilities for teachers to engage with others and to connect with them – and that democratic citizenship education frames the nature of teachers' deliberations with colleagues and learners – the hospitable relations that might emanate would be non-hostile, non-aggressive, non-humiliating and non-embarrassing. Only then would the teaching profession be contributing worthily to the cultivation of humaneness – an aspect that would enhance the critical competence of beginner teachers.

I started this chapter with a suggestion that hopeful teacher education in South Africa can be engendered through a politics of humanity, and that such a politics would extend the deliberative discourses offered to democratic citizenship education. Whereas a democratic citizenship education discourse can cultivate competent teachers who can engender a critical spirit in and through pedagogical activities, a politics of humanity can frame such teacher competences along the lines of what it means to be human – that is, initiating teachers into practices that resist disgust and shame. Such teacher education practices would then provide hope for the transformation of education in South Africa.

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# 9

## A pedagogy of hope: learning about community, self and identity with students in the social and allied health sciences

*Lindsey Nicholls and Poul Rohleder*

Many psychoanalysts agree with Freud (1917) that hope is one of the elements of gratitude, which is a product of the work of mourning, and that giving up unrealistic hopes or, to be more precise, unrealistic goals, while maintaining a hopeful attitude or orientation to life and living, indicates that therapy has been successful. ... Hope is the very essence of attempts to make creative use of traumatic experience, which always involves reparation, restoration and restitution. (Hopper, 2001:206)

This chapter describes a process that was used to create a learning project for South African university students who came from different backgrounds (cultural, professional and institutional) which required them to interrogate the interrelated concepts of community, self and identity (CSI) in a post-apartheid South Africa. The design of the project was based on the sensitive social/ political and psychological understanding of the project leaders that students' deep learning was only possible if they could examine personal beliefs and common cultural assumptions in a facilitated experiential encounter with an 'other'.

... be still, and wait without hope  
For hope would be hope for the wrong thing  
(TS Eliot, *Four Quartets*, 1959:28)

One of the key challenges for education in South Africa – and for the society as a whole – is to ask whether changing embedded practices from the past is

possible and what mechanisms may need to be in place to bring about a better and more equitable future for all. Educating students to become participatory citizens for a common public good requires an element of hope that change is possible; a hope that the past does not repeat itself. This is perhaps salient now with class replacing race as the new division in this nascent democracy, preventing those who have few economic resources from accessing health, housing, education and work opportunities. bell hooks (2003), inspired by the works of Paulo Freire, advocates a 'pedagogy of hope' for bringing about a 'just' society. She argues that building inclusive communities, through critical and reflexive dialogue, is one way of generating hope; where the development of recognition of one's own and others' humanity may facilitate personal as well as community change (see Carolissen *et al*, 2011 for an exploration of the pedagogy of hope applied to the CSI project).

Straker argues that an inconsolable mourning is part of the identity of every South African. She looked at the effects of the institutionalisation of racism in South Africa and how black and white suffered profound loss and 'grief without end' (2004:408). Black people were the victims of a system that denied them a rightful place of belonging and the white people, who were actively opposed to the apartheid regime, 'could provoke ... the very racism we are attempting to avoid' (*ibid*:407). Straker draws on the Freudian concept of melancholia; an unresolved grief that is distinguishable from the more healthy process of mourning: 'Mourning is resolvable, whereas melancholia is a form of grief without end. It is sustained by the irresolvability of the conflict and ambivalence that loss of the object produces' (2004:408).

What hope can South Africans have then as educators and as human beings, that we can make a difference, that the past can be faced and that to have hope is not a false or manic wish to make the past disappear? Hopper, in defining and analysing the vicissitudes of hope, stated:

Hope always implies a belief in the possibility of improvement and of creativity, that is, in the possibility of making something better and something new. However, to be creative is not the same as to create. ... In other words, to be hopeful does not imply omnipotence and omniscience, which may be defensive against the possibilities of being hopeful. (2001:211)

The CSI course had three iterations between 2006 and 2008, and involved a total of 23 tutors and approximately 300 students from the disciplines of occupational therapy, psychology and social work. From the start, the CSI course was a creative endeavour, incorporating web-based interaction, art-work, group interactions and reflective work. The design and curriculum of

the CSI course is described below. In undertaking this joint work, the project leaders and students underwent an intense emotional process – learning to speak about how past racial inequities in South Africa remained present in the perceptions we all carried about ourselves and the ‘other’. The previous apartheid government’s spurious and divisive use of racial classification in all aspects of life, work and love had had a profound effect on present day relationships and relatedness. It influenced our capacity to learn. We did not think authentic education could be possible without confronting the recent traumatic past each person held within themselves. By making the past present in all of the project’s curriculum activities, we hoped to provide opportunities for the students, in relationship with each other, to find ways of understanding their past that could offer ‘reparation, restoration and restitution’ (Hopper, 2001:206).

The project was called Community Self and Identity (CSI), making a play on the name of the USA television programme that was popular at that time. This play on words and letters may have had a subconscious deeper meaning; the Crime Scene Investigation of TV often followed a fingertip search through an area of crime to discover what had really happened. But it was never obvious or easily known. In some way the project we undertook with the students and each other had a similar feel. We had to explore each event in the course, consider the ‘evidence’ (students’ final essays) and reflect on our intuitive imaginings while working across the divisions of class, gender, race, institutional culture and professional domain. Unlike the TV programme, there wasn’t a suspect we could identify, confront or send to prison; justice could not be served. We were all part of the messy crime of apartheid and we were all implicated as perpetrators, victims or bystanders, often being two or three of these at different times in the lives we had lived in and out of South Africa.

### **Curriculum matters**

The course, which brought together final-year students from three different professional courses and two historically dissimilar universities, aimed to create an experiential learning environment where students could interrogate their knowledge and assumptions about the concept of community, self and identity. Choosing students from psychology, social work and occupational therapy related to their shared clinical interest in working in health and social care environments. The choice to mix students from the two universities – one with a predominantly white middle-class student group (University of Stellenbosch) and another a historically disadvantaged institution



(University of the Western Cape) with a majority of black and coloured working-class students – arose from the programme leaders’ concern that students were having a mono-racial experience of higher education. This concern about students’ lack of contact with the ‘other’ evolved from an understanding that their future professional work would most likely be with clients from all race groups, and that if students did not talk with each other they might never explore the assumptions they held about the other or themselves.

While where students can study is no longer determined by statutory segregation, the apartheid past retains its evil grip on the aspirations of many black youths, who may be born in the geographical areas previously designated ‘homelands’. Many of these areas are rural – a legacy of the ‘separate development’ policies of the past – and remain in a cycle of poverty due to poor transport links with industrially active towns and a lack of modern educational environments or health facilities. This inheritance of place and race relates directly to class, and its lack of economic stability makes it extremely difficult for black students from rural areas to achieve the equivalent of their white urban counterparts.

In exploring the changes in higher education since 1994 within the new democracy, Morrow (2008) has focused on the role of historically disadvantaged institutions (HDIs) such as the University of the Western Cape (UWC) and previously ‘white only’ institutions such as the University of Stellenbosch (US). Morrow states that:

While white institutions became increasingly multiracial in their student intakes, the HDI’s remain overwhelmingly black. In this, they reflect wider patterns in South African education ... . It has tended, increasingly, to be the poorest and least privileged sections of the black population that attend these nearly all-black institutions, with the most economically privileged ... now attending previously white schools. In other words, social class and race now begin to intersect in complex ways. In this context those who lose out, relatively speaking, in terms of higher education tend to be those who go to the still-existing black universities, desegregated in theory, but in fact catering to the poorer or less qualified students. (2008:266)

This social/ political and economic analysis was reflected in the assumptions students made about their academic worthiness in applying for further studies. A black student, who was part of the 2008 CSI project, said they had applied to UWC as they didn’t believe another university would have accepted them.

The idea for the project was initiated in 2005 by a design team of six academics who worked in four departments – education, social work, psychology and occupational therapy – across the two institutions. Three of the academics had known each other for many years through their political activities prior to the 1994 elections and their shared political principles provided a firm foundation for the work to progress. Leibowitz *et al* described the motivation of the design team as wishing to:

present a pedagogic model ... which would respond to the inadequacies of our present educational system. The inadequacies pertain to the different quality of resources and teaching historically provided to students on the basis of race, and increasingly, of social class, or an intersection between race and class ... Further inadequacies are geographically and socially divided institutions in which students learn, and the ingrained habits of thinking about the 'other' as inferior or superior. (2010:124)

The first iteration of the CSI course involved students from psychology (US) and social work (UWC), while the following two years included students from occupational therapy (UWC). The combination of all three professional courses brought together students who would not have previously shared their complimentary areas of interest. The course ran for six weeks in total and used a web-based structure to organise the overall commutation with the large (approximately 100 in each year of the course) student group. The e-learning platform facilitated shared communication – for example discussion boards and emails – and carried the module rationale and learning objectives as well as the assignment outlines and criteria. During the six weeks students worked online and had three day-long meetings where they were brought together in a large venue at one of the two campuses. These whole-day workshops included participatory learning in action (PLA) techniques (see Bozalek and Biersteker, 2010), facilitated small group discussions and talks given by invited guest speakers (see Carolissen *et al*, 2011).

At the first face-to-face workshop, which marked the beginning of the module, students were randomly assigned into small groups of approximately six. They were required to draw a map of their community and a river of life and to share these with members of their workgroup – see examples below. Following this first meeting and exercise, the module had five assessments and students were given individual and group marks related to their overall contribution (see Table 9.1). Each group had an online tutor (a member of the design team or another member of staff working at UWC or US) and individuals met with their groups during the day-long workshops and had an online presence during the module.

<b>Time-frame</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Description</b>
First week	Community Map and River of Life drawings	Students were required to draw a map of their community and a river of life drawing, and to share these with members of their workgroup.
	Assessment 1: Online Worksheet	Students were asked to answer a series of questions regarding their initial impressions of the course, the other university, and other students that they met.
Second week	Assessment 2: 1st discussion board postings	Students were asked to post a written piece in their workgroups' e-learning discussion forum, reflecting on their own drawings made at the first workshop, as well as the drawings of one other student from the other profession – reflecting on what they had learnt about communities in South Africa.
Third week	Assessment 3: 2nd discussion board postings	Students were required to post replies to comments made by other students (from first assignment).
Fourth week	Second workshop at UWC	This second face-to-face workshop provided an opportunity for students to meet in person again and to start working on the group project.  The workshop included discussions and exercises on identity and community by invited speakers.
Ongoing	Assessment 4: Group Project	The student workgroups were required to prepare (via the e-learning platform and email) a PowerPoint presentation on their thinking about community, self and identity (to be presented at final workshop).
Fifth week	Final workshop held at SU	Students presented their group projects to each other. Their ideas were discussed by the audience and the presentations were marked.  The workshop ended with a guest speaker or presentation related to issues of identity (eg performance by dancers with disabilities).

<b>Time-frame</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Description</b>
Sixth week	Assessment 5: Short essay paper	Students were required to submit a short essay paper describing their experience of collaborative learning and reflecting on community, self and identity in contemporary South Africa.

**Table 9.1: Outline of CSI Module Assessments**

		<b>Psychology (SU)</b>	<b>Social Work (UWC)</b>	<b>Occupational Therapy (UWC)</b>
<b>No of Students</b>		17	44	44
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Female</b>	12	42	42
	<b>Male</b>	5	2	2
<b>Age</b>	<b>Range</b>	20-52	20-37	20- 42
	<b>Mean</b>	27.4 yrs	24.3 yrs	23.5 yrs
<b>Race</b>	<b>African</b>	2	18	10
	<b>Coloured</b>	3	25	29
	<b>White</b>	12	1	4
	<b>Indian</b>	0	0	1
<b>Language</b>	<b>African</b>	2	18	10
	<b>Afrikaans</b>	5	14	3
	<b>English</b>	7	12	31
	<b>Other</b>	3	0	0

**Table 9.2: Description of Students on CSI 2007**

The initial allocation of students to their small learning groups aimed to create a diverse membership based on race, gender, professional and university affiliation. As mentioned earlier, the two universities have a different historical background which continues to be reflected in the demographic profile of the majority of their students. Table 9.2 provides a description of some of the demographics of students participating in 2007. It also includes demographics of race. For an explanation of the use of racial categories, see the introduction.

Twelve mandatory readings from a wide range of academic sources were chosen by the design team for students to use in their group debates and course assessment tasks. This literature, uploaded on the website, created a

shared language of learning as students began to discuss that concepts such as ‘community’ and ‘community work’ may belong to a conservative political past – as Thornton and Ramphela (1988) argue. While literature related to South Africa’s social/political past (eg Posel, 2001) seemed to support some students’ personal experiences of race and class, for others it elicited a confrontation with previously held assumptions; some students, for example, believed that regardless of one’s racial classification (ie past), hard work would lead to the same outcome for all in South Africa.

### Learning about ‘the other’

It is difficult to describe the charged emotional atmosphere that became a part of this learning environment. Students and staff alike became absorbed in each other’s narratives and insights into what it was like to live, learn and love in South Africa today. The diversities, richness and disparities of experiences were immediately evident from the community map and river of life drawings produced by students at the start of each module. Figure 9.1, drawn by a student from US, depicted a fairly pleasant looking community, with trees, animals and evidence of good economic resources. The other community map is by a student from UWC (Figure 9.2) and depicts the different social problems faced by that community. This student stresses the importance of hope in bringing about change.



Figure 9.1: Community map by US student (CSI2008)

We have selected these drawings because they illustrate fairly stereotypical differences. It is important to state that not all UWC students had difficult lives and not all US students had easier ones. For example, many students from both institutions had similar concerns about crime and safety, and students from both institutions had experienced loss in their lives. But what



Figure 9.2: Community map by student from UWC (CSI2008)

the drawings do depict in more general terms is how students are typically situated in relation to their family's history of race and class in South Africa.

The facilitators and design team would meet periodically to reflect on the whole process. During these meetings, we identified a shared concern that students seemed reluctant to discuss race in relation to understanding the 'other'. Despite the disparities depicted in the drawings, students frequently used terms from the 'New South Africa' discourse: they described being members of a 'rainbow nation' or were quoted as saying 'he is my brother, a brother from a different mother' or 'we are still just people' (see Leibowitz *et al*, 2007). This seemed to imply that the past was well and truly behind them and they were all equal and able to relate in open and trusting partnerships. We realised that this dynamic was echoed in our – ie the staff's – reluctance to bring up the past or discuss our experiences of race and class with the students and each other. Following this insight we arranged a week-long experiential group course for the full CSI staff team, where we spoke in a painful and ultimately profound way about our gender, class, professional grouping and race. By the time we ran the final course in 2008, this transformative process allowed us to engage with the students more openly and explicitly about matters of race and the traumatic past of the country that each of us carried and shared (see Leibowitz *et al*, 2010).

### **'We bring blame; they bring guilt ... that is no way to begin a relationship'**

In an early design team meeting we watched a video recording of a workshop Dr Ariella Friedman had run with a small group of students from the 2007 CSI course. Dr Friedman is a psychologist with many years experience of inter-group contact work in Israel/Palestine (see Halabi, 2004). The group of students had volunteered to consider their learning from the CSI course with her and each other. The film showed a deeply moving encounter between students who came from different racial, professional and gendered backgrounds. In it coloured students from rural areas spoke of being warned by their parents not to trust 'black people' when they came to the city (university), while white students spoke of their dawning realisation that their much loved domestic worker or nanny, who lived in a small room at the back of their home, didn't have hot water to use in her bathroom. It was following a prolonged and painful silence, which acknowledged the stories that had been shared by all the group members, that a black student looked up and said 'we bring blame, they bring guilt...that is no way to begin a relationship.'

Despite their evident difficulty in explicitly entering a dialogue about the legacy of apartheid and engaging fully with the crime scene, students seemed to find the CSI course a moving, challenging and educationally beneficial experience. For many it was an opportunity to briefly visit the lived experience of the 'other', an opportunity not all students had had outside their everyday superficial encounters in the broader society. Despite the many silences during their discussions, it was apparent that many students recognised that they were not 'all the same' and it was in fact their diverse racialised histories that accounted for their different positions in contemporary South Africa. This is reflected in some of the comments students made in their individual essays (their final assignment).

In the following quotes, three students comment on the overall effect of the course. It made them more aware of themselves as professionals or as having a black, white or coloured identity. They seemed able to consider these parts of themselves because they were in groups with students who came from different backgrounds:

[The CSI course] has provided me with an opportunity to reflect on myself in many areas such as my own identity and what determines that as well as the identity of my community and how it has affected who I am and who I will become. My background and upbringing has resulted in a certain way of thinking, and although I do not believe that this is wrong, I do believe that CSI has exposed me to many people with different backgrounds and views and taught me how to consider their views as seriously as I consider my own. (Female, coloured, OT student, UWC)

In this course I have been conscientioused[sic] into investigating and challenging my knowledge about what communities are and how having limited notions on what communities are can result in one being discriminative to other communities that exist in the same space as my community does. ... A comment was made about one of the colleagues in the CSI course about why does each institution not hold its own course. Apparently this individual did not see the importance of the collaboration between these institutions as a drop in the bucket towards nation building and racial integration. Yes we have had our difficulties during the course, but that does not mean that this exercise was futile. (Male, black, OT student, UWC)

As a learning experience the course has been incredible. I have, at different times, been impressed, energised, frustrated, annoyed, overwhelmed, challenged and moved. The group dynamic really added value and I doubt that I would have been able to learn as much without my group member's, and the wider participants', contributions. (Female, white, psychology student, US)



The critical questions that were part of the assignment guidelines and directed reading exposed students to a number of controversial views. Such questions were debated in their small groups, often prompted by the thought-provoking and emotionally honest presentations given by the guest speakers. From this experience, students described how they began to reflect on their own assumptions and positioning. They emphasised the importance of listening to 'the other' and what was learnt during that process. For example two students wrote:

This has afforded me the opportunity to explore and view my opinions in an open forum, but has also allowed me the opportunity to hear the opinions of my peers. With the new framework of critical thinking, this expanded my knowledge and opened my eyes to a whole new world of hurt, pain and oppression but also a world of expression, reconciliation and a journey of healing. (Female, coloured, OT student, UWC)

I was also struck by [the guest speaker's] beautiful comment at the third workshop that 'the self is both host and hostage to the other'. Indeed it seems that self is not possible without the existence of the other. For me, his comment also tied in with an issue that I have struggled with throughout the course. I am often quite outspoken and my work requires me to be quite directive. I have been grappling with the paradox of how to allow my/one's own voice without silencing the other. And his comment has led me to consider at least a partial solution to this complex problem and that is that any statement of, or arising out of, the self should also include an invitation of response from the other. (Female, white, psychology student, US)

Both quotes also reflect optimism about future change, with students emphasising a hopeful dialogue or expression. In relation to this some students also recognised the value of what was learnt for their future professional lives:

Are we then truly living in a democratic country? Topics such as these stirred many questions in me and above all forced me to relook at my view on this topic. With hindsight it became clear that by 'not having an opinion' I was in fact taking the easy way out and not facing the realities which were lying right in front of me and by this I was taking away opportunities and experiences from many of the clients I was working with by not allowing them the opportunity to be affected by this very real situation and express the result of this. (Female, coloured, OT student, UWC)

Similarly, another student writes about her future professional self:

This course has been something of a consciousness-raiser for me. ... In the session on PLA techniques ... she [guest speaker] told us a story of a community intervention in which taps were built. For the first time the community had safe, running water. But no-one had consulted the children who, it turned out, were the primary collectors of water in the community and the taps were built too high for them to negotiate. In that story I have found three key principles that I hope to take with me into the future: consultation, inquiry and empathy. (Female, white, psychology student, US)

During the first iteration of the CSI course, the research team began to feel a little despondent that students were not actively engaged in deep and meaningful verbal dialogue on matters of race and identity. We reflected on the assumptions and expectations of the students, we hoped that we had developed a course that could inspire students' critical reflectivity. However, it was in reading the progressive years of such essays that we began to see students becoming able to reflect in a meaningful and creative way.

The CSI project was ambitious in its aim to provide students from different institutions with a containing space so they might engage across areas of difference, to learn from each other. The potential for this type of authentic learning requires the commitment of academics and institutions. There is no quick fix, and everyone involved (educators and learners) is required to explore their identity markers (given and chosen) in an emotionally authentic manner. There can be many conscious reasons given for not doing this type of work (eg timetable issues, the high staff-student ratio required), but these reasons may hide a deeper unconscious denial of the painful past. As Berlak (2004), Walker and Unterhalter (2004) and Hopper (2001) all declare, without an acknowledgement of the injuries caused and felt from the past, no mourning can take place, precluding the possibility of learning something new. This type of curriculum design is not a place for piety or seeking easy solutions, but an acknowledgment of the reality of others lives that can allow us to see ourselves. It is in the silence of listening to the other that we can hope for change in ourselves.

... wait without love

For love would be the wrong thing; there is yet faith

But the faith and the love and the hope are all in the waiting.

Wait without thought, for you are not ready for thought:

So the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing.

