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REVIEW HIGHLIGHTS

Education Policy Consortium
TRANSFORMING EDUCATION

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The Centre for Education Policy Development

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The Centre for Education Rights and Transformation at the University of Johannesburg

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The Centre for Integrated Post-School Education and Training at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University

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The Nelson Mandela Institute for Rural Education and Development at the University of Fort Hare

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Editorial

This issue of the Review brings writings by some new researchers into view – once again representing a cadre of developing researchers and activists in the area of post-school education. These researchers and their colleagues are beginning to get to grips with the difficult issues of post-school education, wrestling with how to conceptualize and define the nature of post-school education both theoretically and for practice. Their contributions open up a perspective on how young researchers in particular could envisage their roles in this field of education and training.

There are also two contributions by Lesley Powell, the newly established Chair for Youth Unemployment, Employability and Empowerment, at the Centre for Integrated Post-Secondary Education and Training, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. The first of these provides a useful overview of the context in which post-school education finds itself, examines how vocational education is conceptualized in the dominant approaches of the day and provides a critique of its limitations. Dr Powell suggests an alternative approach to this poorly understood issue. Her contribution also tells us about how the work of the Chair will itself take forward these alternative conceptualisations of vocational issues in post-school education.

Powell's second article deals with an important regional workshop on the subject of poverty and inequality held at the Nelson Mandela University on 20 and 21 August 2015. The workshop sought to engender a call to action in engaging poverty, inequality and unemployment as well as rethinking social policy and post-school education in the Eastern Cape. In part this conference sought ideas and expressions of the potential for alternatives to the dominant systems which strangulate the possibilities for a more imaginative approach in the context of the ravages of unemployment and poverty – both of which are best understood against the background of the rampant inequality pervasive in South African society and globally.

Modiehi discusses the issue of community engagement. She argues why it is important as a 'space for the creation of oppositional discourse about the origins of knowledge' and explains how its uses in stimulating reasoned dialogue should be encouraged. She raises concerns about the 'traditional academic approaches' in relation to the challenges of societal development and in particular its pedagogical usefulness. Modeihi argues the case for 'a sense of responsibility towards society through the acquisition of the attribute of cultural tolerance in South Africa'. This article reinforces the importance of engaged research and practice central to much of the work done by the Education Policy Consortium (EPC).

Hukwe writes about the critically important role played by women in the organizing of community based educational activities despite the many barriers they face in doing such work. The obstacles they face are exacerbated in the context of limited resources and the perception that women educators are 'volunteers'. Hukwe compellingly demonstrates the critical value of this work in stimulating popular and community based agency enabling communities to take up issues which they regard as important and developing their autonomous capabilities while engaging critically with the challenges they face.

Blom examines the nature and limits of the DHET's policy framework on work-based learning (WBL). Her argument is that the potential for making such learning useful lies in recognizing its value as an educational practice. This practice should be regarded as an explicit outcome of the WBL if it is to have any real educational value. Such an approach may not be directly instrumental in achieving the narrower 'economic and social expectations of growth and employment so evident in the discourse about WBL' because it is less concerned with the process of learning and more directed at the requirements of 'working'. Yet for her these are inseparable since work is 'a vehicle of learning' and requires a more resilient and textured view of the role of WBL as a necessary practice in learning and not simply as a tool for economic ends.

Musthan's article is a direct response to the call for academics to enter the fray regarding the phenomenon of 'institutional violence' witnessed during the events of 2015 when students throughout the nation raised critical issues about higher education. She sets out to provide a historically informed approach to the context in which issues of violence could be understood and especially to 'explain the conditions of those alienated by it'. Her argument is that unresponsive social systems which fail to recognize the fundamental nature of the demands made by students and their identities, 'autonomy, participation and security' lead inevitably to conflictual relations. She is critical of a perspective that relies on the 'simple equation: frustration leads to aggression and the potential for collective violence' and the idea that the violence will escalate because of 'unrealistic demands, negative emotions of anger, hate and fear, polarisation and negative stereotyping, morally outrageous collective behaviour, and the emergence of militant hostility.' Such an uncritical perspective ignores a number of prior and more fundamental formative conditions which when carefully examined provide meaningful explanations for the actions of students and their demands.

In this regard Khanyi Ngalo offers us a thoughtful poem that reflects on the events of 2015 that has fuelled his 'potent pen – the poet's spear and the bricks that follow …'

Khomotso Ntuli's article is based on empirical research undertaken by the Centre on Education Rights and Transformation (CERT) staff on the experience of young people in the Vaal and their difficulties in accessing higher education. Using the Fees Must Fall student and workers' struggles at the Vaal University of Technology (VUT) as the backdrop, Ntuli critiques the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) and addresses its inadequacies and limitations.

Once again the Review features a brief review of an interesting book - even one written as long ago as the 1930's, because of its continued relevance to aspects of the contemporary discussions about the purposes and value of scientific knowledge.

And the Review also carries a reprint of a statement about the value of education in society previously featured on the website of the Public Participation Education Network (PPEN). It seeks to engender a wider discussion about the purposes of education in society and could be usefully examined in workshops and other events for the purpose.

As always we urge you to read these brief writings critically and share with us your comments and critique as we strive to build a culture of writing and thinking, reflection and writing for all of us. The next issue of the Review will be a special one, devoted to higher education including a submission by some members of the EPC to the Commission of Inquiry into Higher Education and Training (the Fees Commission).

Enver Motala and Salim Vally

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The Disposable Generation: The Role of Vocational Education in Youth Unemployment

Lesley Powell

Introduction

In this article I attempt to get beyond the "black box" of one of the crucial issues for Vocational Education (VE): the relationship between VE and work. The specific focus of the article is on VE and unemployment. In its crudest presentation, the debate on the relationship between VE and the world of work has existed for much of the past half century on two polar ends. On the one polar end of the argument are sociological concerns about the role that VE has played in reproducing the working class (Willis, 1977) and more recently, the role that it has played in producing a surplus labour force (Yates, 2011). On the other polar end are arguments related to the human resource needs of the labour market and the economy (Human Sciences Research Council, 2008) and the role that VE plays in providing such. Floating across this debate are philosophical concerns about the relationship that VE has to the world of work and the implications that this has for what has been termed a 'vocational pedagogy' (see for example (Lewis, 1998; Gamble, 2006). Embedded in this is the tension that exists between different notions of a vocational pedagogy which represents a tension between a liberal pedagogy (see for example Lewis,1997 and Winch, 2000 for further discussion) and a critical pedagogy (Baatjes, 2014).