(From the *Four Quartets*, TS Eliot, 1959:28)

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# 10

## Disrupting mainstream discourse in teacher education through decolonising pedagogies

*Sharon Subreenduth*

### **Introduction**

**A**s a transnational subject in the West with shifting positionalities – Third World subject from South Africa now living in the United States – I use my teaching experiences as analytical possibility for legitimising transnational epistemologies within dominant educational discourse and theory-making in higher education settings. In contextualising myself within this chapter, I utilise Smith's use of transnational as 'shifting spaces' that recognise that the 'other is not located solely in the margins and distant places but is here and there, within and outside, visiting home as well as visiting the metropolitan institution' (2008:551). My shifting transnational spaces are located respectively within my experiences in US higher education settings and in SA as a western educated diasporic and subject of apartheid. This transnational theorising is actualised through the praxis of social justice and an analysis of the critical tensions in engaging with difference (ie identity, nationality, race and knowledge) within my courses.

While I utilise US higher education as a context of analysis, the decolonising pedagogies espoused here, rooted in global South experiences of colonialism and oppression, have implications for the approach of pre-service teacher training in the South as well. My hope for such transnational analysis is an alternative lens through which to examine the discursive nature of race, power and knowledge. I assert that my socio-political and educational ex-

periences in the South have offered me a more critical, complex and nuanced approach to dealing with issues of diversity and difference in the West (Subreenduth, 2008). This move challenges the colonial knowledge export model in which the West is always the producer of knowledge and the South always the recipient.

Globally, educational scholars (Smith, 1999; Rizvi, 2009; Gillborn, 2009; Fataar, 2010; Spivak, 1993) have discussed the need to make connections amongst indigenous, multicultural and local-global discourses on social justice to better understand contemporary issues such as poverty, oppression and religion. However, while many US teacher education courses may want to engage in critical dialogue about issues of difference, diversity, equity and social justice, they often find little space to do so, given how dialogue about difference in teacher education is so tightly framed by monolithic ideas of truth and reality (McLaren, 1988). Merryfield's (2000) study on how/why teachers are not being prepared to teach about diversity, equity and global connectedness underscores the gaps in teacher preparation and professional development programs across the US. As a result, mainstream thinking and approaches to diversity education are reproduced in various forms, often without any interruption (see Kumashiro, 2008).

While this gap remains, calls by critical educators (Giroux, 2005; Ladson-Billings and Brown, 2008) have highlighted the shortfalls of teacher preparation to challenge students and teachers beyond their comfort level and beyond what they think they already know about issues of social justice in education. Kumashiro argues that teacher education needs to take an anti-oppressive approach to teaching about diversity, difference, equity and social justice, irrespective of whether it engages with local or global societies, politics, histories and people. Such approaches are more consistent with using higher education for the public good as a space for critical and transformative possibilities, as we consider what it means to learn and contribute in society with the other.

This chapter highlights the imperative to develop and implement more critically nuanced, reflexive and diverse pedagogies in teacher preparation and professional development programmes, so as to better equip educators to understand, develop and implement pedagogies in their classrooms that work towards decolonising education (see Rhee and Subreenduth, 2006; Subedi and Daza, 2008; Subreenduth, 2010). While decolonising and social justice theoretical frames may have originated as the result of different local experiences in the West and the South, and may play out differently given dif-

ferent histories, politics and contexts, they are interwoven and work against oppression and marginalisation.

For the purposes of this chapter I frame pedagogical encounters within a US higher education context and look closely at undergraduate pre-service teacher education courses that focused on social studies pedagogy. As a means to consider possibilities for decolonising pedagogical encounters and looking at representation of the other through familiar and common sense realities of my white middle-class students, I borrow two key concepts from two social justice oriented scholars.

- Kevin Kumashiro's anti-oppressive stance with its focus on how repetition leads to normalisation and common sense
- bell hooks' transgressive pedagogy, as a pedagogy of resistance to hegemonic knowledge production and consumption.

Kumashiro and hooks produce alternative conceptualisations that interrogate Eurocentric and dominant forms of knowledge that continue to sanction monolithic ideas of truth and reality. This chapter is a call for teacher education programmes to move beyond making information available, so they engage students in alternative, more critical perspectives, counter narratives and pedagogies on issues of difference, diversity, oppression and social justice. In order to rupture the underpinnings of oppression, one needs to counter and disrupt the operations of othering and objectification within classrooms.

### **Tiptoeing around issues of diversity and race in teacher preparation**

This chapter draws on data and my engagement with undergraduate social studies teacher preparation courses I taught. While these courses are not characterised as 'diversity' courses *per se*, a significant amount of course materials and dialogue are included and were intended to serve as a counter hegemonic intervention to mainstream curricula. Expectations of methods courses rarely incorporate an interrogation of how student diversity and alternative knowledges and perspectives can produce a different classroom dynamic, and hence a different engagement with content and a new construction of knowledges. Critical perspectives of difference should be integrated across a programme and not relegated to one course (Gay, 2000). However, when students expect diverse perspectives in a diversity course but not in other courses, they may experience a kind of cognitive dissonance.

Inserting difference into my methods class – not just through my bodied self (African immigrant, black Third World woman of Asian descent) but also by

my insistence that students wrestle with issues of diversity, racism, globalisation and multiculturalism via the ways they think, practice and choose – is covertly questioned by students. When white middle-class pre-service teachers earnestly profess that race, color and ethnicity ‘does not matter’ in the class because they ‘don’t see it’, because each child is ‘equal’, how and where does one begin to disrupt this continued pattern of perceived anti-racist blindness? Pollock (2004) refers to this as colourmuteness; it mutes the discourse on race and racial inequalities and thereby maintains the status quo. Claiming such a position seems to allow students to move beyond issues of race, ethnicity and diversity without questioning their own privileges and those that govern the process of schooling. While diversity issues have a legitimate space to occupy in courses, including in its title ‘multicultural’, ‘race’ or ‘diversity’, integrating the analysis of such issues in my methods class is often met with cynicism, disdain and agitation by students.

### **Anti-oppressive approach to repetition in education/society**

Kumashiro (2000) reviews four approaches typically used in mainstream anti-oppressive education: education for the other; education about the other; education that is critical about privileging and othering; and education that changes students and societies. His paper outlines and critiques the limits and possibilities of these four approaches. His argument is to move beyond any one of the above approaches; to use them in concert; and to include marginalised theories and perspectives that they exclude. This chapter puts anti-oppressive approaches to work in educational theorising and teacher preparation.

Efforts to challenge oppression are not free of contradictions, ambiguities or complicities. Kumashiro (2003) notes that anti-oppressive approaches to teaching and researching operate in ways that challenge some forms of oppression while complying with others. This complicity by educators and students is not always intentional, visible or knowingly resistive of social change. Kumashiro (2003:45) explains:

One reason that a desire for social change can coincide with a resistance to social change is that some educational practices, perspectives, social relations, and identities remain unquestioned. In fact, people, often consider some practices and relationships to be part of what schools and society are supposed to be, and fail to recognise how the repetition of such practices and relations – how having to experience them again and again – can help to maintain the oppressive status quo of schools and society.

This desire and resistance to social change is exemplified in recent instances of conflict on who gets included or excluded from the stalwart of US high school culture – the prom. The prom and school dance (the latter is the typical end of high school activity in most countries) have generally reinforced mainstream stereotypical and repetitive images of male and female roles and concretised ideas of race, sexuality and gender as well as socio-economic privilege. There are, for example, certain expectations for dresses, tuxes, limos, dinners and expensive venues. Recently these expectations have been interrupted and challenged by openly gay students wanting to attend their prom as same sex couples. This interruption of common sense expectations instigated openly hostile resistance from administrators and community, which led to legal battles over school policy and issues of equity (Best, 2000) <http://thinkprogress.org/politics/2010/03/23/88131/mcmillen-alternative-prom/>).

Kumashiro (2008) premises that the basic repetition of mainstream narratives, images and discourse is what makes them so normal and why they become framed as common sense. These entrenched common sense notions are part of the reason why it is so difficult to disrupt or learn against these normalised views of reality. Learning against repetition is a long-term, conscious and often tedious process – a process that requires patience and a willingness to be open and vulnerable. The difficulty of unlearning repetition is demonstrated in the following anecdote.

During a discussion on stereotyping and its implications for us as educators, I gave one of my pre-service social studies classes (all white, mainly female students) a short article – *Taking the Offensive Against Offensive Toys* (Gordon, 2002) to read. It was meant to stimulate a discussion on the political implications of toys, especially the stereotyping by gender and race and exclusions of marginalised groups. The article described how a teacher and his young students visited a toy store and after analysing toys and their packaging came to the conclusion that certain toys were racist, sexist and exclusionary. Students in this article were encouraged to write to the manufacturer about their complaints. One such read: ‘Your product ... is racist and sexist because your toys only have whites on the toy but no blacks.’ Another stated: ‘one of your products is very badly stereotyped of a Native American ...’ I asked my pre-service students to share their reactions to this reading: there was silence and uncomfortable shifting. I then went on to ask whether any of them had played with Barbie or GI Joe dolls and if we used this article and our other class readings on diversity, how would they now analyse these dolls for stereotyping, if at all.



After some politically correct feedback, a white female student blurted out: 'I basically think whoever wrote this article had nothing better to do with their time!' She was adamant that there was no stereotyping with these dolls, and that she believed young children do not discriminate when they play with toys. Asked how she knew this, she shared a story from teaching Sunday school class. One of the white kids in her group, she said, loved playing with a black Barbie doll and when she asked the little girl why she liked it she said she liked black Barbie's tan! According to her this was a positive affirmation of a black person and indicated a lack of racism or discrimination. The black Barbie doll was given value and meaning by the commodity of its tan, not the possibilities of friendship it presented, it being a 'nice doll' or smart or pretty, or because of any cultural characteristics deemed positive. While I am not sure of the exact skin color of that particular Barbie, even a cursory look at African American Barbie dolls shows that most mimic the physical features of the white Barbie doll but in a darker tone.

*RACE* is a current project of the American Anthropological Association, while video project *Girl Like Me* explores the standards of beauty imposed upon black girls and how the repetitious learning of who/what (white skin) is beautiful becomes normalised and desired (see <http://www.understandin grace.org/lived/video/index.html>). These common sense commodified precepts of beauty play out in my students' analysis of the Barbie, in which they end up simply reminiscing about childhood play and not interrupting essentialised discourses of gender, race, ethnicity and beauty. Some students, like the one quoted, expressed anger that the course attempts to disrupt the repetition of their childhood memories of play and re-read them in more critical and less romanticised ways. I believe that despite resistance to this interrupted reminiscing, the students could use this experience to re-read their childhood memories and that student resistance to anti-oppressive pedagogy can mark that pedagogy as anti-oppressive.

### **Engaged pedagogy**

hooks' educational theory – engaged pedagogy – has developed out of an interplay of anticolonial, critical and feminist pedagogies and provided an 'engaging and powerful standpoint ... for interrogating biases in curricula that reinscribe systems of domination while simultaneously providing new ways to teach diverse groups of students' (1994:10). She critiques the banking education approach and its ideology of maintaining the status quo. While hooks addresses the cultural reproduction of dominant and discriminatory elements in educational settings and society, her analysis moves beyond classism to embrace the complexity of racism and sexism.

hooks' theorising of an engaged pedagogy is largely built upon her own educational experiences as a black student and educator. As a woman who encountered oppressive racism, sexism and classism, her experiences of marginality helped shape and articulate her educational pedagogy – a pedagogy fundamentally based on developing and nurturing critical consciousness in both teachers and students. hooks (1994) outlines her educational theory by recollecting her educational experiences in school and at college. The teachers, according to her, were enacting a 'revolutionary pedagogy of resistance' by nurturing the students' intellect to become scholars, thinkers and cultural workers; this was a 'counter-hegemonic act, a fundamental way to resist every strategy of white racist colonisation' (p2). hooks refers to this type of education as the 'practice of freedom' (p3) – that is, a 'way of teaching [so] that anyone can learn' (p13).

Engaged pedagogy provides students with multiple perspectives, allowing them to know themselves better and to live in the world more fully by reaching 'critical awareness and engagement' – the foundation of engaged pedagogy (p14). I have tried to offer these multiple perspectives to my students to engage them in critical awareness about the canonised realities they experience so they can critique, dialogue and reflect on their commonsense notions of reality. For such discussions I have deliberately chosen books my students would have encountered at home or school. I often give my students a couple of books to review and analyse for such stereotypes.

Building on the aforementioned student's response to Barbie I added a story about Barbie, titled *Barbie: The Pyramid Adventure* (Balducci, 1998). Barbie goes to Egypt to visit her friend Christie, an archeology student. While visiting the tomb Christie is helping excavate, Barbie gets lost, falls asleep and dreams of herself and Christie as princesses. The other book, *Babar the King* (De Bruhoff, 1963), sees Babar the elephant leave the jungle to visit the city and return determined to build an elephant kingdom so the elephants can live in a civilised world.

For this activity I specifically ask students to pay close attention to the pictures in the books and consider what messages they might propagate. For instance, according to my reading, the visuals depict hierarchical, racist, and colonial images. These included: Barbie seated on a chaise longue with Christie, an African American doll, seated at her foot; and in *Babar the King*, the animals dressed up and acting European in order to be civilised. The first image is decidedly reminiscent of the master/slave narrative while the second indicates dominant racial, political and cultural power dynamics.

I have used these books for two classes during two different semesters. Students fail to recognise any of these visuals' troubling aspects. Their reactions to the texts and visuals remain largely in the realm of fondly reminiscing about their childhood play. This highlights the imperative to equip students with theoretical and conceptual frameworks and for us as educators to utilise pedagogical strategies that help them re-read and re-interpret materials in critical ways that go beyond their personal experiences.

Engaged pedagogy seeks more than to nurture a reflective and critical stance or to develop in students a level of prescribed literacy, professional skills and conformity to the status quo. It calls for a reconceptualisation of knowledge and for linking theory to practice. Possibly the greatest downfall of most of our teacher preparation courses is the lack of strong theoretical frameworks that are inclusive of decolonising theories (Daza, forthcoming). Another possible issue in teacher preparation is the mainstream, liberal, politically correct and multicultural push for having students read from their own experiences. This is couched as student-centered pedagogy, but students often do not have access to multiple theoretical perspectives from which to re-read their world in ways that interrogate their personal experiences. Hence it remains childhood reminiscing.

Teacher preparation and K-12 pedagogy, whether taking place in the South or West, needs to push students beyond their own realities and experiences by providing multiple perspectives and alternative theoretical frameworks from which to re-read their experiences, common sense realities and dominant Eurocentric and canonical forms of knowledge. Willinsky (1998), for example, highlights how the legacies of colonialism and imperialism continue to inform contemporary discussions on science, history, geography and race in education and thus have implications for the ways in which these are taught in K-12 classrooms. In her analysis of how the Middle East gets represented, Senoy offers insights into the powerful ways the media reinforce canonised notions of gender, physical appearance, race and religion, and argues that this 'media-based schooling about the world' (2010:40) concretises mainstream narratives. She challenges educators to explore strategies to teach social science curricula in ways that offer more critical readings of the media and the messages it embeds. Transgressive education, like Kumashiro's anti-oppressive approach of learning against repetition, intends to interrupt the familiar, the taken for granted. For example, will the same students view the Barbie and Babar visuals differently after a class that allows opportunities to deconstruct the master narrative?

### **Towards decolonising pedagogies**

I have utilised Kumashiro and hooks as an impetus to analyse the need for making difference part of the mainstream in teacher education programmes and as a means to consider how this discourse can counter the repetition so embedded in our everyday thinking, dialogue, interactions and discourse. On the discussion of possible interventions I propose a two-pronged approach to engage teacher educators in more critical and nuanced dialogue. The first is getting students to understand that ‘worlding’ (Spivak, 1985a; 1985b) happens, that there are different perspectives at the center and periphery (and even within each) and how those ideas are controlled then shape subjects and life. Secondly, once it is recognised that multiple ways shape truth and reality, there is then the active engagement with other perspectives – an infiltration into dominant discourses.

According to Spivak (1985a; 1985b) worlding speaks of ways in which colonised spaces were constructed and ushered into the world through the Eurocentric mentality and made to be sovereign and normalised. This can be used to read how the changing demographics in the US brings the global other into local spaces. She speaks of worlding as taking place in subtle ways. Her example is of how the presence of the British soldier in India rewrites/worlds the colonial space as an imperial space for the native Indian simply by his presence, which then dislodges any other discourses. Again, Spivak’s (1985a) colonial analysis ironically speaks to the ways in which difference within the US – be it immigrant, native, foreigner, race, gender, sexuality, poverty – creates the othered subject and gets packaged in particular ways through societal, cultural and political policy and curricula that are seen as abnormal.

For educators even to think about decolonising pedagogy, they need to understand the centre’s ability to map the contours of both the centre and the margin and the ways in which the centre controls the dialogue about difference (Spivak, 1993; Jackson and Mazzei, 2011). This is why a complex, nuanced engagement and dialogue about issues of difference, diversity and equity are often marginalised as too ideological, controversial or irrelevant to local experiences. More often, and especially in non-diverse environments like the one I work in, a mainstream politically correct engagement of these issues takes place, sometimes to such an extent that these issues become sanitised, isolated or remain the purview of the other. Case studies and readings about poverty, difference and diversity in teacher education programmes are not enough to engage educators in decolonising pedagogies. This argument is supported by Kumashiro, who states: ‘changing oppression requires disruptive knowledge not just more knowledge’ (2000:10). Said (1993)

referred to this disruptive knowledge as contrapuntal perspectives. These are perspectives and theoretical frameworks, often by the marginalised, that challenge and reinterpret dominant narratives in order to produce decolonising readings of our world and our interactions with it (see Subedi, 2010).

This is the decolonising scholarship of hope that Fataar (2010) and others advance. Fataar argues that:

A scholarship of hope ought to be based on bringing understandings of excluded communities and their perspectives and knowledges to academic consciousness. Such a scholarship is also meant to inform the critical pedagogical work of educators in school classrooms and university lecture halls. (p1)

Should this scholarship of hope not be the impetus to serve the public good intentions of schooling, not just in South Africa but in the US too? Kumashiro, hooks, Spivak and Fataar challenge us to work against the familiar, the common sense, the taken for granted. Only when we move beyond these and subject our everyday normalised realities to an anti-oppressive, social justice analytic lens do we recognise and engage at a more conscious and critical level with the other. Through these concerted efforts, I see the work of decolonising pedagogy being realised.

As our local environments become increasingly implicated in global operations via our material, technological or cultural consumptions, we need carefully to rethink and rearticulate the global-local implications of difference, diversity, race, social justice and oppression. Educators, irrespective of geography, history, politics, can enable a more nuanced and complex understanding of social justice through disrupting canonised discourses and knowledge production and consumption. Such an approach will provide forums that challenge them to pay attention to ideological, imperial and personal curricular decisions. For educators like me, with socio-political lived experiences of the South and now practising and living in the West, this examination of how purposeful educator preparation programmes could offer spaces to challenge dominant curricula provides insights into how to generate productive possibilities for our students. This offers a space to also examine ways in which individuals and groups of people within the same geographic and othered locations construct, challenge, negotiate and interpret the political, cultural and historical aspects of their lived experiences.

While the dominant imagination of curriculum knowledge and power is always present in interactions, the possibilities presented in this chapter offer insights into the process by which educators can re-imagine, re-concep-

tualise and disrupt dominant ways of knowing and consequently of teaching about oppression and social injustice. Such purposeful pedagogical experiences challenge educators to create curriculum knowledge that is more critically presented to their students. These interactions also remind us that teachers serve not just one role in the learning process but many. Like learners, their pre-existing attitudes and past experiences will colour the learning process, making it far from neat and homogenous. Thus schooling and learning opportunities must be sensitive to difference and account for externalities in the learning process. In offering my pre-service education students opportunities to re-examine themselves within the convoluted terrain of their course material, I also hope that engagement will yield more critical educators who become cognisant of the complexity of culture, race, politics, difference, diversity, social justice and anti-oppressive perspectives (Ayers *et al*, 2010).

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# 11

## Cultivating global citizenship in engineering courses

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### Introduction

Taking into account the context of uncertainty and change which lies ahead for most engineering graduates in their professional lives, numerous experts and higher education bodies not only demand a solid knowledge of the technical aspects of the profession, they also see the need to introduce the so-called soft skills that lie at the interface of physical sciences and humanities/social sciences (Cruickshank and Fenner, 2007). Among these, we highlight reflexivity (Robbins, 2007), creativity, communication and leadership (Sheppard *et al*, 2009) and the ethical competences (Newberry, 2004; Billington, 2006; Berjano and Boni, 2009).

We understand that these ethical competences should be applied to the discussion concerning individual awareness of the values which have a direct influence on the carrying out of one's profession, but also that they should address global ethical dilemmas. As Sheppard *et al* point out, it is important to understand the micro and macro ethical dimensions of professional practice:

even if graduates are not expected to move into positions that involve policy formulation and other direct macro-ethical decision making, the large perspective provides an important context that should play a role in shaping many aspects of micro-ethical professional practice. (2009:138)



Along similar lines, the United States-based Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (2008) proposes that as a result of professional training programmes in the field of engineering, the outcomes should include: an understanding of professional and ethical responsibility; the broad education necessary to understand the impact of engineering solutions in a global, economic, environmental, and societal context; and a knowledge of contemporary issues.