This article begins with an overview of the context in which we find ourselves. This is followed, in the next section, by a discussion on the role of VE as it is currently constructed. I then discuss the critique and concerns with the assumptions that underpin South African VE policy and thereafter I briefly highlight alternate theoretical frameworks that might be brought to the table in our "re-imagining of the purpose" of VE. I conclude by providing a brief overview of the work planned as part of the Research Chair of Youth Unemployment and Empowerment.

Context

The dramatic explosion of unemployment around the world has resulted in the creation of what Yates, (2011) describes as the "human-as-waste". Drawing on Davis'es (2004) notion of "surplus humanity", she argues that the price of capitalist production in the neoliberal age is the production of "surplus humanity" who, for all intensive purposes, are humans discarded as waste by capitalist production. Unlike the surplus labour of yesteryear, and in contradiction to Marx's belief that cycles of surplus labour would be reabsorbed during future phases of expansion, all evidence is that "this is a mass of humanity structurally and biologically redundant to global accumulation" (Davis, 2004, p.11). Effectively, the 205 million unemployed in the world (International Labour Organisation, 2016) exist as "permanent surplus labour" (Yates, 2011, p.1681).

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) warns that this perverse boom of unemployment is amplified in developing contexts and that women, young people and rural communities are disproportionately affected. Solutions-for-Youth-Employment (2015) estimate that a third of the world's youth (defined as 15-29 years old) are unemployed. Of great concern is that all indications are that these staggering totals are on the increase. The ILO estimates that by 2019 global unemployment will affect a shocking 212 million people and that youth unemployment will rise by at least 8% (ILO, 2016).

South Africa, meanwhile, has reached its highest recorded levels of unemployment. Of the 36.1 million South Africans who are of working age, 5.4 million are unemployed and nearly 15 million are not economically active either because they are discouraged from finding jobs and/or because they are involved in caring roles in their family (StatsSA, 2015). Following the international trajectory, women, youth and people living in rural areas are the greatest affected. Of the 11.3 million young South Africans who are not involved in education and training, 3.6 million are unemployed and 9.8 million have given up on the prospect of employment and stopped seeking work (StatsSA, 2015).

Pali Lehohla describes the triple crisis of unemployment, inequality and poverty as a "cocktail of disasters" (http://allafrica.com/stories/201604210554.html). Faced with the crisis of more than half of South Africans living below the poverty line, almost half of South Africa's youth are unemployed and hardly likely to ever enter the labour market and a Gini coefficient that marks the country as one of the most unequal in the world, education and training development has been brought to the forefront as a key strategy for addressing the "triple crisis".

In line with this, the White Paper on Post School Education and Training identifies increased "access to high quality post-school education [as] a major driver in fighting poverty, inequality and unemployment" in South Africa (Ibid, p.viii). To this end, the White Paper and the National Development Plan (NDP) have set ambitious targets for expanding PSET. Against a background of approximately 2.8 million young people (18 to 24 year olds) who are not in employment or in education and training (NEET), a central priority for policy is to address the need for high quality Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) which is accessible in all provinces and in all locales. In terms of this, the NDP recommends expanding participation in the colleges from the current 300 000 enrolments (DHET, 2013a) to over a million enrolments by 2030 (National Planning Commission, 2012, p.317). In addition, Community Education Training Centres (CETCs) are to be established that are to play a critical role in catering for adults and youth who did not complete their schooling or who did not attend school at all and therefore do not qualify to study at TVET colleges and universities.

Underlying this commitment to increased participation is a deeper logic about how this contributes to reducing poverty and unemployment that is well presented by (Anderson, 2003, 2009) who argues that human capital theory is core to the policy and practice of vocational education. Building on Giddens (1994) concept of 'productivism', he argues that the underlying paradigm is built on two interrelated assumptions. The first is that "training leads to productivity, [which] leads to economic growth (training-for-growth)". The assumption is that this will, in turn, increase government revenues through increased taxes and thereby increase public spending on social services; also, that this will result in an expansion in production which will lead to job creation. The second is that "skills lead to employability [which] leads to jobs (skills-for-work)" and which thereby reduced poverty and unemployment (cited in Simon McGrath, 2012). As with other middle income countries, since post-apartheid the South African policy narrative for TVET colleges has been located within this 'productivist' logic in that the TVET colleges are expected to fuel economic development by providing the skills required to compete in challenging and changing global and national economic contexts. Simultaneously, they are also to contribute to social justice by widening participation in programmes targeted at employability within communities most affected by unemployment.

Within the framework of the dominant orthodoxy, the mainstream debate – insofar as there is anything that can meaningfully be described as a debate – is of a "disconnect and misalignment" between education and the economy (HSRC, 2008, p.2). This position is succinctly put forward by the HSRC (2008) that expresses concern that,

South Africa's economy has dramatically improved during this period [2003-2008], with a growth rate approaching 5 per cent in 2006. However, these positive developments have not filtered down into the education and training (ET) sphere" (2008, p.2).

This understanding of a dialectical connection between economic growth and education and training has translated into one central question for education policy: How can the gap between education and the world of work be narrowed? This faith in the connection between education and economic growth has translated in South Africa into the supposition that skills shortages hamper firm productivity which then restrains economic growth which, in turn, limits job creation. The argument is also presented in reverse, without skills development innovation is curbed, which limits job creation and this, in turn, restrains economic development. The assumption, as provided by Vally & Motala (2014) is that "there is a readily available supply of jobs if the prerequisite skills are there – or that, conversely, once there are skills in the market the jobs will follow" (2014, p.8).

Notwithstanding the emphasis on the education-economy nexus, very little empirical evidence of a connect between education and economic growth and even less between vocational education and economic growth exists. Studies that have attempted such measures within developed contexts, even within a human capital approach, have found scant evidence of a relationship between education and economic growth. Wolf (2002), for example, studied the relationship between education and economic growth in the United Kingdom. She argues that the "belief in a simple, direct relationship between the amount of education in a society and its future growth rate, and that governments can fine-tune education expenditures to maximize that self-same rate of growth" is incorrect and unsubstantiated by any empirical data (Wolf, 2002:p.244). Furthermore, that simple beliefs in a direct relationship between education and national economic growth have resulted in educational "expansion as an end in itself" and nations adopting policy frameworks that fail to achieve the economic growth hoped for, that are ill conceived for helping the poor and that, instead, contribute to expanding social inequalities (Wolf, 2002, p.245). As argued by Bils and Klenow (2000), countries that are richer, faster growing and with developed social and physical structures find it easier to increase their educational spend thereby reaching higher educational attainment levels. Therefore, correlations depicted between educational spend, educational attainment and economic prosperity are in all likelihood due to a reverse causality where the existing economic wealth of the nation has created the country's educational attainment, rather than – as policy makers have been assuming – that educational attainment has created the wealth of the country.

While education might not "matter" in the way that "governments expect them to" (i.e. through economic growth and increased productivity), the more education an individual acquires, the higher their income is likely to be, and the less likely they will be to experience unemployment (Wolf, 2002, p. 15). In short, at the individual level, all evidence is that education pays in that it dramatically increases the probability of being employed and the wage income of individuals. Branson, et al., (2009) found that individuals with some tertiary study are between two to three times more likely than matriculants to be formally employed and with earning potentials of between 170% to 220% higher than those with a matriculation (Branson, et al., 2009). The findings of Branson et al. (2009) are supported by an earlier study by Wittenberg (1999), and later by Dinkelman and Pirouz (2002) and also by Ardington, et al., (2009). Together these studies show a consensus of the protective value of education with an inverse relationship existing between an increase in the level of qualification and a decrease in the probability of employment.

Banerjee, et al. (2008), however, show that the protection provided by education is not constant. There is clear evidence that the benefits of having a matric is in steady decline. The participation of matriculants in the labour force declined from 54% to 49.7% during the period 1995 to 2005 and the unemployment rate for matriculants doubled from 15.2% to 28.2% (Banerjee, et al., 2008). The main reason for this is the increase in the total number of matriculants entering the labour force which has resulted in the labour market having more matrics and therefore, has served to devalue the matriculation as a labour market qualification (Cichello, et al.,2012). Studies on education in Europe show that qualification escalation over the past two decades has resulted in the protection provided by matriculation disappearing and that provided by higher education declining significantly and, in contexts like Portugal, completely eroding (Andrade, 2014). The problem of qualification escalation in the South African context is further supported by StatsSA (2013) that identified that youths are spending more and more time in education to try and protect at an individual level from unemployment (StatsSA, 2013).

The contested role of Vocational Education

Despite these arguments, and clear labour market evidence of a decline of jobs in the private sector (cf Powell, 2015 for a summary of this literature), the notion of the 'responsive' college is deeply embedded in South African vocational education policy (Wedekind, 2014). A key aspect of TVET college responsiveness is the formation of college partnerships. The most common reasons advanced for partnerships is to narrow the gap between TVET and the world of work through ensuring the relevance of the TVET curriculum to the labour market, enabling student and lecturer placements in Work Integrated Learning (WIL) and improving the absorption of graduates into the workplace. The White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (DHET, 2013b), the National Development Plan (National Planning Commission, 2012) and the HRD Strategy (HRDC, 2014) all underscore the importance of strong working partnerships between the TVET colleges and employers. Strategic goal 2.3 of the HRD Strategy, for example, makes reference to the importance of industry-institutional partnerships by stating that "each FET institution [should have] at least one functional and sustainable industry-institution partnership aimed at enhancing the link between formal learning and the world of work and providing opportunities for placements" (HRDC, 2014: online resource).

Currently, and as shown by HRDCSA (2014) all TVET colleges in the country are involved in partnership projects. These partnerships include partnerships with large national companies and with local small businesses, with national and local government departments, with national and international colleges and with higher education institutions and with SETAs. In a review of the TVET college sector done last year for the Human Resource Development Council of South Africa (HRDCSA) I show that "the number of partnership projects differs markedly between colleges and between provinces with the college mean ranging from 3 to 150 partnership projects and the national mean being 39 partnership projects per college" (HRDCSA, 2015). Furthermore, I noted that the study of college partnerships which I took on behalf of the Department of Education in 2003 showed that more than a decade ago every college in the country had existent partnerships (HRDCSA, 2015). Drawing from this, I conclude in this report that the historic existence of college-industry partnerships together with the current partnerships that are in place "begs the question asked by the HRDCSA (2014), which is: 'if TVET colleges are enmeshed in partnerships as it appears in the literature, then why are they struggling to win the confidence of students, parents and industry?' Extending on this question, one could also ask why students are struggling to source internship placements and why graduate employment rates continue to be unsatisfactory?" (HRDCSA, 2015: p.56).

Recognising the decline of jobs in the formal sector, one argument put forward is that the problem of unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, is a problem caused by a mismatch between the skills composition of the labour force and the requirements of industry. The argument is that the shedding of low skill jobs has led to a change in the skills composition of the unemployed and the employed with a significant change away from lower skill labour toward the absorption of higher skill labour. This has then contributed to the decline in unskilled labour and the expansion in demand for semi-skilled and skilled labour leading to a widening gap between the skill levels of the employed and that of the unemployed (Banerjee, et al., 2008; Bhorat and Hodge, 1999). This has led to the idea that developing the 'right' skill mix within the labour force will address unemployment through resolving what has been termed the "skills mismatch" problem. Further, that this will, in turn, address high levels of unemployment. However, in the absence of large scale vacancies at semi-skilled and skilled levels, which Dias and Posel (2007) can find "little evidence of", it is unlikely that higher skill levels will create employment and more likely that higher skills will result in qualification escalation with employers increasing their demand for qualifications that are irrelevant to the task(s) that the employee needs to undertake. As argued by Levine (2013, cited in Treat, 2014) is that,

The consensus among top economists [in the face of the evidence] is that the skills gap is a myth. High unemployment is mainly the result of a deficiency in aggregate demand and slow economic growth, not because workers lack the right education or skills. (2014, p.173)

Another position that has gained favour with policy is the suggestion that the TVET colleges be targeted towards training for the informal sector. This is against a backdrop of the majority of new jobs between 1997-2003 (60% according to Casale, et al., 2004) having been created in the informal sector. The idea of orientating the TVET colleges towards the informal sector raises some concern for equity. The inequality existing in the informal sector is captured by Banerjee, et al., (2008) who argue that the informal sector is characterised as the second-best alternative for those who are unable to access the formal sector because incomes are significantly lower in the informal sector and self-employment is a much less stable state than regular employment with retention rates low and with a higher incidence of transitioning to unemployment than transitioning to formal sector employment. Contrary then to advocates who see the informal sector "as a beehive of ambitious entrepeneurs yearning for formal property rights and unregulated competitive spaces" (Davis, 2004, p.25) the reality is that those functioning in the informal sector exist for the most part as the "active[ly] unemployed" (ibid: p.25). Living precariously, and often furtively, on the periphery of cities in fragilely claimed land spaces they are everywhere subjected to exploitation: they are universally underpaid, work for the most part outside the protections provided by labour laws and work safety regulations and have little, if any, job security (Davis, 2004).