In this chapter we give a detailed account of the rationale and development of a subject in the curriculum which has been offered since 1995 to engineering undergraduates at the Universidad Politécnica de Valencia (UPV), Spain. It aimed to enhance three ethical abilities considered to be of utmost importance in the formative process of professional engineers. According to moral philosopher Martha Nussbaum, these three abilities are fundamental to cultivating humanity in educational contexts (Nussbaum, 1997). The abilities proposed by Nussbaum are the following:

- The capacity for critical examination or *critical thinking*.  
Is particularly crucial for good citizenship in a society that needs to come to grips with the presence of people who differ by ethnicity, caste and religion [...] training this capacity requires developing the capacity to reason logically, to test what one reads or says for consistency of reasoning, correctness of fact, and accuracy of judgment
- The second, *cosmopolitan* ability, focuses on:  
Understanding the differences that make understanding difficult between groups and nations and the shared human needs and interests that make understanding essential, if common problems are to be solved [which includes] the related task of understanding differences internal to one's own nation
- And, finally, the *narrative imagination*:  
This means the ability to think what it might be like to be in the shoes of a person different from oneself, to be an intelligent reader of that person's story, and to understand the emotions and wishes and desires that someone so placed might have. (Nussbaum, 2006:388-91)

In Nussbaum's proposition we have discovered a source of inspiration that has helped us construct a humanistic university curriculum pedagogically based on development education. Thus education can be understood as a formative process whose main goal is to empower learners through a teaching and learning process which develops knowledge, skills and values to

enable them to become members of a global community of equals (Boni, 2006). This vision of development education reflects what is known as fifth generation development education, which particularly emphasises a global perspective (Mesa, 2000; Ortega, 2008).

This curricular experience involves two subjects: Introduction to Development Cooperation and Development Aid Projects, which are offered as free elective courses with a length of 45 to 60 hours per course depending on the school where they are taught. In this chapter we describe the origins and context in which the experience has evolved over the years, the objectives and teaching methodology and the results of an exploratory study carried out between 2005 and 2007. The study aimed to determine whether, and to what extent, the students developed a more critical spirit which would allow them to adopt a more global and cosmopolitan vision of the world.

### **A curriculum to foster global citizenship abilities**

In 1995 a group of students and professional engineers involved with a non-governmental development organisation (NGDO) named Engineers without Borders started an innovative course on development aid. With the endorsement of The Technical School of Industrial Engineering, Valencia, and support from the Department of Engineering Projects, the first lecture on development aid in a Spanish engineering environment took place. Over a ten-year period, more than 3,000 undergraduate students followed two free elective courses – one on introductory issues regarding development and development aid called Introduction to Development Aid and the other entitled Development Aid Projects. The aim of this initiative was to develop in future professionals a sense of democratic and global citizenship through the accomplishment of the following objectives:

- to bring the University closer to the reality of southern countries, thereby overcoming prejudice and revealing the consequences of individual actions and personal and professional attitudes to that reality
- to contribute to the acquisition of a global and interdependent vision of the reality in which students will develop their future professional activities
- to encourage active social involvement, volunteering and professional activity oriented towards social action.

Table 11.1 provides a summary of the main concepts these two elective courses dealt with, from the point of view of the teaching-learning process.

<b>Knowledge and Understanding</b>	<b>Skills</b>	<b>Attitudes and Values</b>
social justice and equality	critical thinking	empathy
globalisation and interdisciplinarity	ability to argue effectively	sense of identity and self esteem
kinds of development	cooperation and conflict resolution	value and respect for diversity
diversity	ability to challenge	diversity
peace and conflict	injustices and inequality	commitment to social justice and equity
development aid		sensitive to environmental issues and committed to sustainable development
cosmopolitan citizenship		firm belief that people can make a difference
		capacity for self-regulation

**Table 11.1: summary of contents**

Methodologically, we do not underplay the importance of technical content in the curriculum, but we regard the key approach needed to foster a student’s cosmopolitan ability as being *how* they learn rather than *what* they learn. For instance, if we want to enhance critical thinking or a commitment to social justice and equity when explaining human development theories, after a short overview of these theories’ key issues we spend more time discussing in groups how the concept of human development can be applied in our context and our lives. To do this, we use the matrix of needs and satisfiers proposed by Max Neef *et al* (1994) to allow students to understand the contextual, multicultural and non-Eurocentric sense of human development.

Using the technique of moral dilemma to introduce reflections on a controversial issue in development is a further example of the importance of how learning is facilitated. One such dilemma concerns the tension between social audits for fair trade products – for example, carpet making – and the context in which these products are made – for instance, using child labour. After presenting the dilemma we use open and respectful dialogue to trigger a series of arguments – such as whether or not to sell the carpets on fair trade circuits (Lozano *et al*, 2006). We use these two exercises to foster Nussbaum’s abilities; namely, a person’s critical and autonomous capacity and their ability to think for themselves. We thus discourage a-critical forms of thinking on development or simplistic approaches to resolving complex, moral problems, and promote socially responsible and reflective choices. We also foster respect,

dignity and recognition, as well as social relations that promote attitudes of active respect, listening and sensitivity to others which thus avoid dogmatic egocentrism.

Another ability our lectures aim to foster is the competence to challenge inequalities. In this sense, critical reflection on global issues such as globalisation, migration and environmental problems are illustrated with examples of how change happens. This is a strategic point in the course. To overcome the widespread belief in the impossibility of challenging the trends of the globalisation process, we focus on the importance of personal and collective agency, using examples of champions and networking that have made changes in the world possible (Chambers and Pettit, 2004). We comment on successful global campaigns such as the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, global boycotts against products manufactured with child labour and the World Social Forum in our lectures.

One of the most remarkable insights afforded by this experience of learning and teaching is owed to the strong connection between the University and NGOs in Valencia. For many who work in the broad field of development, the statistics of the World Bank or even the Human Development Report are seen as a privileged form of knowledge. Universities in the North rarely have the chance to create opportunities for their students to be immersed in contexts of poverty and marginalisation in the South, where experiences of life differ from their own and alternative perceptions about knowledge may arise. To address this, those of us working in universities in the North open our lectures to people from other parts of the world, allowing our students, through the interactions and dialogues that ensue, to perceive new realities. These revelations happen often and are almost always new and frequently unexpected.

Moreover, we offer the possibility of a brief immersion in Valencia's local context through short internships in NGOs. From 1995 to 2008, 189 students have had this practical experience in sixteen of the city's NGOs (Calabuig and Gómez-Torres, 2008), contributing to each organisation in some of the following ways: teaching basic computer courses, developing short studies for development aid projects and accompanying disabled people. The majority of students considered the experience extremely positive as they became acquainted with different problems and contexts and overcome prejudices about such people as gypsies, migrants or former inmates of secure institutions (Boni, 2007). This kind of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984) fosters students' cosmopolitan abilities alongside their emotional qualities of empathy, understanding, awareness and discernment.

### **Fostering global citizenship? Results of an exploratory study**

Between 2005 and 2007, we carried out an exploratory study which aimed to ascertain whether there was any evidence in the students' discourse to indicate their development of the abilities described by Nussbaum. We are aware that these abilities are not exclusively process-related, since they reflect values and question beliefs and ideologies. Moreover, these abilities can obviously be acquired not only within but also beyond the confines of the classroom. Accordingly, we consciously refer to this study as exploratory, and maintain that its main objective was to determine whether the educational intervention actually contributed to the learners developing Nussbaum's abilities.

To facilitate this the following questions were presented to the students before they started the course: What does the term 'development' mean to you? How do you think your values, beliefs, and attitudes influence your idea of development? And vice versa, how do you think you can have an influence on development issues? Students' reflections were written down and the same questions were repeated at the end of the course. To prevent influencing the answers given it was made clear that they were not being evaluated or included in the final mark.

Through quantitative and qualitative analysis of the students' responses in the pre- and post-course questionnaires, we were able to deconstruct the discourse in search of clues which might indicate some tentative development of critical thinking, cosmopolitan ability and narrative imagination. The written task required the students to externalise their inner thoughts and concerns, to put on paper their ideas and preconceptions concerning the issues that surround the concept of development in a changing world. There were a total of 80 informants, 37 female students and 43 male. Their nationalities were Spanish (63), Colombian (8), French (5), German (2), Australian (1) and Polish (1). The questionnaires were hand-written in Spanish and then transcribed. An analysis of the students' discourse was carried out using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The initial quantitative analysis was facilitated by using tools from the field of corpus linguistics<sup>1</sup> to identify the different aspects of lexis, grammar and the use of language in the texts. After making frequency word lists and carrying out concordances using the programme WordSmith 5 (Scott, 1996a), the next stage involved the study of longer parts of the texts.

Evidence showed clearly that students wrote significantly more about the different issues in the post-course questionnaires. Compared to the pre-course questionnaires, 50 per cent more words were used in the texts. While a direct link cannot be established between the development of critical thinking and

the length of the texts written, it does suggest that students had more to say, were more informed about the different topics and had more confidence to write in the later exploratory survey about the different questions brought up during the course. Moreover, a closer analysis of what was written in the texts suggests that while students critically examined the main issues relating to development and globalisation, they also placed themselves and their roles and responsibilities to society, both globally and locally, under the microscope too.

The most frequent content words in both the pre- and post- questionnaires are: development, country or countries and life. The most notable differences involved the words north, sustainable and human. In the post-course questionnaire, however, the last word is used 35 times next to the term development, whereas it only appears twice in the pre-course questionnaires. While the post-course questionnaires reveal notable differences concerning the students' perceptions of development, they also illustrate the complexity, richness and rigour of their arguments which reflect critical thought by not simply centering on economic issues. Students instead considered development as being dependent on multiple factors, as for instance:

Development involves several different aspects such as the economy, education, employment, housing, trade balance, technology, etc providing the population with quality of life, and the nation with sustainable growth, and is generated by the correct use and administration of a country's assets and resources.

In the same way, while the term sustainable appears only five times in the pre-course questionnaires, in the post-course text there are 50 incidences of its use, collocating with such terms as development, welfare, and environment. This not only highlights the increase in the use of these tokens, it shows there has been a qualitative change in the students' reflections. This is incorporated in the following statement: 'I am now familiar with the term sustainable development, a way of growing without harming...'

Students are not only aware that the welfare system is unsustainable, they also admit that the same is true of their personal growth within the consumer society they are immersed in: 'I think that living in a consumer society, my personal development is unsustainable.'

Concerning the issue of an action-oriented approach as a component of the global citizenship ability for tackling common problems, in the pre-course questionnaires students were generally quite negative about their capacity to change the status quo. In some cases, their attitude depended on the different

governments in power – some said, for example, ‘everything is in the hands of the USA and the European Allies’ or ‘I think I have very little influence on development.’

By the end of the course participants appear to have acquired a more global and interdependent vision of their roles in striving for a fairer society. They seem to have become empowered individuals who know they can influence what is happening through individual and collective action. They state, for instance: ‘therefore I can have some influence on the development of other countries, even though it is only on a small scale’; or ‘we have seen quite clearly in this subject that there are many ways of taking action, of helping in the field of development.’

By using certain forms more in the post-course questionnaires, the students illustrate their growing involvement, at both personal and collective level, in the search for solutions to problems in the field of development and other complex issues concerning human relations on a global scale. Discourse analysts study the use of modality in texts as it often reveals what the writer’s own perspective, attitude or stance is through the use of certain verbs, adjectives and adverbs. Unlike the nouns we analysed above, which appeared with a higher frequency, the verbs ‘supposed’, ‘think’, ‘guess’ and ‘believe’ were less frequent in the post-course questionnaires. Given that most would have had only a working knowledge of the different issues involved in the field of development, we understand that students would have been less confident about what they were writing about before taking the course.

According to Quirk *et al*, modal verbs, such as those indicating permission, obligation and volition, involve some kind of intrinsic human control over events (1987:219). In the case of ‘must’, two main uses have been established: logical necessity and obligation or compulsion. We have found in our data that nearly all the different forms of ‘must’ are used in the texts, although the present tense third person singular (‘must’) and first person plural (‘we must’) are used much more frequently in the post-course questionnaires – indeed, there are nearly five times as many examples of its use in this case. This frequency expresses what Quirk *et al* (1987:225) call obligation or compulsion, since there is an implication that the speaker or writer is ‘advocating a certain form of behaviour’ which indicates that the actual order of things in the world must be changed. There is a further implication that certain actions are seen as imperative, but the use primarily expresses that a person is to be found within the confines of those actions, as indicated by the pronoun ‘we’. The student is thus indicating a higher degree of personal implication as part of

the process of developing a global citizenship. Examples from students include: 'that is why we should work in many different ways, joint projects'; or 'to finish, I think we also must change the way we act with the countries in the South'.

If they are to acquire a narrative imagination, people have to understand what it is, and what it feels like to be the 'other'. The terms North and South are used significantly more in the post-course questionnaires. Appearing four and 45 times in the pre- and post-course questionnaires respectively, the increase in the use of the term North suggests that the course made students more aware of the North-South divide, so that by the end more appreciated that where one is born determines so many factors related to an individual's well-being – and that, ultimately, development is an issue that should concern people as much in the North as it does in the South. Their comments reflect these views: 'I can confirm that a person's social condition and the place where he or she is born will directly affect his or her idea of what development is'; 'I think that this is a key concept: by reducing the existing inequalities between South and North many of the problems will be resolved in the South ...'

Pronoun use in some genres has been strongly associated with the creation of social identities and the different social relations which can be established between writers and readers and the broader context being referred to in the texts. These features of reader-writer visibility are used to express attitudes and feelings and create greater interaction with the reader. As a consequence they can provide insights into the narrative imagination and empathy of the writer in relation to the other actors who are mentioned in the texts.

In Spanish (the language used by all the students in this survey, although not necessarily their native tongue), personal pronouns are less frequently used than they are in English. As a sign of grammatical person and number especially with verbs, they tend to be shown in the form of verbal morphemes (MacDonald, 2005). Studying the use of personal pronouns in critical discourse analysis enables the analyst to distinguish which groups the writers belong to, which are distanced from them, which pronouns indicate 'inclusion' and which are used (whether intentionally or not) for 'exclusion'.

It is interesting that although the majority clearly identify themselves with the rich and affluent North, they show their criticism of this individual and collective 'we' and display strong empathy with the other, or those who were born in the poorer parts of the world: the South. This is clearly expressed by a



student who said: '*We* are getting richer all the time, and *they* are getting poorer; this situation, if it continues, will explode...'

Many of the students in their post-course questionnaires remark how taking the subject has radically changed their attitude, not only with regards to development issues but also in relation to myriad subtler matters concerning their own moral consciences, their values and the possibilities each has for bringing about changes – they are now much more positive. As they put it: 'at the beginning of the course I really felt I had little influence on the topic of development. Now I really believe I can do something, both on a personal and professional level'; or: 'the world seems a smaller place [after working on, and thinking about the issue of development] and at the same time, your power to influence becomes greater.'

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter we have discussed the rationale, pedagogy and outcomes of a curriculum offered to engineering students at the Universidad Politécnica de Valencia (Spain). The curriculum comprises two elective subjects entitled Introduction to Development Aid and Development Aid Projects. The inspiration for the construction of the curriculum was the three democratic abilities proposed by Nussbaum (1997; 2006) and the way to operationalise it was development education understood as education for global citizenship. From our analysis of the discourse of the students, we can conclude that they did indeed develop the abilities described by Nussbaum; firstly, because of the complexity, richness and rigour of their arguments and reflections, or critical thinking; secondly, in the way they express their understanding of difference, the feeling of global identity and their orientation to action, ie cosmopolitan ability; and lastly, in their empathy for and awareness of the problems of others, or their narrative imagination. In the same way, although there may not be a significant relation between taking these subjects and the acquisition of critical skills for bringing about social transformation, we can confirm that many students showed clear indications of becoming empowered, being made aware of their capabilities and knowing they can influence what is happening, not only at the present time but also when they finish their studies and have an opportunity to put these cosmopolitan abilities into practice in their professional lives.

## **Acknowledgements**

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## Note

- 1 Corpus linguistics is the term that is used to define the approach or methodology which studies language use by gathering samples of what is actually said or written (a corpus), using computer technology for its analysis.

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# 12

## Towards a pedagogy of hybridity, reconciliation and justice

*Nico Koopman*

### **Introduction**

**F**or the past decade Dr Xolile Simon and I have been teaching a course on reconciliation and justice at the University of Stellenbosch in South Africa. Our fifth year Masters of Divinity (MDiv) class is constituted by students of a wide range of ethnic, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, as well as diversity with regard to gender and sexual orientation. Their diversity reflects the diversity of broader South African society, and of various countries in different parts of the globe. They are the students who now study together on a campus that is on a journey from exclusion to inclusion, from participation in apartheid injustices to the building of a just and reconciled society. They are part of a campus that strives to nurture hope on the continent of Africa by contributing to a life of dignity, justice and freedom on our campus and in broader society.

These students originate from communities that still experience high levels of ethnic alienation. Even though apartheid laws were scrapped two decades ago, and although there is more inter-ethnic contact and exposure than during apartheid, millions of South Africans, many struggling economically, are still insulated from each other to a great extent. These students come from different socio-economic backgrounds. The majority of our coloured and black students still struggle to survive financially, while most of white students experience socio-economic wellbeing.

The diversity of our students is also reflected in their gender composition and in their views about gender justice. They are products of a society where

misogyny is still present to varying degrees, especially in subtle forms. Our students also have different sexual orientations and views about sexual orientation. They were exposed to crude and also subtle forms of homophobia from childhood. The diversity of our students is also perceived in terms of categories like ability and disability, age and nationality. There are often exchange students from Europe and Northern America in this class.

This diversity of students raises challenging questions that require a plurality of responses. Some of the students' questions seek for a constructive way to deal with the past:

Can't we forget the past and just go on? Why do some want to forget the past as if it is not important? Can't we do away with categories like perpetrators, victims (or survivors) and beneficiaries because they cause division, and it is not that easy to say who belongs where? How do I succeed in forgetting the past in a morally acceptable way?

Others ask how to define our social identities in terms of the vision and ideal of a new society rather than in terms of the notions of apartheid and even post-apartheid. All 'post' words indeed betray something of the old to which they refer:

Why do we keep on defining ourselves in terms of apartheid? Can't we define ourselves in terms of the vision of a new society, the same vision that the struggle against apartheid adhered to and that was documented in the Freedom Charter<sup>1</sup> and at the launch of the United Democratic Front<sup>2</sup>, and that is now to a high extent articulated in the Bill of Rights of the South African Constitution? Does the language of shame and guilt, pain and anger not betray a negative theological anthropology that expects nothing good from human beings? Does this discourse in fact not underestimate the forgiving, transformative and renewing power of the triune God?

Some questions deal with feelings of shame and guilt:

What is the relationship between confession of guilt, confession of faith and confession of hope? How do I get rid of the exhausting and pacifying uncertainty in me and the anxiety that I unwittingly might be doing something wrong against my brothers and sisters of other ethnic groups?

Some questions express the theme of accountability for wrongs that predecessors committed:

For how long do we have to say sorry for wrongs that we did not commit ourselves but that our fore-parents committed? Reparative measures are im-

portant but for how long will affirmative action discriminate against so-called beneficiaries and bereave them of the opportunity to fully actualise their potentialities to the honour of God and for the sake of the wellbeing of others?

A few years ago a white student said he found it painful that he lives very comfortably whilst some of his classmates do not always have access to food. He struggled with the reality that he was born in a relatively affluent family, and asked with urgency how he personally, as a student benefiting from the material care of his parents, could address the immense inequalities of our society.

Some students employ a cognitive approach and ask what can be learned from other post-liberation contexts:

Would it not be helpful and illuminating and even energising for current debates about the wrongs of apartheid to broaden our focus and discuss other collective wrongs, eg the wrongs committed by the British against white Afrikaans people during the two wars of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the collective wrongs of people against each other in other parts of Africa and the world?

A student from a disadvantaged community raised a question about the forgiveness of the wrongdoer:

Why do the wronged always have to forgive and pay the price for fixing problems caused by others? Is the Christian notion of forgiveness not bad news for the wronged? Does it not justify a form of sado-masochism, ie does it not legitimise the sadism of the perpetrator whilst it calls the wronged to a life of masochistic self-sacrifice and self-hate?

The questions of our MDiv classes are the questions of all South Africa. They may even reflect the questions of other pluralistic societies, and of societies who are moving from oppression and enmity to freedom and friendship. These questions continuously surface in our private and public discourses and are posed by an increasing number of people in various parts of the world. In our interaction with colleagues in the circle of the Global Network for Public Theology – of which I was the first chairperson – we become aware of the presence of these and related questions and struggles across the world.

In this chapter I suggest we pay attention to the notion of a pedagogy of hybridity as a category that may provide some guidelines for dealing with these unavoidable questions. I briefly analyse the meaning of the notion of hybridity in contemporary social scientific discourse before discussing some features of a pedagogy of hybridity. I conclude the chapter by demonstrating

that a pedagogy of hybridity has the potential to enhance the quest for thicker forms of reconciliation and justice: namely, just reconciliation and reconciling justice. This discussion will illuminate the description and use of the notion of hybridity. Furthermore, the discussion of hybridity, features of hybridity and thicker forms of reconciliation and justice may provide guidelines for addressing the questions of our students and of people in South Africa and other parts of the world.

Where we succeed in naming and addressing these questions constructively, and where we help to equip students to deal with them constructively, we may make significant contributions to the building of the common good in South Africa. This is especially true since the common good is not a value neutral notion. It has a bias towards interdependence, reconciliation and justice, as reflected in this definition of the common good by Vatican 2 (*Gaudium et spes – The Pastoral Constitution on the church in the modern world*, 1965):

Every day, human interdependence grows more tightly drawn and spreads by degrees over the whole world. As a result, the common good, that is, the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfilment, today takes on an increasingly universal complexion and consequently involves rights and duties with respect to the whole human race.