Despite these realities, the emphasis on the supply side of the equation has led to the TVET colleges being severely criticized for not delivering on its mandate of making a more meaningful contribution to unemployment. This media report, for example, titled Young, Jobless and Desperate – will FET Colleges Fix Our Future (CityPress, 2012) quotes a young FET college student as saying that "You come to an FET college looking for a better future for you and for your family but . . . there's quite a lot of sadness and disappointment". Another media article written by Cosser (2012) entitled, FET colleges fail, lays the problem directly at the door of the TVET colleges by discussing "shortcomings at college level". This critique of vocational education as inefficient and ineffective and as not delivering the 'appropriate' and 'relevant' skills required by the labour market is a global phenomenon with education and training blamed for not supplying the skills required for firm productivity and for economic growth and thereby not responding to youth unemployment, poverty and increasing social inequities. In this logic, "the cause of unemployment, in general, is put at education's door, more broadly arguing that education is not teaching what the economy wants" (Klees, 2014, p.vii).

Promising alternatives

So where does this leave the colleges? Commenting on the dominant orthodoxy and the need for alternatives, McGrath (2012) argues that it is time to begin "building beyond the narrow theoretical orthodoxy" (2012, p.620). Vocational education, both in South African and internationally, has suffered an "impoverishment of theory". This is partly because research on VE and equally so on South African TVET colleges has been scanty, underdeveloped and undertaken for the most part by consultants and think-tanks funded through government or government linked projects (Wedekind, 2009) but also because of the dominance of the VET orthdoxy.

Despite this dominance, a number of promising alternatives exist, all of which require further work and more rigorous engagement to examine the value and benefits that they might have for what I termed in my PhD "re-imagining of the purpose of Vocational Education and Training" (Powell, 2014). These paradigms include critical pedagogies such as Freire's (1970) emancipatory work on education where Freire argues for education being the means by which people are enabled to critically understand, engage with and transform their worlds. Philosophical arguments in the liberal education tradition such as that made by Dewey (2012) and Lewis (1994) that argue for the dignity of a truly vocational education and that of philosophers such as Sennett, (2008) and Winch (2000) who challenge the role and understanding of 'skills' in the vocational education by arguing for the broader notion of 'craft'. Sociological work such as that undertaken by Willis (1977) that provides an analysis of the role that skills plays in class reproduction and ethnographic work such as that undertaken by Rose (2004) that critiques the 'hand' and 'mind' distinction. Work located in political economy such as that undertaken by Ashton & Green (1997), Crouch, Finegold, and Sako (1999) and more locally, by Allais (2012), that emphasises the importance of locating skills within social, political and economic contexts. Work located in development studies such as that undertaken by McGrath & Powell (2015) and by Powell (2014) who bring a human development (or capability approach) lens to the theorisation of VE to argue that social justice, human rights, and poverty alleviation be brought to the forefront of VE policy. These frameworks come to the topic from different directions, but together they negate the trickle down logic of neoliberalism, shred the underlying assumptions of human capital and serve as powerful ammunition for the reconceptualisation of the purpose of VE in addressing poverty, unemployment and inequality.

In an attempt to develop further the theoretical base, the work of the Research Chair: Youth Unemployment and Empowerment will be focussing on the role that VE can play in advancing the solidarity economy. In the face of a decline in the formal labour market, particularly for the private sector, and with large numbers of people excluded from the formal labour market, the focus is on exploring the ecovillages as a viable policy solution to poverty and examining the role that education and training can play in further advancing the ecovillages. Following the Senegalese approach which has committed to transforming 14 000 villages to eco-villages, the focus will be on the viability of the ecovillages as a policy solution to poverty, but also on the role that education and training can play in expanding and further building the solidarity economy through supporting the ecovillages.

A five component proposal has been developed to address this research agenda. Together the five components allow a number of critical questions to be asked of VE policy: (i) What does this mean for the policy agenda for VET? (i) What does it mean for VET partnerships? Is it possible to forge college-community partnerships where internships are located in functional and stronger ecovillages? (ii) What does it mean for Workplace Integrated Learning (WIL)? Could we conceptualise WIL as

happening between colleges and communities in college-community partnerships, rather than as college-industry as they are currently perceived? Underlying these questions, is a deeper set of questions which relate to the current orientation of South Africa's TVET colleges. In particular, it raises questions as to what this means for the pedagogy, lecturing training and the general purpose of South Africa's public TVET colleges?

How we respond to these questions, how we resolve these debates and how we enact these resolution in both our policies and our practices will have important consequences for the approximately one million students currently enrolled in the public and private components of South Africa's college sector, and for the almost three million young people who are not in employment or education and training.

Lesley Powell (CIPSET)

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The Poverty and Inequality Inquiry Colloquium. A call to action: Engaging poverty, in equality and unemployment & rethinking social policy and post-school education in the Eastern Cape

Lesley Powell

Introduction

Lesley Powell reports on The Poverty and Inequality Inquiry Colloquium held at the Nelson Mandela University on 20 and 21 August 2015. The overall theme of the conference is captured in the subtitle: A call to action: Engaging poverty, in equality and unemployment & rethinking social policy and post-school education in the Eastern Cape.

Just a month before university students took to the streets in the #FeesMustFall protests[1], the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) hosted a regional Colloquium on the role that Post-Secondary Education and Training (PSET) could play in intervening in the triple crisis of unemployment, poverty and inequality in the Eastern Cape. Professor Derrick Swartz, the Vice Chancellor of NMMU, opened the Colloquium by urging participants to "cite alternatives to capitalism" and to consider the "role that PSET can play in supporting these progressive projects and the movements in which they are embedded". The important thing, he said, is to ask "how we break out of the mechanisms that keep reproducing this [poverty and inequality] 20 years after democracy". He reminded the Colloquium that while the push might be to adopt instrumental and technicist approaches, that the development of any viable alternative is completely dependent as a first step on critique as "critique and reconstruction can and should go together. In fact, critique is the beginning of reconstruction" and critical to ending the 'culture of silence'.

This past week saw thousands of students joining in protests that shattered that 'culture of silence'. Students raised their voices, stamped their feet and together with their supporters marched in the thousands to Parliament, to the Department of Higher Education and Training, to the Union Building and to Luthuli house with international support marches held in London, Paris and New York. The demands centered around a 0% fee increase for 2016, free education in the long term, the end of outsourcing and the right to protest and to do so safely. The #FeesMustFall protest is underpinned by frustration at the persistent inequality in South Africa and structurally entrenched poverty. As argued by one of the students, "we can't separate how deeply linked the issue of student fees are to other transformation issues in the country, like poverty and the struggle for economic transformation in the country"[2]

The Colloquium, held just weeks before these historic events, is the first of a five year plan to host an annual regional Colloquium on the triad. The emphasis in this first Colloquium was on what was termed in the title of the Colloquium 'a call to action'. This 'call to action' included: (i) actions that aimed to challenge the hegemony of the dominant ideology of neoliberalism; (ii) projects or activities that served to disrupt the inherent inequalities of capitalism; and (iii) activities that aimed to identify the barriers that prevent communities from actively engaging in the development and transformation of their lives.

In one sense, the Colloquium could be described as a move at the provincial level towards the goals spelt out by the National Development Plan (NDP): most notably towards "the elimination of poverty and the significant reduction of the current levels of inequality" (Wilson & Cornell, 2014, p.v). And, more locally, towards the goals of the Provincial Development Plan that aims to increase "the well-being and flourishing of all in [the province]" (Eastern Cape Planning Commission, 2014, p.12). It could also be seen as supportive of the goals of the White Paper on PSET which aims to orientate PSET towards "build[ing] a non-racial, non-sexist and prosperous South Africa characterised by a progressive narrowing of the gap between the rich and the poor" (DHET, 2013).

In another, and deeper sense, the conference could be described in Freirean terms as a reawakening of a Pedagogy of Hope. In contrast to pragmatic discourses that would have the world adapt to and accept as the norm growing inequality, increasing poverty and staggering levels of unemployment, the Colloquium encouraged a view of the triad "not as a static reality but as a reality in the process of transformation" (Freire, 2005, p.12). As with the #FeesMustFall campaign, the Consortium sought to reach beyond the notion of education as neutral and to shatter the 'culture of silence' that rests within technicist fix-it approaches. The hope was to create a space where the discussion could transcend the false neutrality and instrumentalism within which the role of PSET in relation to the triad is increasingly posited. The expectation was that the Colloquium would focus on the potential of PSET as it is currently constructed whilst simultaneously developing a vision of what a transformed PSET actively contributing towards a more socially and economically just world would look like. The aim was to provide an intellectual space where the dominant discourses on PSET could be challenged, where new discourses could be developed, and where a unity of understanding and commitment around these progressive alternatives could be forged.

As the first of five Colloquia, the scope was purposefully wide with the Colloquium tasked with engaging with existing as well as possible future educational responses of PSET to the triad. It is not possible in this submission to capture the full content of all the presentations and the discussions that ensued. Podcasts of the Colloquium are available on the CIPSET website at http://cipset.nmmu.ac.za as are copies of all the presentations and a more detailed report entitled, The Role of PSET in intervening in the Triad.

PSET as a contested terrain

This submission distills from the Colloquium report the role(s) that PSET can play in intervening in the triple crisis of unemployment, poverty and inequality (hereafter termed 'the triad'). Central to the discussion was the need to open discussion on the purpose(s) and function(s) of PSET in developing contexts. In the #FeesMustFall

campaign, "students are insisting that a frank national debate be opened on both the funding and orientation of higher education" . A similar conclusion was reached at the Colloquium with repect to both higher and further education. As stated by one of the speakers, what is clear is that "we don't have a hegemonic view" about what development is or how it should take place in South Africa and neither do we have a hegemonic view of the role that PSET is to play therein.

The students have taken leadership in the #FeesMustFall campaign to emphasise the need for free education, the end of outsourcing and the transformation of higher education, but there remain deeper questions as to the role(s) that PSET is to play in community development, poverty (and particularly rural poverty), environmental sustainability and inequality. Different understandings of what constitutes unemployment, poverty and inequality matter and the causal relations between them are embedded in different and potentially conflicting ideological approaches to the orientation of PSET and the ways in which PSET should and could intervene in the triad.

Take poverty as an example. What constitutes 'poverty' and how poverty is to be defined has been at the heart of decades of vicious fighting within academic, policy and donor circles. This, quite simply, is because how poverty is defined matters. It matters to governments who have a vested interest in the definition of poverty as it affects the nature of social support budgets and the achievement of poverty alleviation targets for political mileage. It matters to the donor community whose business is to dispense billions of dollars to communities identified as 'the poor' and in some cases to make a profit from doing so. It matters to academics concerned with social justice who argue for broad and inclusive definitions. But mostly it matters to the poor whose ability to access social support through income grants or educational opportunities are dependent on where the poverty line has been drawn. As one poster held up by a student at the #FeesMustFall campaign read, "too poor to study, but too rich for the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS)". It matters also because it compels recognition of the many different and distinct groups amongst the poor and the varied interventions required.

The conventional and dominant perspective in South African PSET policy is to define poverty as income deprivation. As I have shown with McGrath (2014), "terms such as 'prepar[ing] learners adequately … for productive employment' (DoE, 1998a), and ensuring that college learners 'are provided with the skills they need to be productive' (DHET, 2012) abound in key policy texts" (Powell & McGrath, 2014, p.213). This has led to an emphasis on identifying the skills that would most ensure that PSET provide the education and training required for employability. It has also led to criticisms that education is not adequately preparing learners for employability and discussions on how education and training can do this better.

Following the work of Amartya Sen, who developed the capability approach (also called the human development approach), Clark & Qizilbash (2005) argue that poverty exists as deprivation across multiple dimensions and that while income is a critical aspect it is by no means the only issue relative to poverty. Drawing from an understanding of poverty put forward by the capability approach as capability (or opportunity) deprivation across multiple dimensions allows for a much deeper reflection of the role that PSET can play in intervening in poverty. It allows the debate on the role of PSET to include but extend beyond notions of increasing and facilitating access of the poor to PSET. The White Paper on PSET argues that, "access to quality post-school education is a major driver in fighting poverty and inequality in any society" (DHET, 2013, p.viii). While supportive, from a social justice perspective of this, I argued in my presentation at the Colloquium that "access to educational opportunity remains a human right but that it is not in and of itself sufficient to addressing poverty". Three reasons were provided for this: (i) Firstly, because poor students have different abilities and capacities to cope with the educational opportunity made available as they face social and economic challenges that affect their learning trajectories and learning experiences in ways that access alone simply does not address. (ii) Secondly, because qualifications and skills do not necessarily translate into sustainable employment or employment that provides a career path of growth. (iii) And, thirdly, because employment does not necessarily translate into poverty alleviation. Citing the work of Bhorat, et al. (2010), it was shown that 34% of workers are paid below the legislated minimum wage with the average shortfall in wages being 36% of the minimum wage. As pointed out by Mziyanda Twani in his presentation, the share of income of workers declined from 56% in 1995 to 51% in 2012. As he said it, "the picture that is being painted is that the condition of workers has deteriorated worse than it was before".