## **Hybridity**

Hybridity is used in contemporary social scientific discourses in the contexts of post colonisation and globalisation. The word, which literally means mixture, has its origins in the contexts of different plant species and different racial groups. It refers, for instance, to the mixing of races. In modern race discourses these hybrid or mixed races were viewed as inferior.

A more positive use of the concept of hybridity has developed during the last few decades. Racial discourses increasingly reject the idea of a so-called pure race without any form of hybridity. In apartheid South Africa the controversial work of the historian Hans Heese (1984; repr 2005), which traced the roots of some extremist white apartheid ideologists to, amongst others, the Khoi-San indigenous groups, paved the way for a re-evaluation of the notion of hybridity.

The deployment of the notion of hybridity in social scientific discourse (Pieterse, 2004; Bhabha, 1994) is of particular interest. Hybridity challenges certainties and essentialisms. It resists monophony and promotes the idea of

polyphony. It carries the notion of liminality, which refers to an in-between state where old, certain, clearly defined identities are re-negotiated and the door is opened for the new, imaginative and surprising. Hybridity acknowledges complexity and ambiguity.

I propose that we use the notion of hybridity heuristically and almost playfully. It might open new imaginative possibilities in our reflections on themes like unity, justice and reconciliation. I also propose that we use it rhetorically. It might help make Christian convictions accessible to contemporary cultural life and public discourses. In this sense the notion of hybridity acquires a public, theological, ethical and pedagogical function. In some ways I use the concept existentially. Although all races are hybrid in nature, I belong to an ethnic group, the 'coloured' group, which is described as the most hybrid one!

Hybridity, it seems to me, does not advance a type of mixing that dissolves the entities that mix, that brings forth a totally new uniformed entity. Hybridity does not destroy particularity. Rather, it refers to a mingling, exposure to the other, dialogue with the other, interaction with the other, participation in the life of the other, hospitality to the other, learning from the other. This exposure does not leave one unchanged. One has internalised something of the other.

As this interaction and communing with the other, as this exposure to and participation in the life of the other, as this life of porous boundaries and vulnerable openness to the other, as life on the thresholds and margins, as life in liminal and uncertain in-between spaces, as life of openness to many voices and many lenses – in each of these guises hybridity impacts positively on the way we define our humanness.

Hybridity helps us journey from minimalist to maximalist descriptions of ourselves and others, from mono-descriptions to multi-descriptions, from exclusive descriptions to inclusive descriptions, and hopefully, therefore, from unjust to just descriptions, from dehumanising to humanising descriptions.

This entails that I am a heterosexual person, but through my participation in the life of gays and lesbians I also wear the lenses of my gay and lesbian brothers and sisters. I am heterosexual but I am also more than that. I am a male, but because of my interaction with females I also wear the earphones of women and try to hear what they hear. I am male, but I am also more than male.

I am coloured, brown, Khoi, Griqua, Hessequa, Outeniqua or any category used to describe these brown groups in South Africa, but I am also more than



that. My life in South Africa which I shared with my Xhosa, white and Indian brothers and sisters did not leave me unchanged. I also live with their lenses. I am more than coloured.

A pedagogy of hybridity might enable me to wear the lenses and earphones of other nationalities, ages and socio-economic groups, as well as the lenses and earphones of people living with disabilities, and even of nature, including animals, plants and the rest of our natural environment.

So, a lifestyle and pedagogy of hybridity might assist us in overcoming the alienations and injustices that are expressed in homophobia and misogyny, racism and xenophobia, ageism and classism, handicappism and ecocide.

The pedagogy of hybridity paves the way for Christian denominations to live in a unity and catholicity that comes to expression in ecumenicity through particularity. The maximalist denominationalism which makes me say I am more than Uniting Reformed or Dutch Reformed or Presbyterian or Anglican might contribute to our liberation from divisive denominationalism.

This pedagogy of hybridity should help us move to higher levels of peace among the religions of the world. The relatively high level of peace among people from different religions in South Africa might be attributable to the hybridic interaction, collaboration, and life together of these people in our neighbourhoods and communities. I am Christian, but through my interaction with my brothers and sisters from other religions, I know I am more than that.

### **Features of a pedagogy of hybridity**

If the following features of a pedagogy of hybridity guide and drive us, we may deal more constructively and faithfully with the challenges of reconciliation and justice on our campuses and in our societies. I posit at least seven features of a pedagogy of hybridity in service of reconciliation and justice.

#### ***Plurality***

Discussions in our MDiv class illuminate the plurality of voices, opinions and perspectives on challenges like reconciliation and justice. These voices are manifold and more often than not, contradictory. A pedagogy of hybridity accepts this plurality and deals with it constructively by exposing views to each other, through dialogue and the search for consensus, or allowing peaceful co-existence and continuous deliberations in the case of incommensurable positions.

Let us take the challenge of homosexuality as an example. An American theologian, William Stacey Johnson (2006), has identified seven positions among Christians in all parts of the world regarding the ordination for ministry and the confirmation in marriage of gay and lesbian people. This plurality of positions has been reflected in our classes over the years. Just as no major church in the world could reach consensus on this challenge, the opinions in our classes are divided. We are in agreement in rejecting all forms of homophobia, both crude and subtle. We guide students to practise hybridity, to wear the lenses of others. This can enable them to listen and understand the person of a different sexual orientation, and therefore to tolerate and embrace the other, although they may differ with regard to specific decisions. We encourage them to practise tolerance and embrace those of a different sexual orientation and we encourage them to build communities of tolerance where opposing views on this and other matters can enjoy hospitality and peaceful co-existence.

### ***Ambiguity***

Ambiguity refers to the fact that the same phenomenon or reality can be described in different and even contradictory ways by different people and in different contexts. Ambiguity also refers to the shifting meanings of words, sentences and concepts (Tracy, 1984; repr 1994). We often wrongly associate ambiguity with unclarity and vagueness, and want to avoid it more often than not (Levine, 1985).

People who cannot live with ambiguity either choose absolutism or relativism. Absolutism implies that only my interpretation, description and solution is right. Absolutism paves the way for judgementalism, fundamentalism and even some forms of anti-intellectualism or irrationality, as well as the stereotyping, stigmatisation, demonisation and annihilation of the other. Relativism feeds an attitude of passivity, melancholy, pessimism, internal emigration and nihilism.

In our reconciliation and justice discourses absolutism or relativism are the more popular options. Many people cannot bear the vulnerability of uncertainty and prefer absolutist and fundamentalist positions with all their negative implications. Others do not show the commitment of making a responsible choice and bearing the consequences of that choice. So, whilst thinking that they stay neutral by adhering to relativism, they do in fact make a choice. They make a bad choice, the choice of being unwilling to make a stand for what is wise, right and good.

Travelling the road of ambiguity asks for wisdom, courage and patience. It also demands the ability to communicate highly sophisticated positions in clear and intellectually accessible ways.

### ***Complexity***

Students in our class also plead that we investigate the lessons South Africans can learn from the quests for reconciliation, justice and transformation in other post-liberation contexts like, amongst others, the post-South African War period, the post-Second World War period in Germany or the post-civil rights struggle in the United States. This broader focus renders the issues more complex and sheds additional light on our own struggle. Thorough historical analyses and cross-national analyses of our own and other quests for reconciliation and justice help us describe our own challenges in a more nuanced way. It also helps us gain strength and hope from others' struggle to actualise the common good, the good society of unity and reconciliation, justice and peace. Moreover, it helps develop the right emotional orientation and sensitivity for our local challenges. These analyses of other contexts also free us from over-sensitivity and insensitivity, both of which are stumbling blocks on the road to peace.

### ***Duality***

To address the challenging questions regarding reconciliation and justice we also need to live with duality. By this I mean the capacity to live with the notion of both 'and' and the more popular 'either ... or'. We need to say yes to more than one thing at once, even though it may seem that these things contradict each other.

Let's take the question of whether we should talk about the past as an example. Should we still continue to talk about the past? Yes, because if we do not talk about the past, the anger, pain, shame and guilt we have not dealt with will keep on haunting us. Should we stop talking about the past? Yes, because if we do not stop talking about the past, we may keep each other trapped in the past and foreclose the wonderful prospect of journeying together and energetically into the future.

Or take another question: Do we need to refer to each other in colour categories? Yes, we need to do this for the sake of trying to repair the wrongs that were committed along colour lines for centuries, on the condition that this is a fairly applied and interim arrangement and as long as we also address other categories of injustice like those pertaining to gender, class, disability, age and the environment. Do we need to stop referring to each other in colour cate-

gories? Yes, we need to avoid racial categorisation for the sake of working together to actualise the vision of societies where the importance of race ceases.

A pedagogy of hybridity teaches us to live simultaneously with more than one yes to contradictory questions.

### ***Paradox***

Church reformers like Martin Luther posited the paradoxical nature of human anthropology. We are simultaneously sinners and justified ones. This paradox, this apparent but not real contradiction, permeates human existence. Faithful servants of reconciliation and justice learn to live with the tension of paradox. A few years ago the first coloured rector of the Free State University, Jonathan Jansen, told an audience about his positive experiences at a rugby test match between South Africa and New Zealand in Bloemfontein. A Sotho person sang traditional Afrikaans folksongs. The mainly white spectators loudly supported the brilliant black Springbok prop forward. Earlier at a soccer match that he had attended, the main hero of the mainly black spectators was a white player from the South African national soccer team.

After reading this I watched a rugby test a week later at the reunion function of my Stellenbosch University residence, Huis Visser, where I was warden. A few hundred former residents of Huis Visser watched the match in a tent on a big screen. They jointly sang South Africa's national anthem. They sang the non-Afrikaans part just as loud and enthusiastically as the Afrikaans part. They knew all the non-Afrikaans words. I was energised. To think that these men, some of whom were in their eighties, sang the new anthem of a new society on the same grounds where they sang the anthem of apartheid South Africa for many decades. One of them even shouted: 'we should have recorded this on video!'

With these experiences of hope in my mind and heart I attended the celebration of a friend's fiftieth birthday later that evening. While we stood in line for food one of the guests told me that he could not support the Springbok rugby team. He explained that at the test match in Bloemfontein – the one that filled Jansen and me with hope for reconciliation and justice – a few white supporters insulted coloured supporters who were wearing Springbok support jerseys, accusing them of wearing jerseys that actually belong to white people.

The same rugby matches in the same country were experienced by South Africans in conflicting ways. To serve reconciliation and justice we need to hold on to each of these sets of experiences, the positive ones as well as the

negative. We cannot absolutise only one of the two. We need to say yes, good things happen in South Africa – otherwise we will be dishonest and will become discouraged, melancholic and apathetic, and unfaithful to our god-given calling. But we also need to say yes, bad things happen in South Africa – otherwise we will be dishonest and become unrealistic and naive, insensitive to the pain and anger in our society. With this sense of paradox we need to live.

### ***Proximity***

A pedagogy of hybridity, of interacting and communing with the other, also advances the notion of proximity amongst people. The logic of the three articles of the Belhar Confession, a confessional document that was adopted in 1986 by the former Dutch Reformed Mission Church, today known as the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa after its merger with the major part of the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa, is that visible, concrete, experienced unity, where people develop sympathy, empathy, interpathy and solidarity (article 1), stands in service of reconciliation (article 2) and justice (article 3).

US theologian David Augsberger (1989:31) provides a helpful definition of sympathy, empathy and interpathy:

Sympathy is a spontaneous affective reaction to another's feelings experienced on the basis of perceived similarity between observer and observed. Empathy is an intentional affective response to another's feelings experienced on the basis of perceived differences between the observer and observed. Interpathy is an intentional cognitive and affective envisioning of another's thoughts and feelings from another culture, worldview and epistemology.

Reconciliation and justice grow where people do not live outside of hearing distance of one another (Esterhuysen, 1989) but where we hear each other, see each other, feel each other, participate and share in each other's lives, in our joys and sorrows, in our guilt and shame, in our anger and pain. And this proximity need not and cannot be physical all the time. The electronic media and other forms of communication, as well as art, literature, culture and sport, can be used to create spaces of proximity amongst a plurality of people.

### ***Absurdity***

The last feature of a pedagogy of hybridity relates to a logic that seems to be absurd, ridiculous and foolish. For reconciliation and justice to materialise, we need forgiveness. Forgiveness opens the door to recognition of guilt, con-

trition and remorse, confession of guilt in the face of overwhelming, forgiving love, confession of faith which accepts forgiveness and confession of hope which says 'yes' to a new life of sanctification and restitution. In the light of this logic, Archbishop emeritus Desmond Tutu (1999) calls his famous book *No Future without Forgiveness* (also cf. Smit, 1996; repr 2007).

South Africans are continually surprised by private and public experiences of this absurd love, this forgiving love. This love embodied in the life and person of Nelson Mandela. This absurd, forgiving love was experienced at the hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Manifestations of this love granted South Africa the wonder of a transition to democracy without civil war. The sustainability of our peace is dependent upon our commitment not to make this forgiveness cheap. We live with the hope and expectation that the wonder of a love that forgives will open the gates to a responding love that repents and repairs, a love that heals the brokenness and that rights the wrongs.

### **Just reconciliation and reconciliatory justice**

A pedagogy of hybridity eventually paves the way for the actualisation of so-called thicker manifestations of reconciliation and justice: the idea which is derived from, amongst others, the Judaeo-Christian tradition, that reconciliation cannot be discussed without justice and that justice cannot be discussed without attention to reconciliation. This is a crucial notion in educational and social contexts where we so often hear views which separate the reconciliation and justice discourses from each other.

In biblical thinking reconciliation has two dimensions. Reconciliation (Greek: *hilasmos*) has to do with the expiation of wrongs and stumbling blocks to atonement (at-one-ment).

Reconciliation (Greek: *katalassoo*) refers to harmony in the relationship with the other. This reconciliation has in mind the embrace that US theologian Miroslav Volf (1996:171) refers to: the embrace of different races, tribes, nationalities, socio-economic groups, genders, sexual orientations, age groups, 'normal' and disabled people. This reconciliation pleads for the removal of stumbling-blocks in the way of peaceful living, in the way of the embrace. Reconciliation therefore implies opposition to injustices like violence, war, racism, tribalism, xenophobia, classism, misogyny, homophobia, ageism, disablism and ecocide.

Reconciliation aims at embrace through the expiation of wrongs and stumbling blocks to that embrace. The connectedness of reconciliation and justice

is thereby revealed. The justice that is confessed in both the Old and New Testament is rightly described as compassionate justice. In line with the biblical use of these concepts, both the sacrificial (Hebrew: *tsedaqah*) and forensic (Hebrew: *mishpat*) dimensions of justice are referred to. For New Zealand theologian Christopher Marshall (2001:59) justification by faith is an expression of restorative justice.

The notion of sacrifice has another aspect: justice cannot be reached unless there is the willingness to sacrifice for the sake of the other. Moreover, justice does not seek revenge, but it is merciful. It seeks the healing and restoration of both perpetrators and victims. In fact it seeks the healing of all broken relationships. Therefore this justice is called restorative justice.

Marshall's analysis of the use of justice in the New Testament enables him to refer to justice as restorative or covenantal justice (2001:35-93). Covenantal justice goes beyond retribution and punishment and seeks, like reconciliation, the healing of relationships. Like reconciliation, restorative and covenantal justice seeks embrace. It seeks the renewal of the covenant between God and humans, between humans themselves and between humans and the rest of creation, from the most local to the most global levels.

This brief outline demonstrates the close resemblance between justice and reconciliation. Although the two concepts are not identical, it is clear that, when we view justice as compassionate, covenantal and restorative – justice that seeks reparation and restitution through forensic means, and justice that seeks, in a merciful way and in the willingness to sacrifice, the healing and renewal of relationships – justice and reconciliation are both at the service of the dawning of embrace or, in the words of US theologian Nicholas Wolterstorff (1983:70), the dawning of 'shalom' or peace.

Where our students and citizens develop a pedagogy of hybridity, of exposure to each other, of wearing each others' lenses, we make progress towards the thicker forms of reconciliation and justice, to just reconciliation and reconciliatory justice. Shouting at each other across the distances of distrust and alienation closes the door to just reconciliation, and merely seeks cheap reconciliation without justice. Shouting at each other across the distances of pain and anger does not serve lasting reconciling justice, but brings about alienating and destructive justice that cannot last because it forms seedbeds for new forms of injustice.

## Conclusion

The pedagogy of hybridity is a pedagogy of hope. It has relevance not only for classes dealing directly with the theme of inclusion, justice and reconciliation. It may have healing implications and relevance for all of campus life, including the spheres of academic work, academic support, academic residences, social life, cultural life, sport, free time, amongst others. The pedagogy of hybridity may bring hope to broader societies in South Africa and elsewhere in their struggles against exclusion, enmity and injustice. The broader societal impact of our pedagogies is crucial for campuses in contemporary societies across the globe, which are all characterised by plurality and complexity and which struggle to journey away from a divided and oppressive past to a united and liberating future.

## Notes

- 1 Charter of core freedoms drafted by the Congress movement in Kliptown in South Africa in 1995.
- 2 The United Democratic Front was a popular non-racial organisation that fought apartheid inside South Africa in the 1980s and 1990s.

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## SECTION FOUR

### The Academic

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# 13

## Critical professionalism: a lecturer attribute for troubled times

*Brenda Leibowitz and David Holgate*

### Introduction

**T**his chapter describes the research-based project, Critical Professionalism, which gave rise to several of the chapters in this volume. We suggest that the concept of critical professionalism, with its strong value-orientation, makes a foundational contribution to approaches to professional development for teaching for the public good in South Africa and other parts of the world. We use data generated from this project to tease out some of the characteristics of critical professionals, as well as some of the key ingredients necessary to support the emergence of academics as critical professionals. We begin by setting the scene for the study and explaining why, in the present era, academics' sense of agency, criticality and professionalism might be threatened – to a fair degree by the rise of the audit culture and a strong managerial and prescriptive approach to steering the direction of higher education.

### The changing international context

Various changes to the conditions of academic life in the past two decades have threatened academics' sense of autonomy and agency, a point made eloquently by Singh in chapter one of this volume. Currie and Vidovich (2009) identify this as a global trend. It has become almost commonplace to refer to the rise of control over academics' working lives. The literature on the rise of managerialism and performativity (Baty, 2012; d'Andrea and Gosling, 2005; Jones, 2007; McLean, 2006; Sparks, 2007) has shown that the increasing in

control aims to make academics more accountable and responsive to set objectives. These objectives include making institutions more competitive, more effective in terms of student retention and pass rates, more responsive to the workplace, more responsive to students as clients and, on occasion, to the challenges of social inequality, climate change and discord.

Bansel *et al* (2008:682) make the important point that technologies of the university audit, which tend to emphasise quantity over quality, 'narrow the possibilities for intellectual work, especially the work of critique, and produce the subjects of academicity as increasingly anxious and compliant'. It is ironic that while creativity and agency are required to help academics rise to the challenges of our times, these attributes are constrained by the very management processes universities use to corral academics into responding to some of the self-same challenges. Furthermore, it is ironic that we encourage the need for debate and discussion of appropriate graduate attributes and graduate capabilities, as discussed in chapters six and seven of this volume, but we do not stress in like fashion the need for lecturers to acquire and display similar attributes.

### **The local setting**

Global trends have impacted on the working lives of academics in higher education in South Africa, but the local situation adds its own complexities and challenges. The rise of performativity and managerialism (le Grange, 2009), the emphasis on widening participation and the lack of transformation and social inclusiveness in South African higher education (Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion, 2008) are discussed in the introduction to this volume.

The university this study was conducted in – Stellenbosch University (SU) – displays many of the particularities informed by South Africa's apartheid past. Gibbon (2010:84) maintains that the University, though one of the strongest academically in the country, remains within a 'bubble of privilege'. Contrary to its comparative isolation and exclusivity, SU's intention to contribute to the development of both South Africa and Africa is strongly signalled in policy and is given much support by its academics. The University's principal has indicated the institution's aspiration to make a significant contribution towards social development in the region by embracing the ideal constructed by Freire: a 'pedagogy of hope' (Botman, 2007).

While the institution displays many specific and localised characteristics, its academics also experience obligations and challenges similar to those of

academics elsewhere in South Africa and in the developed world. One notable feature is the rise of the audit culture: we measure student responses to our teaching via a likert scale and impression score; we benchmark faculties' efficiency via their student success rates; and we measure academics' research prowess by the number of their publications on various national and international publication lists. Less openly discussed is the way academics are valued according to how much funding they bring to the University, from student fees to the more profitable consultancies with the public and private sectors.

Thus academics who embark on a journey towards critical professionalism face both constraints and opportunities, a condition of duality which McLean (2006) identifies as facing academics in the UK. This contrasting set of relationships – of reduction of autonomy on the one hand and the potential for contributing to society via teaching and research on the other – forms the backdrop of our study.

### **The critical professional**

Walker offers the term 'critical professional' to suggest the combination of criticality, reflexivity and questioning the purpose and values underpinning teaching in higher education for the public good on the one hand, and professionalism – with an emphasis on public service and the commitment to learning – on the other. She offers the classroom as a 'landscape of possibility' (Walker, 2001:214); a location in which one can exercise agency and contribute towards various aspects of the public good. The Critical Professionalism research project she ran with a group of lecturers at Glasgow University, based on action research, dialogue and reflection, demonstrates an alternative approach towards the development of academics who wish to teach for the public good.

If academics purport to be preparing students to be critical, creative, original participants in an increasingly connected world, we need to engage with each other in a similarly critical and creative manner. Nixon's (2001) and Nixon *et al's* (2001) description of a 'new professional' is a useful starting point for what a critical academic professional might be. Vital attributes presented by Nixon (2001) are: responsibility towards students, colleagues and the wider community; being open to difference; and concern with how power and domination work. Nixon sees the academic as having a shared concern with students: learning. Palmer (2007) uses the term 'new professional' to suggest someone who is able to resist the constraining power of institutions.

We use the term *critical* professional to emphasise the critical, reflexive and scholarly element within this professionalism. Nixon *et al* (2001:234) assert that academics as educators should consider not just *why* they think or do what they do, but also *how* they go about thinking about this. Reflection and enquiry are necessary attributes for academics, since with reflexivity we can free 'ourselves to consider fairer alternatives' (McLean, 2006:14) and become social agents who can resist structural constraints. Rowland (2000) argues that when we teach we express our values and should thus reflect on these values. We should learn to reflect on knowledge and practices but also on values, emotions and beliefs. A disciplined process of reflection can enable the new professional to distinguish between 'emotions that illuminate our environment and those that simply reveal our own shadows' (Palmer, 2007:11).

### **Becoming critical professionals**

The various attributes of the critical professional are also linked with the process of *becoming* a critical professional. This process involves taking responsibility (Nixon, 2001), having a strong values base and working with others. As a valuable form of professional self development, Rowland (2000) includes enquiring about the learner. To perform as a critical professional the enquiry must be action based, critical and participatory, and must seek to transform both theory and practice, rather than focus on enquiry purely for its own sake (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2005). This process is fostered by social engagement within a community of enquiry, 'a group of people who work together with a shared purpose which entails some collaborative attempt to explore issues or answer questions and hence potentially create new knowledge or understanding in a given domain' (Christie *et al*, 2007:264). According to Cox (2004), in faculty learning communities (FLCs), where staff come together voluntarily to engage in research and development, openness, trust and empathy develop amongst colleagues. Anne Austin interviewed academics who described having a passion for social responsibility and found that they enjoyed being part of a community with others who shared this passion (London, 2003). Walker (2001) maintains, moreover, that collaborative partnerships can have an advocacy role, where academics become 'activist professionals'.

Davidson (2004:307) maintains that in order to become critical professionals, academics as educators should engage in critical interdisciplinary dialogue. Interdisciplinary engagement forces individuals to externalise their own assumptions and consider them critically from a fresh perspective (Winberg, 2008; Trowler and Cooper, 2002). It allows an approach towards problem-solving to become more multifaceted and, by linking the local with the

abstract, provides a means to grasp the complexity of human experience (Pohl and Hadorn, 2007). Interdisciplinary forms of engagement should be based on an acceptance of and respect for disciplinary differences (d'Andrea and Gosling, 2005; Davidson, 2004). This is different from generic approaches towards the professional development of academics, which are disengaged from the disciplines. The latter mitigate against criticality and assume that 'academics are consumers of specialist pedagogical research' (Davidson, 2004: 307). This removes responsibility for self-development from academics.

### **The Critical Professionalism research project**

In this section we present the research project, which combines an interdisciplinary professional development approach with collaborative research. The project was originally set up to encourage academics to engage in exploratory studies of their own in their teaching and learning contexts, and to engage in self-reflective practice with colleagues from other disciplines. The process was supported by two professional development practitioners from the University's Centre for Teaching and Learning. The project was intended to be influenced by the views and needs of the participating academics, and its mode of operation was exploratory and loosely structured.

A brief description of the activities conducted under the Critical Professionalism project should suffice. Academics who were known to the leader of the project (and first author of this chapter) from previous research or via her work in teaching and learning at the University, were invited to join. A group of twelve academics from across the University began meeting within the Critical Professionalism group early in 2007. The group was diverse in terms of age, gender, race and language, as well as academic seniority. It comprised academics from both the Centre for Teaching and Learning and the following faculties: the arts, education, natural sciences, health sciences, engineering and agricultural sciences. The group met roughly four to six times a year, for conversations, presentations from guests or to design and implement common research activities.

The group's cohesion came from a fourfold set of aims, as articulated by the participants themselves at various stages during the project. The first was to become more effective educators. The second was for individuals to become more empowered. A third aim was to understand issues of biography and diversity as the latter played itself out at SU. The fourth aim was for team members to engage in interdisciplinary and reflective conversations.

The manner in which participants interpreted and reinterpreted the purpose of the project in light of their own needs and interests is not atypical of teaching and learning situations in general. For example, in small group discussions participants changed the direction of the discussion or reinterpreted the questions in light of their own preoccupations. This could be seen as a weakness of this project, owing to its lack of structure and direction – or as a strength, since it gave participants a sense of ownership and investment:

I've experienced the more intense community involving critical professionalism compared to some of my immediate colleagues. (Rashied', Education)

While Michael described the process enthusiastically as like being in a 'coffee club' and 'muddling along', Arnold, an educational developer who remained on the margins of the project, found the team process to be too meandering:

When you are setting out on the one hand to get the team as soon as possible, you want them to do something, have results and share and talk about it, and on the other hand to get them to, almost through a piece of theoretical work, to the point where they understand what and why they want to do it, as soon as possible to try and facilitate that gelling process, I wonder if it's possible to do it more quickly than eighteen months. (Arnold, Centre for Teaching and Learning)

The first exploratory activity required team members to respond to a set of three questions posted in a module on a learning management system utilised for the project. These questions were:

- In light of our concern with social justice, what kinds of graduates should Stellenbosch University produce, and what would the challenges be to producing such graduates?
- What are you doing towards producing these kinds of graduates, and what challenges are you experiencing?
- What, in terms of your own biography, brought you to the understanding you sketched in question one? And what challenges have you faced?

In response to question one, team participants said they hoped to produce graduates who were competent and able to contribute to the public good in one way or another:

I want a graduate to walk out into the world being able to say: 'I am a healer' ... and embrace and practice that, without discrimination of any kind. (Tanya, Health Sciences)

In response to the second question, colleagues gave examples of the attempts they were making to meet their students and support their learning, but noted a common constraint: their lack of a sense of commonality with a rapidly diversifying and increasingly young student cohort:

As you become more distant from being a student yourself, you perhaps don't realise what the reality is for people ... you feel that you have some idea of the complexity of a deeper society ... but then you see individual examples which make you realise that ... you have no idea. (Michael, Natural Sciences)

Answers to question three demonstrated that some team members see themselves as part of the dominant group, experiencing the strengths and limitations of this association: 'the self assurance and sense of entitlement to an equal education that was built during my school years carried over and grew during my university education' (Jacky, Engineering). Others in the team identified the strength engendered from being from a marginalised group: 'I am passionate about my work because I achieved my degrees against many odds' (Sharon, Health Sciences).

To give the group a clearer focus, and to ensure that each team member participated in at least one concrete research activity, a common open-ended questionnaire was administered by each participant to a group of students they were teaching. It contained the following questions:

- How did you reach this point in your education?
- How are you experiencing this course/module/programme now?
- Where are you heading to?
- Anything else about the educational journey you are undertaking which you would like to bring to my attention?

Answers to the 550 questionnaires collected were analysed by the group as a whole. Although reported on at the University's annual scholarship of teaching and learning conference, it did not lead to a full report and publication. This was partly because its open-ended nature made reporting difficult, and partly because there was a lack of adequate biographical information on each respondent. Progress was also hampered by practical constraints such as inexperience and lack of time.

This reflected the team and its leader's lack of research sophistication. However the process spurred several academics to conduct further exploratory processes with their students: Tanya developed a funded project to explore the learning experiences of her postgraduate students with a focus on aliena-



tion and engagement; Rashied followed up the questionnaire by interviewing the students who expressed discomfort with his teaching aims and style; Michael arranged a series of large group interviews with the first-year students he was teaching, and involved other academics from his department; Danielle gave a seminar on her survey results to her department, following this up with interviews with each departmental staff member to ascertain their thoughts about teaching and about the students in this department. Other group members developed entirely original research projects. Susan gave her second-year graphic arts students an assignment in which they were asked to design a web page, using data they collected with international students, on the topic of xenophobia. André, from the Centre for Teaching and Learning, collaborated with Lauretta from Classical Studies to reorientate the first-year module according to a community of enquiry approach. This permitted more experienced professors to share their wisdom with the first-year students (Young and Kotze, 2009).

A visit to South Africa by Melanie Walker, one of the educators whose ideas helped form the research project, led her and her colleague Monica McLean to conduct a series of interviews with project participants. In the penultimate research activity designed to foster reflection and at the same time track the experience of the project's participants, each team member conducted audio-taped interviews with another.

All data generated in the project was coded and analysed according to simple categories such as motivation to join, benefit or the attributes of critical professionalism displayed. The data from this final set of interviews provided much insight into how the team participants saw themselves, what attributes of critical professionalism they displayed and what aspects of the project's process they particularly valued.

In addition to the research activities spawned by the project, seven conference publications were produced, three journal articles written and four of the chapters in this book, including this one, were produced. The final outcome was a colloquium held at the University entitled 'Hopeful Pedagogies', which was accompanied by a blog of the same name ([blogs.sun.ac.za/hopefulpedagoguessu](http://blogs.sun.ac.za/hopefulpedagoguessu)). The study taught those of us who participated in it several useful lessons, which are enumerated here.

## **Lessons learned**

### **Support for critical professionalism in higher education**

In this study seven dynamic aspects of encouraging critical professionalism came to the fore:

#### ***Interdisciplinarity***

Group members spoke universally of the benefit of engaging colleagues from other academic disciplines. The diversity a university has to offer is too seldom exploited by its academic staff. The pressure to perform within academic environments and the nature of specialised research keeps people apart. We agree with Nixon (2001) that interdisciplinary engagement relies on respect for the epistemological and methodological differences of the various disciplines, which provided team members with new insights.

The refreshing exposure to other disciplines and discourses, in addition to insights which are variously influenced by team members' academic disciplines, helped hold the group together. Ridding students of their discipline-specific 'baggage' helped focus attention on their academic realities:

Being involved in the project has made me constantly conscious of the difficulty and uncertainty that students face. I think I had a tendency to regard them as adults who should take responsibility and initiative in their learning, and that I am there to facilitate. I still hold this view, but I am more attuned to their struggles regarding social and academic integration. (Xoliswa, Arts and Humanities)

#### ***Reflection on (student-centred) teaching***

Teaching was the aspect of their profession the group was formed to address. The group's interdisciplinarity and administering the student questionnaire in particular focused much of their reflection on the challenge of being student-centred teachers:

It has made me much more critically reflective on my teaching practice and the influence that I have on my students. I would not have had this insight or knowledge if I had not participated in this project. In other words, it has brought a level of professionalism to my teaching. (Jacky, Engineering)

Some of the students really appreciated the fact that you took an interest beyond just the mathematical feedback ... it made me think quite a lot about how I view and treat my students. (Michael, Natural Sciences)

It was clear that most participants grew to understand new facets of their role as educators. Being part of a community of practice exposed participants to

a broader reality and sustained their motivation to explore this reality more deeply:

As you become more distant from being a student yourself, you perhaps don't realise what the reality is for people ... and even in a broader sense, you feel that you have some idea of the complexity of a deeper society ... but then you see individual examples which make you realise that ... you have no idea. (Lauretta, Arts and Humanities)

As the common interest was teaching, the focused group discussion and reflection beyond academic discipline led members to reflect on the view that teaching is principally about the relationship the teacher has with their students.

### ***Ease***

Inevitably, a process of learning and growth leads to unintended or unexpected insights and opportunities. For most this was the realisation that teaching-related research is surprisingly accessible. One interacts with data sources every day and has an intuition that can readily be tested and debated:

It's logical stuff ... things that you know but you never saw this way ... It was just spoken about or one or two students had mentioned it to you, or you could see the issues, but now ... those issues that can be seen in the class, came out in the questionnaire. (Danielle, Agricultural Sciences, translated from the Afrikaans)

At its most basic level, what the group provided was a simple opportunity to formulate and raise to a more overt level what all academics, at least sub-consciously, grapple with throughout their career:

It just made me do what was on the backburner in the past in my academic life ... going over to (the group's) meetings, has given me that chance to speak about my teaching, in intellectual ways. (Rashied, Education)

That participants' intuition could be so effortlessly interrogated, enriched and given a foundation was instantly rewarding.

### ***Impact on colleagues***

All the group members were conscious of how the model of critical professionalism could be shared with colleagues in their academic departments. The security and stimulation that arose from participating in the group project motivated the members to share their experiences with colleagues and, in some instances, invite them to join the group. Some members went to sub-

stantial lengths to include their departmental colleagues in activities which arose from the project. We see this desire to share as a vital part of such a critical professionalism.

### ***Freedom to explore***

Encouraged by their participation in the project, most members continued with pursuits that focused on research into teaching, via further studies, publishing, networking or even new career opportunities. For some members the process of building on what the project had begun and taking it to a deeper level was focused and well defined. Others experienced a persuasive sense of ‘muddling along’ – not in a random, ill-conceived way but as having the freedom to explore with no fixed goal in mind other than to be more critical professionals. Indeed, the critical professional necessarily remains engaged in such a process of exploration.

### ***Academics taking responsibility for their own development***

Mechanisms for discipline-specific research and development are embedded in the operation of a university. They form the very basis of what constitutes a university. These invariably revolve around collegial interactions – seminars, lectures, discussion. Ironically, however, professional development is most often the domain not of academics themselves but of external or peripheral units which often meet with scorn (or at least disinterest) from academic staff. As Nixon (2001:182) observes: ‘If academic workers were to become serious about their own professionalism, they would ensure that the task of professional development was clearly located within the academic structures of higher education preferably at department or faculty level.’

The approach of the Critical Professionalism project plays into this dynamic of a university. The freedom to explore, with similarly minded colleagues and alone, is what draws academics to their profession. We should use this freedom to develop it.

### **Attributes of the critical professional**

Our analysis of the writings of the Critical Professionalism team has foregrounded various attributes of the critical professional which, we believe, are in agreement with what has been said in the literature on critical or ‘new’ professionalism. We see the critical professional as one who enjoys *interdisciplinary* engagement, while retaining a strong interest in one’s own discipline.

We see a critical professional as one who is *reflexive*, in various related ways: the critical professional questions his or her own role in relation to society

and to knowledge, and in relation to the educational biography. The critical professional is also reflective, in the sense of considering how he or she teaches and how this could be done better.

In line with the argument put forward by Nixon (2001), the critical professional is *accountable*: most importantly to the students but also to other academics in the institution and to the broader society with whom the students would engage as professionals. This accountability should not be reduced to mere counting as stressed in the audit culture, nor to policy compliance in relation to university administrations and national bureaucracies.

A trait of the critical professional described in much of the literature on professional development in higher education is scholarliness, or scholarship. The enthusiasm for *scholarship* on teaching has been demonstrated by the members of the Critical Professionalism group. What is not so often cited, however, is a form of scholarliness which could be described as '*curiosity*', '*inquisitiveness*' or even a '*playful*' approach towards discovery. Participants in the Critical Professionalism project enjoyed applying familiar research techniques derived from their disciplines to new topics, learning new research techniques or investigating new topics.

*Activism* was demonstrated as a trait of many of the team members, who were most anxious to share what they were learning with colleagues in their department and, on occasion, with the University at large.

A final and most significant trait of the critical professional, according to our experience, is a *sense of agency*. All members felt free to join the group, free to contribute in the discussion and free to make changes to their teaching.

## Implications

What are the implications of the description of critical professionalism we have outlined? With regard to the professional development of academics, there are two. The first is for academics and their faculties to take primary responsibility for their development. At the heart of academia and the academic's choice of career is the freedom to engage in unfettered scholarly exploration. This should be exploited to foster academics' professional development. Secondly, and flowing from the first, is for a culture and possibly a system to be created at university level which facilitates, encourages and supports such development. We agree with Davidson (2004) and d'Andrea and Gosling (2005) that appropriate professional development strategies are those which facilitate dialogue amongst academics and enable academics to make explicit the theoretical underpinnings of their disciplinary cultures within interdisciplinary forums.

And what are the implications of our designation of the attributes of the critical professional, in particular that of sense of agency? If we agree with those who see agency as a combination of the will of an individual to act, the ability of an individual to act and the provision of the opportunities by an institution to make space to support this action (Walker, 2006), this requires higher education institutions to endorse freedom to act via its policies and procedures, as well as to make material and policy provisions for this flourishing of its academics. It places a high level of responsibility on academics to practise accountability, towards students, to the institution and to society. Thus we ask is agency not taken, or *exercised*, rather than *granted*?

Finally, we find the concept of critical professionalism as we and others have defined it, with its strong sense of social and educational accountability, to be a useful way to understand the role of the teaching academic who wishes to advance the public good via teaching in higher education.

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### Note

1 All names are pseudonyms, chosen to reflect the demographics of the group.

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# 14

## Self study as a mechanism to foster hopeful teaching

*Faaiz Gierdien*

Teaching mathematics education to pre-service teachers (PSTs) enrolled at university is problematic, due to their lack of agreement about the extent to which they are prepared for teaching school mathematics. Pre-service preparation in South Africa currently occurs in the university, which impacts on the teaching of mathematics education. Noting such a context for teacher education, with its attendant dilemmas, this chapter attempts to present and explore a theoretical basis for helping us to understand what it means to teach mathematics education in such a context. I argue that such a theoretical basis is useful, providing perspectives on the practices of mathematics educators in the light of calls for teaching for the public good. The chapter takes the form of an analysis of selected excerpts of PSTs' views of my teaching of mathematics education in a four-year Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) programme. There are a growing number of university-based science and mathematics educators who study their teaching; ie they engage in self-study. The question considered is: what might teaching for the public good of mathematics education in pre-service preparation at a university be like?

The idea to gather the empirical data presented in this chapter arose in the meetings of a group of interfaculty members of the Critical Professionalism group at Stellenbosh University, who expressed an interest in studying their own teaching by considering their students' experiences of the modules they taught (see Leibowitz and Holgate, chapter thirteen). For my part of the collective effort, I decided to adapt and use some of the questions concerned to conduct a self-study on the basis of the mathematics education modules I taught.



### Theoretical orientation

Different but connected strands of literature are referenced, to address the following areas: the role of the university in relation to self-study in the case of mathematics teacher educators; the functions of a university and university teaching; the central tasks that must be performed during pre-service preparation in teacher education; mathematics education; and concepts pertaining to the public good. In reviewing key concepts in each strand of literature I construct an analytical framework to make sense of empirical excerpts from PSTs' experiences of my teaching that aimed to illuminate teaching for the public good.

A self-study (Loughran, 2007; 2002) of my teaching as a university-based mathematics educator is important, since it enhances my understanding of what I do and allows me to communicate the functions of the university in my academic preparation of mathematics teachers. Engaging in such self-study resonates with Shulman's (1999) notion of the scholarship of teaching, which depends on three key attributes: becoming public; becoming an object of critical review and evaluation by members of the mathematics and teacher education communities; and starting to use and build on the insights by members of the communities concerned.

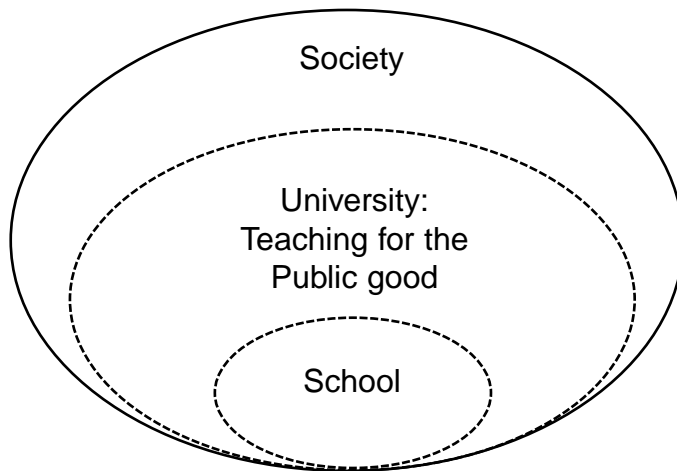
As Habermas expounded, teaching at a university is intimately connected to the functions of a university and I refer to his work and that of other scholars who write on the role of the university. Habermas (1989:121) posits one of the functions of the university as 'the academic preparation of public service professionals – professional and vocational knowledge'. His view is particularly appropriate in the case of pre-service preparation involving PSTs who are enrolled for certificate studies for teaching mathematics in school. During their university education, PSTs should be encouraged to adopt a hypothetical attitude *vis-à-vis* facts and norms (Habermas, 1987:19), especially with regards to the teaching and learning of such a cultural tradition as school mathematics. Habermas further argues that all education produces and reproduces the 'lifeworld' and thus serves to mediate the individual and the society in which they live.

McLean (2006) suggests that Habermas sees the lifeworld as a broad complex world made up of the practices, customs and ideas of individuals or groups. The last concept applies to PSTs enrolled at a university and their ideas about what they need to do and know when teaching school mathematics. Habermas places the university between the social and cultural structures of the lifeworld (McLean, 2006). The school forms part of a social and cultural

structure and aims, amongst other goals, to produce and reproduce society and culture. In a more encompassing sense, Habermas conceives of the university as a lifeworld, a ‘complex bundling of functions’ in a single society rather than a group of unrelated functional social systems including the professional preparation of PSTs (Ostovich, 1995:476).