The linking of unemployment with poverty, as the policy discourse has done, has the potential of coupling unemployment to poverty in a manner which sees the latter as causally linked to the former. Understanding the problem of poverty as a problem of unemployment has led to the conclusion that the solution to poverty is increased employment. This, in turn, has led to the idea that PSET should increasingly orientate itself to skills provision that will enable employability. Seeing the problem as located in employment avoids the tricky reality that jobs in the formal labour market are internationally and nationally in decline. Holloway (2010) put this well when he says that,

More and more people are being pushed out of employment or finding that they have no way of becoming employed, or, if at all, then only on a very casual and precarious basis. They are obliged to make their lives in other ways. The state systems of unemployment benefits and social assistance (where they exist) are designed to extend the discipline of employment even to the unemployed, to make sure that the unemployed really function as an industrial reserve army. (2010, p.23)

Holloway's (2010) concern here is with understandings held about the nature of work itself. At the risk of oversimplification, if to be unemployed is the absence employment then the reality of unemployment depends upon the reality of employment. The two notions are asymmetrically interdependent but dialectically dependent. Unemployment (and under employment) is best seen as a continuum of employment with unemployment being the threat that maintains employment, and the unemployed being the reserve labour force that maintains current social relations and the inequalities embedded in the organisation of work. Both employment and unemployment exist as a feature of wage labour and are contingent upon a capitalist economy.

Embedded in different notions of what these terms mean are multiple understandings and conflicting ideological approaches of the central purpose(s) of PSET. Janet Cherry in her presentation challenged the notion of employment as a solution to poverty by

citing Chambers (1995) who argued that "poverty line thinking concerned with income-poverty and employment thinking concerned with jobs, project Northern concerns on the South, where the realities of the poor are local, diverse, often complex and dynamic" (p.173). In line with this understanding, she argued for the important contributory role that PSET can play in challenging the hegemony of capitalism through supporting local, community driven sustainability projects. Robbie Van Niekerk, in his presentation, argued that the debate has to shift away from a discussion on poverty to a focus on inequality as this would mean bringing class relations sharply into focus. Doing so, he argued, would mean bringing the middle class back into the discussion and would reduce the current tendency of seeing the poor as a class category separate from other classes.

In the 2015 Poverty and Inequality Colloquium, there was a clear sense that PSET needs a major overhaul to play a meaningful role in the triad. As Professor Derrick Swartz said, universities tend to "reproduce and form part of the dominant logic and despite the rhetoric and innovations within them, they tend to reproduce many of the problems that we identify in the main stream economy and within education". Salim Vally, drawing from a book edited together with Enver Motala (Vally & Motala, 2014), emphasised that universities suffer from "managerialism, corporatisation, and racism", all of which serve to reproduce inequalities and severely constrain universities from playing a meaningful role in the triad. Nonetheless, and despite these challenges, both speakers recognised that the university exists as a contested space and emphasised that agential possibilities for transformation and manoeuvre exist and must be utilised. The #FeesMustFall campaign exists as one such agential possibility that has become a reality. In addition, in light of the structural limitations of existing institutions it was also on identifying new institutions and forms of learning that might more powerfully intervene in the triad. Here it was noted that the Centre for Integrated Post-Secondary Education and Training (CIPSET) has been tasked with piloting the first community college in the country.

Future Colloquia would need to build on the work begun in this Colloquium and the theoretical work being developed within the student movement to carefully unpack these concepts and the theoretical and practical implications that different understandings have for our understanding of how PSET can best intervene in the triad.

The role(s) of PSET in the triad

Six ways in which PSET can contribute to the triad were identified at the Colloquium. These are: (i) supporting the development of a capable state; (ii) producing the skills needed for inclusive economic growth; (iii) transforming the Expanded Public Works Programme; (iv) developing active and empowered citizens; (v) growing the solidarity economy and (vi) developing and producing socially engaged scholarship. The six themes are discussed in detail in the report on the Colloquium. In this submission I focus on three themes that cut across the discussions held at the Colloquium.

First, the Colloquium noted the importance of contributing to the development of a capable state. Here the role of PSET in aiding with the development of a community college sector was seen as central. Community colleges are to provide education for those who did not complete their schooling and who do not qualify to study at TVET colleges and universities. An introductory pilot is proposed at two sites in the Eastern Cape for the first two years (2015–2017): one rural in Cofimvaba and one urban in Nelson Mandela Metro. Second is providing pre-service and in-service professional development of educators for Early Childhood Development, schools and TVET colleges. In addition to meeting the total numbers of educators required, it was noted that a far greater understanding of the real experience of educators in schools and in colleges needs to be developed. A critical step to achieving this would require developing a far deeper understanding of the social background of learners and what this means in terms of the learning support required by institutions and educators. Another essential aspect to achieving this would be addressing the complexities of language in instruction, especially the use of mother-tongue languages. The role of PSET in interrogating theoretically and empirically the ways in which the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) could be harnessed to support community development and poverty alleviation was noted as was the importance of providing training for small contractors on how to utilise labour intensive methods of production instead of mechanization.

Second, the Colloquium called for a new kind of graduate who can better understand, relate to and address the challenges of poverty. This would demand a re-envisaging of the curriculum in both theory and practice and a transformation in the teaching and learning cultures of PSET institutions. Importantly, and in line with Stuart Hall's famous quote that "the university is a critical institution or it is nothing" the Colloquium noted the importance of critical and innovative thinkers who contribute to the development of a transformed South Africa.

Third, the colloquium insisted on the development of new and innovative theoretical and empirical work on poverty and inequality. Particular importance was placed on empirical studies that gives 'voice' to poor and silenced communities, and theoretical frameworks that seek to explain and understand their experience. At the same time, it was emphasised that knowledge needs to be co-constructed with communities rather than – in Edward Said's terms – constructed through 'othering' communities by doing research on communities. Here Ivor Baatjes spoke about the importance of community engagement (CE) and socially engaged scholarship (SES). CE refers to university-community partnership, or what Jen Snowball in her presentation spoke of as the 'porous university', and engaged scholarship to higher education partnering with communities and other organisations in search of answers to the pressing social and economic problems. Highlighting the work of CIPSET, Ivor Baatjes stressed the importance of embedding the university more firmly in the community rather than, as is usual in the ivory tower approach, as separate and distant from the community.

Conclusion

The importance of the Colloquium as a space that brought various players together to discuss and to extend the debate cannot be overstated. While we would need to admit, as Enver Motala said, that "we won't solve the problems", spaces like the Colloquium provide an opportunity to "jointly talk about the problems" and to develop "fuller understandings of the issues".

In this sense, the Colloquium has raised more questions that it has answered. It has insisted on a more careful engagement of the triple challenges facing South Africa; raised concerns with the policy

direction being adopted; acknowledged the central role that neoliberalism and capitalism has played in creating the triad and highlighted the possibilities and limitations of PSET in meaningfully intervening in the triad.