Teaching for the public good can be interpreted as an educational slogan (Scheffler, 1960/1964) or a rallying cry that aims to develop and strengthen the connections between the various functions of the university with respect to the school, society and culture – of which a particular function is pre-service preparation. Teaching for the public good has to contend with the reality that the university and the school are two quite different institutions with different goals (Labaree, 2006; 2008). Figure 14.1 attempts to capture the position of teaching for the public good at the university in relation to its position in society and in school.

The porous lines in Figure 14.1 indicate the interdependence of school, university and society, with the activities in each sphere influencing those in the others. The choice of a Doppler diagram is intended to show the interrelationships between the university, school and society. The bottom end of the diagram draws particular attention to instances where the three components – university, school and society – interact. Figure 14.1 captures Habermas’ view of the university as a lifeworld, comprising a complex bundling of functions oriented towards action regarding which school and society-related values are continuously under discussion (Ostovich, 1995:467).



**Figure 14.1: The positioning of teaching for the public good at the university, with respect to society and school**

In the case of PSTs enrolled at a university, teaching for the public good involves the teaching of what Feiman-Nemser (2001) calls the 'central tasks' in pre-service preparation. These tasks exemplify one of the functions of the university: the academic preparation of public service professionals (McLean, 2006:16). The tasks, McLean argues, must include the teaching of what PSTs need to know, what they care about and what they are able to do in order to promote substantial learning for all school learners. The central overlapping tasks consist of analysing their beliefs, forming new visions, developing subject matter knowledge for teaching, understanding learners and learning and building a beginning repertoire and tools for studying teaching. Although the tasks generally concern teacher preparation, they can each be connected to existing literature on mathematics education. In practical terms, such tasks cannot be addressed solely in mathematics education modules at a university, but should also be taught in the other university-based modules that make up the PSTs' degree programme.

To relate the notion of central tasks to mathematics education, a working definition of mathematics education and its teaching is required. Mathematics education is a complex domain of knowledge concerned with articulating relationships between two knowledge objects: mathematics and teaching. Adler and Davis (2006) appropriately describe the tension that exists between the two different knowledge objects, acknowledging that mathematics has a 'strong grammar' in the form of symbols and abstraction whereas teaching has a 'weak grammar'. They note that the latter depends on learning theories and learners' psychological states. Unsurprisingly, recent developments in mathematics education refer to a 'mathematics for teaching', which relates to a central task in pre-service preparation: the development of subject matter knowledge for teaching. So when teaching mathematics education to PSTs the complex nature of both mathematics and teaching have to be kept in mind.

For reasons related to building a beginning repertoire and the development of subject matter knowledge for teaching, it is noteworthy that the mathematics (content) offered in pre-service preparation is a 'mathematics-education-researcher's (MER)' (Sfard, 1998). As a variety of mathematics (Julie, 2002), MER mathematics deals mostly with versions of mathematics that are elementary, such as the connections between, and the development of, mathematical ideas. It is structured by the insights gained from learning theories, pedagogy and the history and philosophy of mathematics. The language and terminology associated with MER mathematics include, amongst others, references to facilitating strategies, the decompressing of mathematical symbols and privileging process over product or answers.

MER mathematics differs in discursive ways from what Julie calls ‘school-teaching mathematics’, which is subject to the organisation of the school in terms of content. School-teaching mathematics is highly fragmented and focuses more on the provision of single answers than on gaining structural insights into abstractions (Watson, 2008). Through our own schooling, we have encountered school-teaching mathematics in the form of an ‘apprenticeship of observation’ (Lortie, 1975:61) – namely, the time we have spent in school. The same argument, which holds in the case of PSTs, is influenced by various actors, including the education bureaucrats, teachers, principals, parents, test-makers, textbook writers and school board members.

### **On data and method**

At the time of collecting their written responses to my teaching of mathematics education, the PSTs had been my students for two consecutive mathematics education modules: Math Ed 278 and Math Ed 378. The modules are taken during the second and third years of the four-year Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) programme, which upon completion certifies the PSTs to teach mathematics to the middle grades (grades 4 to 9) in schools. Each module runs for one academic year. In Math Ed 278 the content focuses on fractions from an advanced standpoint: one informed by a knowledge of the relevant mathematics education literature. For example, the PSTs are taught the many interpretations of fractions, such as those relating to part-whole fractions, ratios, decimals, percentages, and rates. In accordance with the advanced standpoint, the interpretations are investigated numerically, algebraically and geometrically where possible. In Math Ed 378, the content focuses on algebraic thinking and probabilistic reasoning.

During Math Ed 278 and Math Ed 378 the PSTs are provided with opportunities to form new visions, develop their beginning repertoire and consider what it takes to transform school mathematics for the purposes of teaching and learning. The content and teaching of these two modules are therefore informed by the central tasks of pre-service preparation. The modules bring PSTs into contact with mathematics education and, specifically, with MER mathematics, which is discursively different from school-teaching mathematics. The PSTs’ written responses to the Critical Professionalism group questionnaire discussed in chapter thirteen were collected towards the end of the Math Ed 378 module, in the third year of the B.Ed programme. The timing of the data collection was appropriate, since the data would help gauge the PSTs’ experience of the current sequence of mathematics education modules. The PSTs’ written responses to the questionnaire took the form of self-re-

ports. As a data corpus, the written responses formed part of a larger data set generated by the Critical Professionalism group members, who teach in other faculties of Stellenbosch University. Although 26 PSTs were requested to complete the questionnaire, not all responded.

Methodological issues concerning the data analysis require clarification and justification. As a primary issue, evidence of teaching for the public good is contained in the PSTs' written responses that related to their preparation for teaching school mathematics. The qualitative method of comparison (Corbin and Strauss, 2008) was used to analyse the data excerpts which exemplified teaching for the public good. Comparisons were drawn between some of the central tasks that are taught during pre-service preparation in mathematics education and the PSTs' reflections on these tasks. Drawing such comparisons is a way of answering the following research question: what might teaching for the public good of mathematics education in pre-service preparation at a university be like? The implications of such a question are also covered.

A second methodological issue relating to the study described here is the self-study of my teaching. As the PSTs reported on my teaching, they may have been biased since I analysed the data excerpts. As a researcher/mathematics educator, I 'worked on the inside' (Ball, 2000), using my own teaching of mathematics education as a site for studying teaching and learning and for understanding the functions of the university. Such a research genre requires 'distance' (Adler *et al*, 2005) – the adoption of a critical perspective when reporting and analysing findings. According to Bhabha in his work on post-colonial theory (1984), in which he describes his use of mimicry, the 'other' (or the colonised) copies, or aspires to be like, the coloniser. To deal with the distance concerned, this concept of mimicry is appropriate to assess instances where the PSTs are in agreement with my teaching and where, for example, they begin to appropriate MER mathematics discourse. Hence, it is necessary to report the PSTs' respective agreement and disagreement with regards to my teaching. For reasons of space, the analysis of only three excerpts from the PSTs' reports – which range from disagreement to agreement – are presented. Each PST referred to was assigned a pseudonym.

### **Teaching for the public good: mathematics education in pre-service preparation**

The first PST, Anne, questioned the degree to which she had been prepared to teach school mathematics, especially in terms of content and teaching. Writing about her experiences in the mathematics education modules, she states the following:

Anne This course, with reference specifically to mathematics, has been an ‘Ok’ module of the course. To be truly honest, I do not want to teach maths in schools as I do not feel properly trained/educated. This module has not brought desire into my heart to teach maths. Merely trying to understand what is actually being asked is a challenge, and I am a very strong maths student. I would like this course/module to be revised. I would like to suggest that our course, and specifically major subjects such as mathematics, be content-based. Too many teachers are lacking content. Now in our third year, we know how to teach and now we need proper content – content that is addressed in schools.

Although Anne starts by acknowledging that the mathematics component of the course has been ‘Ok’, she quickly expresses her disagreement through the use of such phrases as ‘to be truly honest’ and ‘has not brought desire into my heart to teach maths’. She provides specifics in comparing the content of the mathematics education modules with that of school mathematics. According to her, the content in the modules is not the ‘proper content – content that is addressed in schools’. One particular reason she provides is that teachers in schools are ‘lacking content’. She also states that she found the content of the modules difficult to understand: ‘merely trying to understand what is actually being asked is a challenge, and I am a very strong maths student.’ It is noteworthy that she regards mathematics and teaching as two separate knowledge objects. For instance, she writes: ‘now in our third year, we know how to teach and now we need proper content – content that is addressed in schools’.

In terms of her preparation, the second PST, Tami, noticed a difference between the content of the mathematics education modules and school mathematics (‘the curriculum’), as can be seen in the following excerpt from her observations:

Tami I found this course extremely challenging at first. Now I find it easier. What excites me is the way we approach maths and all the connections we are making, for example the different interpretations of fractions. What I find difficult and frightening is I don’t know how I am going to apply everything to the curriculum. I am also concerned about those other aspects of the maths curriculum that we are not going to cover, because I don’t know if I will be able to apply the same approach and methods by myself.

Evidence of the difference in content is shown in Tami’s description of what ‘excites’ her, such as ‘the different interpretations of fractions’. According to Tami, the mathematics content in the modules focuses on ‘connections’, which refer to the many interpretations of fractions, such as part-whole

fractions, ratios, decimals, percentages, and rates, for example. She is concerned that she will not be able to ‘approach’ school mathematics (‘the curriculum’) by applying the ‘same approach and methods’ on her own. Implicitly, she has made a comparison between the mathematics in the modules and school mathematics (‘the maths curriculum’).

The third student, Liezel, describes her preparation for teaching school mathematics in ways that are specific to the mathematics education discourse. For example, she articulates the relationships between mathematics and teaching, as can be seen in the following excerpt:

Liezel The course has enabled me to acquire a new perspective on mathematics and teaching approaches. We often underestimate learners and go with the assumption that we have to tell them what to do all the time. This programme has actually proved the opposite. In mathematics especially, children can be led by means of the correct facilitating strategies and probing questions, to use their own methods by means of inherent experimental processes to formulate and thereby solve the problems posed to them. The modules have changed my approach to mathematics. By and large, we are taught to follow a product-oriented mathematical approach. In this programme, however, there is emphasis on the opposite (process-oriented) approach as a way to highlight the necessity of the child’s mathematical development. (Liezel, translated from the Afrikaans)

Liezel refers to some of the central tasks of pre-service preparation, including forming a new vision – what she calls ‘a new perspective on mathematics and teaching approaches’. By claiming to regard mathematics with an eye on teaching and the needs of learners, she expresses concern with learners and learning. The excerpt illustrates her awareness that many children find learning mathematics difficult. Accordingly, she writes about decompressing mathematics by using ‘facilitating strategies’ and ‘inherent experimental processes’ that are concerned with the ‘child’s mathematical development’, the goal of which is to provide structural insights into mathematics. Liezel cautions against underestimating learners and advocates the use of particular teaching strategies. Examples include her references to ‘facilitating strategies’ and ‘probing questions’ where ‘they use their own methods’. She points out ‘inherent experimental processes to formulate and thereby solve the problems posed’. Her analysis of the prevailing situation reveals the kind of mathematics problems she has in mind: those in which mathematics, with its strong grammar, can emerge via the adoption of a process-oriented approach. Liezel seems to be aware of the importance of mathematics for teach-

ing, with her epistemic formulations of mathematics akin to those of MER mathematics.

### **Discussion and conclusion**

A comparison of the observations of Anne, Tami and Liezel reveals how their responses about being prepared to teach school mathematics differ. Anne, unlike Liezel, does not see the need to subject the strong grammar of mathematics to specific views of teaching. In terms of her preparation, Anne wants teaching and mathematics to be kept as two distinct knowledge objects. She wants the mathematics content in the mathematics education modules to be like the 'proper content' addressed in school. She does not see the need to consider mathematics for the purposes of teaching, unlike MER mathematics. Tami is excited about the various mathematical 'connections' that have been highlighted through the use of teaching 'approach and methods' in the mathematics education modules. Liezel, by contrast, seems inclined to adopt a hypothetical attitude vis-à-vis the facts and norms that are usually associated with a cultural tradition, such as those that form part of mathematics with its strong grammar. She articulates where a type of mathematics – MER mathematics – emerges through particular teaching processes that make the content in school mathematics gradually more sophisticated.

We might regard what Liezel describes as a mimicking of mathematics education with its associated discourse, which she quite likely picked up from my teaching; she might have simply worked out what the ideal PST should say. This does not imply that she is unaware of the implications of what she is saying, however. On the contrary, by mimicking MER mathematics discourse she shows she is making a transition, albeit only verbally, from her earlier mathematics experiences. Evidently, she is influenced by MER mathematics and its related discourse in ways that resemble the coloniser's exercise of power over the colonised, resulting in mimicry on the part of the latter. In terms of such an understanding, the power and status that the university has in relation to the school is given due consideration.

In contrast, Tami seems to be aware that there are other connections within and between the different branches of school mathematics content that have not been expounded in the modules and which she does not know how to comprehend on her own. It is not possible to prepare PSTs like Tami to teach the entire school mathematics content because the university and the school have different but overlapping goals. One goal within the modules is for Tami to acquire conceptual tools to understand and identify the different branches of the content of school mathematics. A narrow interpretation of preparation



for PSTs like Tami would amount to a 'front load' (Doyle and Carter, 2003) of all the school mathematics content in the modules. The latter is simply not possible because the two institutions have different time constraints.

Anne's remarks about the 'proper content' deserve attention because, by way of negative implication, they point to the issue of the public good in the teaching of mathematics education. The mathematics content, as it is taught at school, is subject to a particular timetable which differs from that of the university. Thus her suggestion that the proper mathematics content of the middle grades be covered after the third year – namely, during the final year of the B.Ed programme in the university – simply does not make sense. More importantly, the 'proper' school mathematics content is subject to test-makers, various teachers' input, the principal's knowledge and awareness, textbook publishers, education department bureaucrats and school board members. In terms of content, however, the teaching of mathematics education in pre-service preparation is characterised by the presence of more transformative goals related to the public good. Examples are the central tasks such as the development of the analysis of belief systems and the formation of new visions, of subject matter knowledge for teaching, of understandings of learners and learning, of a beginning repertoire, and of tools for the study of teaching. In contrast, Tami and Liezel appear to have some understanding of what the university is communicating in terms of pre-service preparation.

At another level, the excerpts from the three PSTs have implications for university practice. Taken as reflections of teaching for the public good, they are an overt admission that much is awry with the function of a university in relation to school and society. The excerpts should therefore not be taken as literal expressions of PST understanding *per se*, but more as revealing the relationships that exist between the university and the school. For example, the teaching of mathematics education for the public good represents a particular intersection between the lifeworlds of PSTs and the lifeworld of the university. The university values, and is concerned with, the academic knowledge that is clearly identified in Liezel's words. For her words to be understood in the context of the school requires 'boundary crossing', if we are to take the educational slogan of teaching for the public good seriously. Also, Anne's response, which is indicative of that which is expressed by society as a whole, implies that different varieties of mathematics are not widely known, heard or seen, as is necessary in the preparation of school mathematics teachers.

In conclusion, teaching for the public good is a concept the university employs to draw attention to its distinctive lifeworld. The specified lifeworld

is related to one of its bundled functions: the academic preparation of those public service professionals who are mathematics teachers. In particular, evidence for teaching for the public good is contained in the PSTs' thinking about my teaching of mathematics education. On entering a university, PSTs come into contact with a lifeworld with which they come, in a variety of ways, to disagree or agree regarding the extent to which they are being prepared to teach school mathematics. In theoretical terms, it has been argued that such a lifeworld has to do with the teaching of the central tasks that are vital and specific to mathematics education in pre-service preparation. In practical terms, examples of teaching for the public good in mathematics education in pre-service preparation have been shown from the perspectives of three PSTs.

In theoretical terms, the excerpts of the PSTs, although given as self-reports, reveal their own lifeworlds coming into contact with the lifeworld of the university, in the form of the practices associated with mathematics education as a discipline (Freudenthal, 1973). The lifeworld of the latter implies that the PSTs must come into contact with a variety of mathematics that differs from the school-teaching mathematics they experienced in their own schooling. Also implied is the fact that they must come into contact with those epistemological and pedagogical issues that are related to the form of school mathematics – exemplified in mathematics education discourse in the case of Liezel. Thus, teaching mathematics education to PSTs at a university constitutes a necessary break in their journeys from school to university and back into the school environment upon the completion of their degrees. Such contact with the university is a first encounter for most PSTs, constituting a time out that provides an incomplete preparation for their entry into the world of teaching. As Dewey (1938) warned: preparation is a 'treacherous' idea when used in regard to education.

The PSTs' experiences reported on in this chapter should prepare them for their later experiences in the school environment, which are bound to be deeper and more expansive than at university (Feiman-Nemser, 2001:1016). In the South African schooling context these experiences are intertwined with particular and peculiar realities tied to the country's apartheid past. Such broadening of experience has implications for the (lack of) connections that exist between the university and the school and how the former communicates its lifeworld through its teachers and their teaching.

My ongoing professional development in teaching mathematics education has been affected by my reading of Habermas' ideas on the role of the university. I therefore envision a more fundamental role for Stellenbosch University

in terms of reversing effects on schools and the society that it helped shaped in the past.

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# 15

## Teaching citizenship in visual communication design: reflections of an Afrikaner

*Elmarie Costandius*

### **Introduction**

**A**n academic institution's focus of learning is usually on students, while the learning of lecturers is often regarded as being of secondary importance. Is it true, as the old adage has it, that the best way to learn is to teach? And, if so, is the learning that takes place mostly content-driven learning or reflective? This chapter describes the learning that occurred through a citizenship module that aimed to change the perceptions and attitudes of students, and also my own reflective experience of the process, which I realised was also a journey in personal learning.

The introduction of a module on citizenship in the visual communication design syllabus led me to valuable reflection on my emotional limitations to facilitate a module of this nature. During my guidance of the module I experienced vulnerability, fear and guilt. Even though it was not an easy journey, this module was the most rewarding teaching endeavour I have experienced; it connected my teaching with my everyday life.

In this chapter I present a summary of the module on citizenship. Then I describe the different perspectives on self-reflection described in the literature, and the memories and emotions that were triggered in me during the module. I also reflect on what I learned in the process.

### **Describing the citizenship module**

The citizenship module was incorporated into the visual communication design curriculum at the Visual Arts Department at Stellenbosch University and brought together first- to third-year students and Grade 11 high school learners from Kayamandi (previously and still predominantly a black suburb of Stellenbosch). Working in the context of Stellenbosch University is complex because of its historical association with apartheid and its mostly white Afrikaans student population.

The module began with the school students and university students reading articles or chapters in books, followed by group discussions in the community interaction sessions in which both groups participated. The aim was to facilitate direct and deep learning by considering such themes as blackness/whiteness, stereotyping, power relations, discrimination, helping behaviour, risk and social memory.

Information gained from the conversations was then visually expressed in a typographical layout. Representing issues visually, finding metaphors, discovering new and unexpected combinations or creating multiple interpretations are all ways of dealing with sensitive issues mentally as well as on a physical level. In his book *The Arts Therapies: a revolution in healthcare*, Jones (2005) emphasises the importance of art in therapy by stressing the relationship between art and the unconscious and the potential for change.

Reflective writing was used as a method to contemplate actions and reactions in the community exchanges. After each community interaction, and at the end of the module, students wrote structured reflections (Eyler, 2002) on their experiences. To encourage personal emotions to surface, while simultaneously placing them in a theoretical context, the Affective-Cognitive model (Smith-Tolken and du Plessis, 2009) was used.

The methodology for the module, Action Learning and Action Research (ALAR), enabled community members, students and the lecturer to take part together (Zuber-Skerritt, 2003). The theoretical framework that guides the ALAR process is constructed of grounded theory: raw data and contextual knowledge; personal construct theory: active constructors of knowledge; critical theory: self-critical attitudes; and systems theory: holistic resolutions to complex problems (Zuber-Skerritt, 2003). The aim was not to arrive at generalisations but to get to know, understand and enhance social transformation for the benefit of all the participants.

### **Perspectives on self-reflection**

In the literature terms like ‘metacognition’, ‘self-study’ or ‘self-reflectiveness’ are used to describe the process in which the self is taken as the object of investigation to acquire an identity as a critical thinker by developing an ability to look inside oneself. Reflective thinking is apparent in oral and early written literature but Kant, Marx and Freud were amongst the first writers to verbalise and formulate this approach. In the field of education, opinions differ as to what is seen as self-reflection and what its major advantages are. Dewey (1910:13) argues that ‘reflective thinking is always more or less troublesome because it involves overcoming the inertia that inclines one to accept suggestions at their face value; it involves willingness to endure a condition of mental unrest and disturbances.’ For Jaspers (1963), self-reflection includes self-observation, self-revelation and self-understanding. Habermas (1978) defines reflection as practising critical self-determination. Mezirow (1998:185) suggests that meaningful personal and social transformation may result from self-reflection, to the benefit of ethical and moral development. Schön (1987) maintains that reflection is a consistent process of self-involvement in what he calls ‘reflection in action’.