What was strongly emphasised is the importance of developing a working relationship between PSET in the province. Recognising that work at the universities have tended to be fragmented, collaboration across PSET institutions was highlighted as a key outcome and goal of the Consortium. A concrete suggestion made by the Vice Chancellor and which had strong support from Francis Wilson was the establishment of a virtual university. This virtual university would be composed of the four universities of the Province and would engage with issues that emanate from this and other similar colloquia with a view to providing research and other forms of support for initiatives that take ideas generated forward in a concerted way. It was understood that CIPSET (Ivor Baatjes) and the Poverty and inequality Inquiry (Francis Wilson) would take the initiative in this regard.

Importantly, in the face of high levels of pessimism at growing inequalities, the Colloquium represented what Enver Motala described as "hope, optimism and possibility".

Lesley Powell (CIPSET)

End Notes

[1]The Colloquium was held at Missionvale Campus of the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University on the 20th and 21st of August 2015.

[2]A student interviewed in Leila Dougan's movie called Shutting Down the Rainbow Nation: #FeesMustFall. Available at http://africasacountry.com/2015/10/watch-our-11-minute-film-capturing-the-energies-of-feesmustfall-in-south-africa/

[3]A Statement by academics that supports the student struggle in South Africa. Available at http://www.amandla.mobi/student_struggle.

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Consensus and Contestations about Community Engaged Scholarship in Higher Education Institutions in the South African Context

Modiehi Morakile

Introduction

Ernest Boyer's 1996 "Scholarship of the Professoriate, propounded what he called Engaged Scholarship as a transformative hope which ought to bridge the knowledge gap between the academy and the civic communities thus further positioning the academy in facilitating the creation of a knowledge base better able to address socio-economic and political illness that confronted the American society in the 90's (JHEOE Vol 1:1). However, he argued that what he found most disturbing –as almost a mirror image of that description, was a growing feeling in that country that higher education was in fact a problem rather than a solution.

Almost 20 years later this statement rings true even in South Africa. Around the same time South Africa too adopted the idea of community engaged scholarship or simply community engagement. This happened through the promulgation of the White Paper in Higher Education and Training 197 (3). Community Engagement was instituted as the third mandate alongside teaching/learning and research. The White Paper on Higher Education and Training 1997 (3) intended to conceptually ground a transformation agenda on the highly inefficient apartheid institutions (Hall 2010:3).

However, since the promulgation of the White Paper in Higher Education and Training (1997) 3, the full scope of community engaged scholarship has not been realized (CHE Report 2009:81). The CHE report further points to the fact that South Africa has been grappling with the conceptualisation of community engaged scholarship (Ibid: 81). Subsequent to Boyer, there emerged a taxonomy of definitions such that Sandman 2008 and Cooper 2010 called this a 'definitional anarchy'.

Conceptualising Community Engaged Scholarship

In resonating with Johnson (2015) and other scholars concepts associated with Community Engaged Scholarship in South Africa have included: community service, university community partnership, social and academic responsiveness, academic citizenship and service. Furthermore, this encompasses; distance education, professional community service, community based research, participatory action research and civic engagement. Preece (2012) discuses engagement with reference to "scholarly" engagement, which focuses on aspects such as knowledge production and benevolent engagement as a philanthropic mode of engagement. In addition to this, reference is made to democratic engagement that stresses the consultative nature of engagement in challenging oppressive structures.

Reference is also made to professional engagement, which is understood as formal engagements in the context of managerial and organizational structures (216-217). These typologies of engagement are however considered as a continuum and mutually exclusive (Preece 2012:216). In conceptualizing community-engaged scholarship as including notions such as community based action research, it becomes apparent that the common denominator in attempts to define community engaged scholarship lies in Pienaar's (2015) interpretation. These revolve around participatory action research, co-inquiry or co-production although she argues that proponents of each may evince distinct differences (in Erasmus and Albertyn, 2014: 89). Despite definitional variations, it is quite explicit that the underpinning principles of Community Engaged Scholarship is reciprocity and equal partnership amongst Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Arguing that there is definitional anarchy, may present Community Engagement as an unattainable mission. It may also presuppose that there should be a unilateral definition of Community Engaged Scholarship. Institutions of higher learning in South Africa have been implementing Community Engaged Scholarship in multi-dimensional ways.

Different models have been used to implement Community Engaged Scholarship. From a research point of view, Johnson and Cooper (2014) pointed to the "use oriented research for the benefit of external communities. They defined use-oriented research as a combination of pure applied research and use inspired basic research. Pure Applied Research refers to the application of knowledge as in the case of universities of technology given their historical linkages with the needs of industry. 'Use inspired basic research' according to Johnson and Cooper (2014) "extends the frontiers of basic understanding and also inspired by considerations of use" (Johnson and Cooper 2014: 102). Mapping this argument, is a reflection that research, a combination of use inspired basic research and pure applied research is one of the multidisciplinary ways in which Community Engaged Scholarship can be driven.

This leads to my argument that Community Engaged Scholarship is not a difficult mandate to fulfil. The blue print of Community Engagement Scholarship lies in respecting principles of reciprocity and equal relations between parties involved. Pre-1994 developmental relations entailed what Johnson and Copper 2014 referred to as the Triple Helix. This encompassed Universities, Government and Industry. The community or the civil society had occupied an orphanage status. The Triple Helix approach positioned the "HEIs as sole producers and repositories of expert and legitimate knowledge. The knowledge that may contribute to the disenfranchisement of the poor, marginalized and indigenous communities by excluding their voices in knowledge formation for the resolution of problems to solve problems" (Pienaar 2014: 81).

The Quadruple Helix on the other hand encompassed Universities, Industries, Government and civil society referred to as the ?Third ?Economy. (Johnson and Cooper., 2014). Underpinning Cooper's conceptualisation is an understanding that the triple helix prominent prior 1994 in South Africa, has emerged because of the crisis in capitalism during the 1970s and the importance given to knowledge production as a means to generate profits. Its architecture was most probably based on 'Pure Applied Research' historically applicable to for Technikons, now Universities of Technology (which were mainly created to respond to the needs of industry). Introducing the fourth helix was thus a means through which to engage universities in contributing to developing poor and working class communities.

Following this basic argument I argue that there can be greater clarity in the conceptualisation of Community Engaged Scholarship. The common thread running through all definitional variances is the inclusion of communities in knowledge formation. There is a desire to engage with communities at reciprocal levels and as equal partners. Such an approach provides for is a good developmental strategy to resolve social issues and means that the argument about definitional anarchy may not stand. It is also very clear that there is just a gap between expectations and practice.