The value and function of self-reflection is described extensively in academic literature but the actual process that takes place in one’s mind when reflecting has yet to be fully unexplored. The relationship between a person’s conscious and unconscious mind is therefore not wholly understood (Schön, 1987). The subconscious and conscious minds might be operating in a closer relationship than has so far been realised. As Yip (2007:294) argues: ‘The gap between the intended mindfulness and unintended unconscious is lessened by a spontaneous self-reflection.’

Writing a self-reflection as an Afrikaner makes whiteness central to the reflection. Steyn (2005:133) reflects on whiteness in South Africa as a complex hybrid identity and urges a ‘continuing need to build self-reflexivity amongst white people’. Vice (2010) wrote a self-reflection on whiteness, urging whites in South Africa to be humble and not perpetuate whiteness. In this chapter, my reflections revolve mostly around contemplations of whiteness and aspects related to it.

Self-reflection is a ‘self-constructed process that is influenced by social, cultural, political and organizational contexts’ (Yip, 2007:296). Historically and currently I am classified as white and, more specifically, a white Afrikaner. I write this reflection from this constructed perspective because I cannot get away from it, and though I would have liked to write as a neutral human

being, I am caught in my socially constructed identity. I would not like to write on behalf of all white Afrikaners, however, because there are many differences within this group. When I read Jansen's *Knowledge in the Blood* (2009), I frequently identified myself with the opinions that he formulates but I also sometimes felt that he describes an Afrikaner I do not associate with. What this chapter contains is therefore a constructed self-reflection from a constructed self-identity. Writing this self-reflection down could give the impression that it is fixed and final but it is in fact a process of continuous reconstruction.

### **Reflections on my learning process**

Here I describe the issues and emotions triggered during the citizenship module, and reflect on the personal learning I experienced because of these emotions.

The module brought back memories of my childhood and upbringing. I grew up without openly discussing politics and the church, the two issues my mother said were like millstones around our necks, preventing us from breaking out of our Afrikaner conservatism. Up to the late 19th century Afrikaans people displayed few nationalistic tendencies because of their strong individualistic inclinations (Nel, 1979). On 8 November 1876 *De Zuid-Afrikaan* wrote, '*Hy moet national selfrespect leeren*' ([The Afrikaners] need to learn national self-respect), and the decision was taken to make teachers the carriers of nationalist messages (Nel, 1979:4). By the early 1990s Afrikaner politics, religion and education were intertwined. The development of Afrikaner nationalism was hugely successful and one becomes fearful when looking back at how easily people can be influenced – especially when an educational system is used as the medium. The module reminded me of the huge responsibility and power a lecturer has, and how conscious and careful they need to be not to misuse this power.

When I was guiding the module there were times I asked myself why I was doing it, as it required a huge amount of time and emotional energy. I must admit that I am still not sure as to what single impetus drove my actions, but speaking generally I can say that I act in any particular way because I believe it is the right thing to do. At the same time, however, a complex set of emotions often accompanies my belief that a certain thing is the right thing to do. I wonder how great an influence white guilt about the past, both individual and collective, has had on my actions. This reminds me of Biko's words about the 'vague satisfaction for the guilt-stricken whites' (2004:23). Would a module like this give me a password that would permit me to live with myself

and sleep without the heavy burden of whiteness? Would I be able, now, to say that I broke the silence and faced the issues openly, or are religious motivations subconsciously driving my actions? Though I would like to believe that I present the citizenship module purely because I believe it to be ethically correct, I cannot ignore the fact that my motivation is undoubtedly more complex and layered.

Each person who reflects on the possibilities of dealing with the Afrikaner past – from denial to open confession – is probably filled with self-doubt, resentment and fear, although these feelings might manifest themselves in different forms. I personally believe that ignoring the little voice of conscience that reminds one of the past might be a dangerous thing to do, since these feelings might then surface in other ways. A suppressed feeling cannot be psychologically healthy. Through the citizenship module, I became more interested in what my subconscious can hide from my conscious mind and faced the challenge of trying to unpack and understand my feelings and actions.

I believe the wrongs of the past should be corrected. By saying this I acknowledge that all people should have a fair chance to succeed. The module again made me realise that it is necessary for both white students and me to understand what it means to be a person of colour, and to critically reflect on whiteness, the invisible privileges of being white, the consequences of institutional whiteness and what is considered the norm. Owing to the interactions involved in the module, I learned that talking about and realising what white privilege involves represents only a first step; actually giving up my privileges would be a far more challenging next step.

My education at Pretoria University years ago was filled with messages that 'white is good' and 'the other is substandard'. African art, for instance, did not feature in our curriculum. Instead we were exposed to European art and design, as if we were living somewhere in Europe, ignoring the fact that our lives were in Africa. At the time I did not realise that there was anything wrong with that assumption; it was what I had been fed since my schooldays. Even though I question these contradictions now, I wonder how much of my education still unconsciously influences my judgement of what is good design and what is not. This is something I continually question and confront in myself.

In the citizenship module I tried to open up the space for more voices and visual expressions to emerge. A Muslim student told me after she had graduated that by encouraging her to use her religious background as inspira-



tion for her designs, I 'othered' her even more. This incident led me to realise the narrowness of my perspective and my own limitations in 'seeing myself in the shoes of others' (Nussbaum, 2002). Encouraging students to develop their own voices is not enough; there should also be space for those students to feel comfortable enough to express a personal voice. I learned that creating an inclusive space is very much in the hands – or rather the psyche – of the lecturer.

Facing whiteness also means overcoming my fear of criticism and putting my own imperfections on show. Every time I talk about the citizenship module it feels as if I expose myself – and if I am criticised about what and how I do something, the reasons why I do it and the ways in which I do it, I feel sensitive about it. After one of my presentations, a member of the audience asked what I meant when I spoke of a safe space. A safe space to me is one where what is said during conversations in class or community interactions will not be held against the students and will not affect their marks. The man asked whether that safe space means I am not confronting issues openly and fully. He also asked why it is that people at Stellenbosch University always seem too scared to talk openly and why there is an insistence on it all happening in a safe space. Theoretically I distinguished between safe space and 'safe speech' (Waghid, 2004) and I thought I had it resolved in my own mind. However, if I go deep inside myself, I realise that I do need a safe space so I can come to terms with my whiteness, and there are aspects of safe speech included in this concept.

I put myself in that uncomfortable space by taking on the citizenship module and talking about it at seminars and conferences, but it has also brought new insights and forced me to admit to contradictions in my own mind. The day after the seminar I seriously considered whether I should discontinue the module and simply return to teaching my design curriculum. Afterwards, I realised that it was positive criticism that helped me understand things in greater depth. The journey continues, because by writing this reflection and publishing it, I am again opening myself to criticism.

The issue of doing good, connected with religious belief systems, surfaced in conversations during the citizenship module. This again made me think of what my potential motivation for taking on this module might be and whether it was somehow influenced by my Christian upbringing. I remember my mother once saying that she did not fulfil her dream to do missionary work; instead she was a teacher all her life. I was very conscious of her urge to help people. I often think that my urge to contribute to society might have

had its roots in my mother's unfulfilled dream. Perhaps it is true that parents subconsciously project their own issues and desires onto their children.

Another spiritual aspect related to my mother's unfulfilled dream may have played a role in my decision to take on the citizenship module. I remember a day in my second year of undergraduate study when I prayed to God and asked him to let me pass my degree, and in return I would do missionary work. I did not study art as a school subject and originally studied law. Starting art studies late made my first two years difficult. By my fourth year I had forgotten about my promise because I felt comfortable on the course. It was years later, when I was walking in Kayamandi, that I suddenly remembered my promise. In a strange way, I felt relieved that after so many years I had done something about it at last. When I reflect on my reaction to this promise now, I realise that although religion is not playing a role in my life at present, traces of it have been left deep in my subconscious.

As a middle-class white person it is easier for me to make an emotionless contribution to poor persons of colour who are 'far' away. If I cook soup for the night shelter, I never meet the people who eat the soup. There are no emotional ties or expectations that can expose my emotions and vulnerabilities. If I teach art to a learner, I do not have to question why I do it and what it is that I really achieve with my teaching. I might believe that I do good because it will help the learner in some way, but in a broader social context it might not be good for healthy future relations because it perpetuates existing hierarchies and power relations.

It is for this reason, through the citizenship module, that I learned to be very cautious and to reflect critically on concepts such as missionary work, charity or types of helping behaviour that encourage the idea of 'white as knowledgeable and black as needy' (Biko, 2004:23) and attitudes of 'giving and receiving'. Santas (2000:349-50) remarks that teaching antiracism, therefore, is doubly prone to failure because the internalised superiority of the 'all-knowing teacher' is most often coupled with that of the 'well-meaning white person'. The charity paradigm, according to Britzman (in Kumashiro, 2000:43), affirms white superiority, since it can veil 'complicity with racism, homophobia, and other forms of oppression'.

A problematic aspect in the citizenship module was the skewed power symmetries and hierarchies between students and learners. The ideal would be for students to have conversations with peers at other universities instead of with school learners. This is something that needs to be addressed in the future. The citizenship module developed over a period of six years in close

partnership with non-governmental organisation (NGO) Vision-K in Kayamandi. It is difficult to break that relationship but an alternative programme needs to be established for learners that will not leave the NGO feeling rejected. That 'the symmetry is not ideal' is not a good enough reason in this situation; the emotional risks involved in these types of relationships cannot easily be ignored.

Because I realised that my urge to grow was a strong driving force behind the module, I often wondered whether it meant as much to the students as it did to me. Were the students eager to participate or did they do so because it is part of their curriculum? I would like to believe that I inspired students with my own eagerness to discover new knowledge about myself in my relationships with others.

Through these experiences I learned doing so takes a huge amount of patience, and that there is a long journey ahead of me. I understand that others might not have the patience and want to see society change at a faster pace – and that is perfectly legitimate after all that happened in the colonial and apartheid past. I realise, however, that consciously changing deep-rooted perceptions and attitudes, most of which lie in the subconscious, cannot be done in a few days or weeks; it will take months or, more realistically, years. Jansen (2009) refers to the knowledge that is in the blood. He is correct: it is in my blood. My journey will be to get rid of the bad blood. Changing perceptions is a process of 'degraining' the ingrained ideas and attitudes in my mind; they need to be decolonised, de-racialised and reprogrammed.

Da Silva (2008:91) refers to whites 'privatising their feelings'. I can identify with that. There was a long silence in my life before I confronted issues openly. It was not a question of not acknowledging the wrongs of the past, but rather of determining what I needed to do about it. What kind of journey did I need to embark on to address these issues and come to terms with them psychologically? The citizenship module became the medium: a space in which I could rethink, reflect and try to re-programme my mind. I suggest to lecturers who would like to come to terms with the contentious past to incorporate it into their curricula, and in that way work collectively with students to attempt to heal the rifts that still exist in society.

Of course one cannot ignore the question of to what extent I am capable of teaching citizenship – not when I am a product of an unequal and divided past and a carrier of 'troubled knowledge' (Jansen, 2009:258). One can also ask who we can consider to be without troubled knowledge, since the influence of scars we carry from our past is undeniably transferred to our students.

These points comprise an extract of my reflections and the emotions I experienced while involved in the citizenship module. I want to close with a last comment from a colleague, who quoted the words of Freire: 'change cannot be driven by a white person, the oppressor; it has to come from the oppressed themselves.' I agree with this; it refers to Steyn's warning about a situation where whites see themselves as the ones who should 'take charge of social transformation, in the interest of Africans' (2005:127). But does that mean I should sit back and not participate in the transformation process, as Vice (2010) argues from a white Afrikaner perspective? I should like to disagree. Each small action has the potential to contribute, although one has to be ever conscious not to perpetuate the negative perceptions and power relations of the past in the process of trying to do good. This reflection assisted me when I thought again about the citizenship module, and learnt in the process of doing so.

When one reads a chapter about citizenship in the safety of one's own home, one can only imagine the experiences and complications of such an endeavour. One can easily think, 'Yes, I agree with everything in the chapter' without changing deeply ingrained perceptions and attitudes in oneself. When one actually participates in a module focused on citizenship, however, the experience become embodied and emotional. My involvement was rich and expansive and delivered opportunities for self-reflection, so enhancing the opportunity for learning. Fourie (1999:277) calls for 'cognitive transcendence', but I believe a physical experience is more likely to trigger changes in perceptions and attitudes. My own learning regarding social transformation was invaluable – and it occurred as a result of my actual participation in the citizenship module.

### **Concluding remarks**

Writing an article is often a huge effort; reflecting on one's own emotional state of mind makes it all-consuming. I can honestly say that it has not been an easy or comfortable journey. Zembylas writes about the pedagogies of discomfort that 'provide spaces for mourning, and transform such feelings into energy for praxis, responsibility and transformation' (2008:235). Steyn's data indicates that 'whites who are shifting their paradigm from preserving privilege for some to taking responsibility for promoting development of all have grappled with, or at least have not evaded, these uncomfortable feelings' (2005:132). But what I can say is that the citizenship module was the most rewarding teaching endeavour I have experienced. It is rewarding to reflect on and deal with issues that have been silenced for too long.

Reflection for me came with physically experiencing and interacting, not merely reading and thinking about citizenship in the comfort of my own home. It was both a physical and a mental experience. Using art as a way of expressing emotions or dealing with sensitive issues was valuable. Even though it is not possible for all lecturers to be physically involved in community interaction, or in dealing with sensitive issues through art processes, other types of exposure could be facilitated in the form of research groups. These could function as support groups operating in a safe space to unpack the white silence and white fear that can form barriers to transformation. I have established a research group at Stellenbosch University called Critical Citizenship and any lecturer is welcome to take part in the group's conversations and activities, including seminars, workshops and research projects.

I decided to write this reflection because I hoped that personal growth would accompany such an attempt and encourage other lecturers to undertake such a journey. Kendall refers to John Kotter's book *Leading Change: why transformation efforts fail*, that it emphasises the first step of 'establishing a sense of urgency' (2006:20). Addressing issues of critical citizenship in curricula across all departments should be treated as a matter of urgency. Teaching critical citizenship from an Afrikaner perspective requires deep self-reflection, which is difficult and uncomfortable but is urgently needed collectively. Afrikaner nationalism was spread very successfully through education – with many negative results. But the medium of education could be used once more to reflect critically on that troubled history and contribute positively by facilitating processes of acknowledging, growing and healing.

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# 16

## Educational development for the public good

*Gina Wisker*

### **Introduction**

In times where conflicting value systems jostle for far-reaching power, it is important that educational developers commit to sound and effective enabling practices. We need to work with our established learning communities to ensure the development of new processes, practices, allegiances and communities that can engage colleagues and students with a positive values-driven agenda. This chapter explores ways in which academic developers, academic colleagues and, as a consequence of our work, our students, can develop and be empowered as active critical professionals, where work and knowledge creation are underpinned by positive values of social justice. What can we *do* in terms of educational development and in our teaching to encourage the research and experience-informed attitudes, behaviour and practices which support and enable staff – and through them students – to ensure that higher education really is effective for social justice and the public good? I explore arguments and some strategic educational activities in a UK university, which could be translated into different contexts. Critical professionalism, a term developed by Melanie Walker, who talks of agentic and purposeful elements where critical professionalism in teaching is ‘about having the courage to put forward alternatives’ (2001:14), underpins Brenda Leibowitz and David Holgate’s chapter in this volume. I use my own academic development interpretation here to indicate engaged, critical, active beliefs and behaviour of academic staff and the palpable influence these have on the perspectives and work of students.



Internationally, the current context for higher education pressurises us to see knowledge as a commodity, and students as consumers and purchasers of that commodity (Brown *et al*, 2011). The current commodification of and competition for higher education seems to have slipped educationalists, academics and students into a world in which fees dominate and curricula are restricted to the totalitarian notion of the 'strictly useful', according to some highly restricted definition of measurable functionality. In the UK at least, we are also caught in an ironically contradictory situation. On the one hand, there is the removal of central government funding and rising fees, which place the total cost of higher education, educating for all our futures, on individuals, many of whom will not want to risk the loan system which is a form of rental on that future. On the other hand, we hear the discourse of widening participation and access, a gesture towards the social justice of knowledge acquisition and construction, if not to the outcomes of that learning experience. What can get lost in this contradiction are the reasons for higher education in the first place. As Martha Nussbaum argues in defence of the humanities: 'cultivated capacities for critical thinking and reflection are crucial in keeping democracies alive and wide awake' (2010:10).

Nussbaum replaces the often sidelined humanities in a tug of war of values in which an impoverished curriculum sees only one version of higher education, operating on a limited version of the sciences, with economics at the centre. She reminds us that the humanities foster imaginative connections with others:

The ability to think well about a wide range of cultures, groups, and nations in the context of a grasp of the global economy and of the history of many national and group interactions is crucial in order to deal with responsibility with the problems we currently face as members of an interdependent world (2010:10).

These values link social justice directly to the vision and curriculum of higher education, and to the practices of academic/educational developers whose roles with staff facilitate theorised, practical and clear thinking – a vision and facility that colleagues can then nurture in their students.

Social justice informs international declarations and commitments which urge higher education to promote critical thinking, active citizenship and elements of critical professionalism which help achieve sustainable development, well-being, human rights, equality and peace. The Declaration of the World Conference on Higher Education stresses that attention be paid to social justice and social responsibility (1998; 2009); the UN emphasises the importance of a social orientation to curricula in its millennium goals (2010);

and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation explicitly stresses the importance of incorporating social responsibility into higher education (UNESCO, 1998; 2009).

Barnett and Coate (2005) argue that the university needs to engage with society and non-academic communities. Coate (2009) maintains that civic engagement is a key university role. Civic engagement initiatives fire up people's imaginations and sense of social justice and they also take these attitudes through to sustainable practice in the work of staff and students. In this way, positive developmental change is more than temporary; it is not simply focused on one-off actions. Senior management vision and commitment, curriculum development, social justice attitudes and values outcomes in educational development programmes are essential. So, too, are ongoing opportunities for supported projects to action values, identify their benefits in practice and embed values outcomes in modules to ensure both students' learning and a common discourse of social engagement, social justice, civic and global responsibility.

Berman (1990) sees social responsibility as 'personal investment in the well-being of others and the planet'. Awareness and practice of social responsibility and social justice reflect an understanding that we all belong to a wider social network which both constructs and maintains versions of identity. We co-develop and maintain interpersonal relationships based on ethical considerations of equality, justice and mutual support, and each act ethically and with integrity. In Berman's (1997) terms, these beliefs and behaviours engage the individual with their well-being and values, and with working with others to engage them too. It starts with the individual in context, spreads to others near and far, and is seen in positive social interactions, decision-making, cooperation, participation and altruistic behaviour for the social good. The benefits are both social and personal: engagement with values and critical thinking, cooperation and energised actions.

I am a frequent visitor to South Africa and engage with educational development in that country. Each time I return I am reminded that education for social justice can sit alongside education for a knowledge economy. For us in the UK, grappling with our contradictions, or for me as a travelling academic at least, this reminder is inspiring. It enables me to return with some new hope to the engaged and values-infused work that I and colleagues do in educational development and our teaching. The hope is that values of social justice will infuse planned (and unplanned) activities both in educational development and in the learning contexts for our students. Rapid change and

challenge to established values can lead to a sense of intellectual impotence, paralysis and silencing. However, educational development, intrinsic motivations as rewards, creativity, exploration, equality, sharing and enrichment are also the longer lasting aims of higher education and the development it fosters. It is in this context that the values of social justice, engagement and a questioning, creative, imaginative and committed response can be revived and nurtured.

For academic or educational developers, the context of contested values of higher education matches the complexities and contradictions we work with in our own practices: 'Academic development is a field in which profound and unremitting contradiction is not resolvable as a problem of professional practice, but is the lived condition within which the work is carried out on a daily basis' (Lee and McWilliam, 2008:75). The ways we might engage colleagues in the university context will be affected by the local, national and global climate in which we find ourselves.

### **What values? Whose values?**

We need to ask a few questions before committing to social justice development or curriculum change. Misguided work with a values-informed curriculum and practices could lead to actions for social *injustice*. The same kind of enthusiasm and engagement could be harnessed for commitment to inequality, cruelty, social irresponsibility and prejudice. There is enough of that about. It is important that our educational development engagements enable colleagues – and consequently their students – to think through their value systems and discuss how they can implement social justice actions in their own study and practice. Is this brainwashing? Is the engagement with good values something entirely subjective or merely temporary and contextually constructed? Are we proselytising a certain set of values in action, and the opposite could be urged or enforced?

Fundamental questions about the right of education to engage with values and bring them into the open for discussion form an early part of any development which leads to critical thinking, critical professionalism and action for social justice. Changing practice and changing curricula are all modes for engagement explored here and should be effective in a variety of contexts. As David Gosling notes: we are 'living within a contradictory reality' (2009:5). The surfacing of values and engagement with practical implications of development for social justice and a values agenda is an important issue for educational developers to tackle.

### **Defining critical professionalism**

It is in this spirit of revival and reinvigoration that educational developers can engage with other academic colleagues in the development of our own critical professionalism, and in which we can all engage our students in learning aimed at social justice, empowerment and self-actualisation. '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. 'Professionalism' implies dedication and commitment to values, rigour and management, and ensuring that the fruits of such development are experienced, shared and benefited by more than the individual or the organisation funding the endeavours.

Critical professionals are engaged academics and colleagues concerned about the relationships between education, social justice, knowledge, people and life. They are individuals who see that their involvement in developing their own professional skills over time, consistently and diversely, can lead to nurturing skills and a searching, constructive development of self and others. This should be more than merely exploratory and ambitious or idealistic. It should be planned, practised, shared and disseminated, influential, far-reaching and sustainable. It is underpinned by and leads to change in vision and practice among staff and students to ensure that outcomes are constructive, positive and sustainable. Some of this can be actioned in the university context through ensuring senior management support and buy-in for developments that enable social justice, values and the public good; embedding values through learning opportunities and outcomes in the curriculum; and by enabling staff to develop projects and practices and to disseminate their experiences (sometimes problematic, taxing and troublesome and sometimes inspirational).

### **Some practical applications**

While the transformational nature of the university curriculum is an underlying theme in the South African context (Jansen, 2009; Terwel and Walker, 2004), in UK universities this is less widely asserted. However, I have been involved with local successes in my role as educational developer at the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CLT) in Brighton, UK.

### **Networking**

Networking with communities and organisations who would benefit from the university's input could provide genuine opportunities for student engage-

ment and jobs after graduation. At the University of Brighton, the CUPP programme (Community University Partnership Programme: <http://www.brighton.ac.uk/cupp/>) exemplifies such community and social justice engagement. The emphasis on volunteering and the theme of sustainable development underlies some curricula and other University practices, whether assessed or additional to the curriculum. Students can become actively involved with social and community organisations, gain transferable skills and enhance their curriculum vitae. They can engage with social and cultural organisations such as the Terence Higgins Trust (for HIV and AIDS), with social action to promote sustainable living in social housing, with projects supporting people with hearing disabilities, with neighbourhood revitalisation schemes and with ageing and well-being projects. CUPP is supported by senior management buy-in and a values-infused vision underpinning the curriculum through a wide range of disciplines.

Engaging colleagues and students in social justice-oriented learning means embracing these values at the curriculum level through course development, learning outcomes, assessment, learning and teaching activities and content. It also means ensuring that aims, targets and goals are embedded in the strategic planning and monitoring processes as recognisable indicators of achievement, and that rewards (intrinsic or extrinsic) are given to ensure achievement of measurable goals and competences of socially responsible behaviour in the disciplines and professional practice. Values-oriented learning is likely to be at a high contextual as well as a practical level if embedded within curriculum development and embraced throughout the institution.

### ***Continuing professional development***

CPD activities can ensure that colleagues focus on issues and practices which lead to social justice throughout their careers. Course leadership and curriculum development courses can support the development of social justice-informed curricula. Including an expectation of social justice and critical professionalism in the criteria for teaching excellence awards highlights their importance in underpinning all learning and teaching.

A strategy developed at several international universities (for example, University of Brighton and University of Stellenbosch) concerns 'fellowship' projects. These enable colleagues to take an innovation, a problem to solve or a development into their own practice and research its progress. Learning and teaching fellowships offer a specific opportunity for colleagues to come together to develop research-informed good practice in a range of areas related to issues, problems, innovations, development and challenges in their own work.

University of Brighton fellowships have included: student empowerment regarding ethnic and gendered identity when about to enter HE; tourism management students' exchange visits to Gambia where they participated in community engagement (Novelli and Burns, 2010); developing IT and blended learning for students with learning disabilities; and refugee education. Not every fellowship relates to social justice, although many do. The ways in which we engage and support their development aim to evolve a shared set of values and methods to underpin work for social justice more broadly. This involves identifying, developing and implementing in their own practice the characteristics of critical professionalism – the questioning, challenging, problematising, engaged attitude which seeks reasons for research, learning and action. Ideas generation, project planning, hard work and meticulous, focused and creative engagement are all essential to the research and professional practice. They ensure that plans are put into practice, that people are engaged and involved and that something of value happens which causes change. Then evaluation and completion-finishing takes place, further plans are developed and the students benefit from the projects.

Dialogues between ideas, values and actions and between colleagues, students and the appropriate professional and practice context lead to knowledge creation and production. The many formal and informal professional educational development activities can engage colleagues in thinking through their values, using research and theory in professional practice to develop supportive communities, contribute to knowledge and create effective change for social justice. In the University of Brighton some of these take place through enquiry group meetings and specific workshops and symposia that enable exchange of ideas, problem-solving and joint working.

### ***Embedding sustainability in the curriculum***

A major value to which curriculum is committed in UK higher education and at Brighton is sustainability or sustainable development. This is seen as crucial to the continuity of humanity. It is embedded in a mindset, affecting the way people behave and how they learn and construct knowledge (Sayce, 2010). It is fundamental and applicable across the spectrum of everything we do. One of the challenges for the inclusion of sustainability in the curriculum is that it could be seen as yet another add-on. Some colleagues might say, 'last year we had equality in the curriculum, or e-learning, and now we have to have sustainable development ...' and this can lead to mechanistic compliance rather than action based on values. For a set of beliefs and approaches to be owned, actioned, maintained and sustained in universities

there needs to be a hierarchy of both strategic commitment from senior management and willingness from the staff and students. Sustainability is enabled by: government imperative (eg Mandelson, 2010; DEFRA, 2010), senior management buy-in and championing and colleagues embracing the commitment throughout their work and embedding it in the curriculum. We also ensure that reports of the effectiveness of sustainability are tabled at faculty board or other middle management discussions and embedded in processes for course validation and annual monitoring. We have found that development opportunities and regular meetings and projects keep the issues in people's minds and practices.

Some of the opportunities within academic development with which I have been involved have included enquiry groups, symposia with national figures and the sharing of local examples in practice, discipline-based project teams and the development of website resources.

### ***Enquiry group***

The sustainable development enquiry group meets three times a year for an hour and is open to anyone interested in the values and practice. Sometimes this is a large group committed to exploring, supporting, producing and then disseminating projects engaged with sustainable development. Sometimes it is a small explorative discussion group. The waxing and waning depends on project initiatives, funding and human energies. We cannot all be focused on this all the time but it is an underlying concern all the time, so a regular group meeting keeps the issues to the fore and enables projects to be maintained.

### ***Symposia***

Twice yearly we have themed symposia: one-day internal mini-conferences with invited outside keynote speakers – colleagues sharing examples of their own practice. The sustainable development symposium had an uplifting atmosphere of engagement in something to which 60 colleagues from across the full discipline range and our partner colleges were thoroughly committed. It was surprising to see how different subjects could interpret sustainability and sustainable development. For example, colleagues working in fashion focused on enabling students to produce fashion products and designs which emphasis certain fabrics and production processes to minimise the waste, toxins and detritus associated with the practising art world. *Telling* students to work in this sustainable way would have failed to engage their beliefs, attitudes, skills and knowledge construction. *Engaging* them to appreciate the theories and values behind sustainable development through discussion and

learning about the implications of certain usage and wastage; involving them in small group tasks that explored applicability to their own practice; setting assessments which encouraged critical thinking, imaginative research, practice-informed responses and production – these actions encouraged students to understand, choose, own, theorise, action and explain their work.

A project funded by the higher education academy educational subject centre – ESCALATE – enabled a small development group of staff and a researcher to work with colleagues across the University, exploring their use of sustainable development in their own curricula. We met termly to consider the planning, findings, developments, future dissemination and embedding. The result was a report for ESCALATE and case studies – examples of sustainable development with curriculum, which can be accessed via the websites listed in the references for this chapter.

### ***Action research for change***

Because it empowers everyone involved and leads to a sense of shared ownership, action research is frequently used as the prime research mode for social justice. It is generally conducted by professionals who see those with whom they research as subjects rather than objects, thus ensuring a shared research endeavour and effective long-lasting change. An example of action research for emancipatory change that I have been involved in has taken place in Iraq/ Kurdistan. The aims of the work have been to:

- identify key research development and supervisory training needs for female researchers and academics
- develop training programmes and other capacity building initiatives that build research development and supervisory capability
- research the development and unfolding of the project through continuous feedback loops that shape the project's direction.

This action research originated in developmental meetings among interested women academics from various, mostly Arabic and Kurdish speaking, universities who co-developed and took on the research processes and data gathering. We, a group of UK women of diverse ethnic backgrounds, have worked from the start to slowly engage with those who wish to engage, co-develop, share and understand the data. We have done this so it can be jointly owned, rather than its implications merely being fed back to the researchers. But we've also done it so the lead institution – University of Kurdistan-Hawler – can make a change in its practices.



We are currently engaged in exploring with women academics how, and if, their involvement in the development programme, constructed with their input and advice, can make positive differences in their own sense of agency in a changing context. This is a context fundamentally based on traditional relations of inequality, where higher education itself is attempting to move forward with gender equality and tackle a history of embedded disempowerment.

It is early days, the research is underway, the data emerging, the development meetings inspirational, But the hidden histories of disempowerment and silencing in academic contexts are also being revealed. This is the tip of an iceberg of a culture in which most research into women's experience has so far dealt with honour killings rather than the empowerment of academic women. The action research cycles now underway are emancipatory and agentic – and the large social justice agenda extends beyond the university women into their teaching, their students and, hopefully, social change.

In our final working visit in February 2012, 250 people, mostly women, from seven different universities, were involved in our workshops and action research training. Twenty-four participated in the symposium on women academics and the sharing of the co-developed research. We have worked together at a conference in Sharjah, in the United Arab Emirates entitled 'Gender and women's studies in the Arab region' in March 2012 and are beginning to co-write. Undertaking these projects has not always been easy, but it has certainly been fruitful, stimulating and enriching. The research and the ongoing development sessions have uncovered a range of issues hidden from the public face of universities, and show us also that as UK-based women working in a postcolonial context, we have surprisingly more in common in relation to barriers – and the imaginative, cooperative ways of working to overcome them – than was apparent at first.

The research looks particularly at the barriers to development and ways of moving beyond these barriers for women in academic and academic-related posts in Iraq and Kurdistan. The research and overall project provide a space for UK and Iraqi female academics to share experiences in developing their own and other participants' development, management and research capabilities.

Local researchers in the team conducted the initial interviews in local languages with academic women at the University of Kurdistan-Hawler, Salahaddin University, University of Sulaimania and the American University of Iraq Sulaimania, Hewler Medical, Jihan and Duhok Universities .

The interviews were based on the following research questions:

- What motivated you to pursue a career in higher education?
- Are you happy with your role? Why and how?
- What are your concerns and challenges?
- What are your professional development needs?
- What do you think would encourage other women into higher education?
- Have you ever encountered any gender issues when it comes to promotion?

The findings were transcribed and translated by the Iraqi researchers. The twenty interviews are being collated and analysed so we can publish together.

The circumstances of the women academics' involvement have been sensitive from the start and participants were reticent to speak openly about their concerns and issues. The local researchers successfully employed appropriate trust-building interview techniques. This reticence was explained as stemming from the fear and mistrust that constrains women from discussing issues of gender and power. Women reported receiving support from their families – although heavy duties within the family affected their work. Some offered examples of general undermining of their confidence at work, and they talked about the lack of equal access to good equipment for work and research.

Despite a contradictory context, the women interviewed were mostly positive about tackling issues and succeeding:

Ambition is what motivated me to work in the academic world – you could say some job privilege motivated too. Yes I am happy and very content with my role in the university. From the beginning it was my dream to attain higher education and work through this field. Facing challenges as a woman is not the issue; it is facing challenges as a human being that matters. (Participant K)

What the projects have done is to raise awareness, enable discussion of issues not previously mentioned and facilitate the sharing of experiences. In social justice terms they have brought women's issues to the fore in the lives of the participants and researchers, and through them, the lives of their students. Should the universities buy into supporting the development and progress of their female academic staff, the situation of the women academics might slowly begin to change. To date, nothing of this kind has happened, however, despite institutional proclamations that it would.

At the individual level the support of the network and development empowers colleagues to take development forward with students. One of the participants notes the changes she feels from being part of the project:

Having participated in the project really was a transformational and empowering experience for me and one that I would like to share with fellow colleagues and students. I sincerely and deeply hope that you do continue conducting these workshops in this region and I will spend more time planning for the next stage ... hopefully brainstorm topics and consider a proposal for a PhD. (Researcher H)

This woman has gone on with a newer colleague to develop a club for women students which enables them to work together and involve new women students so they feel comfortable in the new environment of higher education.

The context is of rapid social change. I see huge new glass buildings every time I return to Iraq/ Kurdistan, while the 8,000-year-old bazaar continues under dubiously safe electric lighting. We hope that involvement in the action research and attendant developments can initiate change for social justice in terms of gender and empowerment, breaking silences without leaving those who break them isolated and vulnerable.

## **Conclusion**

Academic developers are agents for change within higher education. Ironically, given the current pressures and constrictions, there is now a new opportunity to remember that information exchange and the feeding of the knowledge economy is not *all* that higher education is about. In this rather troublesome context, educational development learning dialogues and interactions, colleagues and their students, can lead to engagement with the values of social justice and theorised, well thought-through, well researched action. Critical professionalism unites theory and research with values and professional-practice actions. It does this with the colleagues involved in many of our educational development activities, and with their students who engage with the projects and embody and action the outcomes. Knowledge contestation and creation are recognised as liberating, enabling and empowering those who engage with it for development and social justice.

This work will help make higher education a more comprehensive undertaking, so that professionals, staff and students develop further as persons of integrity who know how to act coherently with values that reflect ethical considerations of justice and care, so that they can invest not only in their own well-being but in the well-being of others and of the planet. They will act, in other words, with social responsibility, for social justice.

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Sites for sustainable development at Brighton:

<http://staffcentral.brighton.ac.uk/clt/ESD/index.html>

[http://staffcentral.brighton.ac.uk/clt/ESD/vignette/geology\\_enviro.html](http://staffcentral.brighton.ac.uk/clt/ESD/vignette/geology_enviro.html)

[http://staffcentral.brighton.ac.uk/clt/ESD/vignette/media\\_studies.html](http://staffcentral.brighton.ac.uk/clt/ESD/vignette/media_studies.html)

[http://staffcentral.brighton.ac.uk/clt/ESD/vignette/ba\\_international.html](http://staffcentral.brighton.ac.uk/clt/ESD/vignette/ba_international.html)



## Afterword

*Brenda Leibowitz*

### **The past**

**E**arlier this year I attended a conference in Götenburg, Sweden, on integrating language teaching into the disciplines – nothing overtly to do with social justice or the public good. One evening after a long and tiring day mulling over the conference proceedings, a group of conference goers, including two from South Africa, one from Spain and one from the United States, settled down for a drink and a (hopefully) frivolous conversation. The conversation soon became serious. We talked about South Africa and apartheid and the past; about Spain and its right-wing dictatorship; and about the United States and resistance to the Vietnam war. Each of us expressed our strong feelings about the injustices in our own countries that we had to endure and grapple with somehow. We found ourselves comparing our attitudes towards these ‘pasts’ with those of the younger generation that had been born after these periods of extreme injustice. Some of our children or students were interested in what we had to say, but sometimes they resisted this ‘harping on’ about the past. In South Africa the term ‘born frees’ has been coined to discuss the lives of young people born since apartheid ended.

The tone of the group quickly became serious, almost reverent and intimate, as we realised how much we had in common and how much brought us together despite our different home languages, accents, religions or geographical origins. In South Africa we often accuse ourselves of being particularistic when we talk about our challenges or history, as if our issues are unique. Soudien deals with this directly when he writes: ‘There is an intensity in the South African discussion which is not as evident in many systems elsewhere.’

One issue which is central to discussion about social justice and the public good in South Africa, and evidently also to concerns about social justice

worldwide, is precisely that of the past. It has surfaced in this book in the contributions by Koopman and Nicholls and Rohleder, who refer to the past as a hurt, a trauma that has to be acknowledged and confronted. It has to be confronted by those who are directly harmed and discriminated against, as well as by those who belonged to the category perpetuating harm. Costandius, for example, takes the active step of exploring her own biography and constructedness. The research and teaching team with which Nicholls and Rohleder participated, meanwhile, dealt with this issue at length (Swartz *et al*, 2009). Swartz *et al* conclude (2009:498/9):

In discussing the question of how professionals engage with issues of diversity and multiculturalism in contemporary Britain, Kai and his colleagues (2007) have recently shown the extent to which trying to act in a culturally appropriate way has become a source of anxiety to some health professionals, who may feel paralysed about not knowing how to do the right cultural thing and to cause least offence. In a similar way, conversations amongst our students have shown that it may be similarly possible to become paralysed by the question of politics in an unequal and historically unjust society. Professionals and professionals in training, we believe, need safe spaces within which to discuss these difficult issues, without the threat of being chastised for their uncertainties, their differences of opinion and even their understandable reluctance to speak of difficult things.

In addition to showing the relevance of this research for an international audience, this extract stresses another significant theme for higher education for the public good: the need for a safe space. This is not, according to Costandius, the same as 'safe speech'. The extract signals another theme which is relevant to furthering the public good via higher education: the kind of exploration that an individual or groups have to undergo is at times uncomfortable, if not downright painful. Discomfort does not only apply to issues of evident oppression. Gierdien's contribution displays his willingness to confront discomfort amongst his students who do not share his worldview, and by exposing himself to their expressions of discomfort, he allows himself to become discomfited in turn. Thus teaching for the public good can entail long and difficult work, and requires individuals to be prepared to experience moments of extreme vulnerability.

### **Agency**

The past is not only a psychic spectre to be confronted. It influences the present by virtue of the social inequality and power differentials that are the legacies of a phenomenon of legalised oppression such as apartheid. Such

legacies are alluded to in the introduction to this book, and in contributions by Lange and Soudien, amongst others. Soudien and Lange demonstrate how difficult it appears to be to move forward and deal constructively with the present, such that the past is no longer purely a bulwark against transformation. A concept dealt with briefly in this book, but receiving increasing attention internationally, is that of agency. Debates about the relevance of agency, and the extent to which one can circumvent constraints posed by one's circumstances and upbringing, have been ongoing, at least since Karl Marx's time. Useful contributions to this debate have been made by Margaret Archer, who argues that except for the most dire, most constraints can be circumnavigated. Archer writes that the constraints require varying degrees of effort to circumnavigate, which implies elements of choice or even reflexivity to resolve to act against such conditions (1982:2000). The question which remains for educationists to consider is this: how much effort do we believe it is worth expending on higher education, such that it can deliver on the 'promise' to contribute to the public good? If the answer is 'a great deal', then the next step is to work in whatever sphere in which we conduct our activities to realise this aim. As this book has attempted to demonstrate, we should come together across spheres, across disciplines and even across geographical territories to achieve this end.

### **Competence**

Agency has also been described in somewhat more deterministic terms by sociologist of education Basil Bernstein (1990), who points out that agency is not free-floating and is limited by what one is able to do. Margaret Archer might have moved the conversation forward somewhat, but it remains the case that though human action for transformation, creativity, autonomy and social mobility requires a sense of agency, the importance of competence, expertise or the ability to accomplish tasks should not be underestimated. The concept of capabilities and functions is discussed by Walker, Hall and Bozalek and Leibowitz. There is a link between functionings as elucidated by the capabilities approach and the kinds of practices or skills contained in the idea of graduate attributes as discussed by van Schalkwyk, Herman and Müller. Lange points out that the ability to exercise citizenship, regarded by many as a cornerstone of work on higher education for the public good, relies on the acquisition of dominant skills and practices. Thus any attempt to embed a pro-public-good approach in teaching and learning cannot ignore issues of competence and what is referred to in South African discourse as 'epistemological access' (Morrow, 2009).



Competence relates also to the ability to implement a change strategy or policy. The contributions in this book feature examples of policies that are not effective – both at institutional level (van Schalkwyk, Herman and Müller), at national level, and even in the schoolroom (Waghid). The failure to implement them successfully is the responsibility of educationists, or it is due to the inappropriateness of the policies themselves. Change strategies or policies require both competence and the will to achieve change, be this motivated by sense of what is right, or by guilt (Costandius), by a sense of accountability (Leibowitz and Holgate) or by a ‘politics of humanity’ (Waghid) as an absence of disgust or shame. Such motivations contrast with the impetus for change outlined by Zembylas (2008), who writes about the value of mobilising affect in education in post-conflict situations, most notably that of anger. To understand the role of affect in higher education, and what a ‘safe space’ might be and how it differs from avoidance, is a valuable arena for further exploration, and invites action based research in teaching and learning settings.

### **Inside v. outside**

Soudien mentions two views on the university: the ‘outside-looking-in view’ – in which ‘the university is just another site of social practice’ – and the ‘inside-looking-out view’ – in which the university as an institution is inherently different and particular. The contributions in this book show how the university is intimately linked to other spheres of society, for which it prepares students to teach, be a social worker or engineer (Gierdien, Waghied, Subreenduth, Boni, MacDonald and Peris, and Walker). Sometimes these worlds are in conflict (Gierdien), and most of the time one has to use what one learns whilst at university to find ways to contribute towards the betterment of those ‘outside’ worlds, through courses on ethics (Boni, MacDonald and Peris) or through practising criticality and tolerance for ambiguity (Koopman, Waghid) or care (Bozalek and Leibowitz).

If they are to teach for the public good, with space for democratic deliberation, lecturers require the opportunity – as well as the agency – to become the teachers they need to be to make this happen. This is the message contained in the contributions by Leibowitz and Holgate and Wisker. Perhaps there is a third view of the university: a view in which the spheres from the macro to the micro are interrelated and in which all borders are porous. In this view everything is connected and the influence is multi-directional. Accordingly, whilst the university is influenced by and related to society, it is also particular and special: it is a place where there is the opportunity to experiment, take risks and, above all, learn. Learn how to agitate for a better future for all.

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