What needs to be understood is that there can never be a monolithic definition on Community Engaged Scholarship. Its approach will always vary based on different contexts

characterized by different challenges that are structural and systemic in nature. Reference is specifically made here to the legacy of the South African colonial and apartheid system further exacerbated by internationalization and globalization. In my view the resolution of challenges will call for multidisciplinary approaches through multi-stakeholder participation. Simply put, developmental approaches would have to be context specific.

Furthermore, it needs to be recognised that different institutions of higher learning emerged from different historical backgrounds. How a traditional university would roll out community-engaged scholarship may differ to how a new university would respond.

Proposed way forward

As a solution, I therefore bring to light the fact that the higher learning landscape needs to adopt a shift in paradigm. It needs to be liberated from the perpetual conceptualization cycle and trap. In order to achieve this there needs to be a transformed mind-set so as to elicit transformation from below i.e. at the students and community levels. This is also likely to surface the structural and systemic problems that are deeply embedded in South African society which cannot be resolved by conceptual formula and definitions alone. These challenges refer in particular to the socio-economic challenges of rising unemployment rates, gender inequality, drug and substance abuse, xenophobia, the spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic amongst other such challenges..

The achievement of the full scope of community-engaged scholarship, can be achieved through multiple innovative and creative approaches that are embedded in activist scholarship and what Gramsci refers to as 'organic' intellectuals. This sentiment is shared by Magiza (2014) who emphasizes the inculcation of an activist research approach. Fundamental to this, is the necessity of ensuring a particular approach to the ethical requirements of engaging communities in scholarly work. Most noteworthy, agreeing with Pienaar (Pienaar 2014) is the protection of the flow and usage of indigenous knowledge created from and with community members and how it is used in academic publishing.

With this in mind, a space for the creation of oppositional discourse about the origins of knowledge should be encouraged. A space, which allows for a dialectical approach where ideas are freely contestable through reasoned arguments. Knowledge that demystifies what has always been seen through the lens of traditional academic approaches should also be given a space in the developmental discourse but should be re-examined critically.. Resonating with Magiza (2014), Community Engaged Scholarship will not only have a positive developmental impact but can also strengthen the pedagogical capabilities of higher education institutions. This could lead to the production of graduates that are not only knowledgeable in an academic sense but who also have a sense of responsibility towards society through the acquisition of the attribute of cultural tolerance in South Africa. (CHE Report 2009).

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CLING Women Facilitators: The Lifeblood of Community Education in Freedom Park

Thamsanqa Hamilton Hukwe

Introduction

Women are at the centre of Community Literacy and Numeracy Group (CLING) activities in Freedom Park. In this article, I will attempt to show the important role they play as facilitators in community education programs in Freedom Park. This offers a window into understanding the agency of women facilitators in addressing the numerous challenges in Freedom Park through CLING.

The article begins by providing a brief history of Freedom Park and its harsh socio economic conditions. This will enable a better understanding of the role CLING women facilitators are playing and the importance of their efforts to improve literacy and numeracy skills in Freedom Park.

Background and Living Conditions in Freedom Park

Freedom Park is situated about 30 kilometres south of Johannesburg, close to Soweto. It was formed in 1993 after the unbanning of liberation organizations and shortly before the first democratic elections in 1994. At the time, the community in Freedom Park was made up of migrants from the neighbouring hostels and backyards rentals in the industrial areas of Johannesburg. Initially, Freedom Park was to be developed as part of an expansion of Devland industrial area. However, since 1993 the occupation of Freedom Park by an increasing number of shack dwellers changed Freedom Park into a residential area.

Over the years, Freedom Park has become a site of resistance to evictions and service delivery protests. As a result, from 2000, three primary schools, a high school and a clinic were built. After 2002, public housing was provided for the community and this led to the recognition of Freedom Park as a formal township.

Freedom Park resembles many communities in South Africa that are excluded from decision making and feel alienated. On high illiteracy levels, the late Ward Councillor, Mr. Mbuyiselo Dokolwane (2014) said:

"… when you don't see a lot of people going to libraries, when you don't see a lot of people reading newspapers, when you don't see newspaper stalls around, when people do not read their bills, to me it tells that its either they don't like reading or they cannot read. If you see a lot of bills not opened, it tells a story – that they cannot read or write".

This draws attention to the problem of illiteracy resulting from the socio-economic conditions under which Freedom Park residents live. More than 63% of families live on less than R2000 per month, and over 80% live on less than R3000 per month (Hoag, 2009). Of the families that receive social grants, over 70% of them receive less than R800 per month from the grant (Hoag, 2009). Almost 30% of the families are female headed households, compared to just 8.1% which are headed by single fathers. At the time of the survey, 12.4% of families had orphans and were not receiving social grants (Hoag, 2009).

This gives a snap shot of the difficult living conditions under which CLING women facilitators run community education programs.

CLING Women Facilitators and their role in community education in Freedom Park

Any narrative of CLING in Freedom Park cannot be separated from the experiences and critical contributions of women facilitators. Not only are the majority of CLING facilitators women, some of them have been with CLING from the very beginning and have been the lifeblood of the group.

Out of the six women facilitators in Freedom Park, five are single mothers between the ages of 22 and 45 years. All of them have high school education with a minimum of grade 10. They also hold part time jobs as domestic workers in Eldorado Park.

These women constitute the core group of facilitators in terms of day to day administration, operation and implementation of CLING activities. They are bound together by a need to improve their literacy and numeracy skills as well as that of the community. They have also worked in the local schools as assistants and established good working relationships between CLING and local schools.

In the quest to advance their personal development and improve their facilitation skills, they have attended educational workshops and seminars organised by Centre for Education Rights and Transformation (CERT). As a result of this, they have developed activities such as 'homework assistant', afternoon classes and a drama group with a view to provide learner support programs. Their role as community educators continues to evolve as they now also provide counselling services to the children who experience different kinds of abuse in their homes. However, they face numerous challenges which they have worked to overcome.

Julia Mamushe, a CLING woman facilitator, has also pointed out how workshops and seminars organised by Centre for Education Rights and Transformation (CERT) has improved their capabilities in listening with empathy and conducting afternoon classes for learners. She added that 'the training we got from Ivor and Britt helped us with skills to improve our learning activities … in the afternoon classes'.

There is a high level of enthusiasm about CLING among women facilitators. When asked about this Zusange said 'we feel happy about the work we do in reading clubs because the learners that are attending have improved their reading and writing skills. They can paint the picture and also separate colours'.

CLING women facilitators have also ensured CLING in Freedom Park is sustained. This was illustrated when CLING was inactive for eight months in 2009. CLING women facilitators were able to revive the group after which it became dominated by highly motivated young women (Kgobe and Sotuku, 2012).

Parents have also noted how CLING women facilitators have an effect in helping them to manage stress related to their children's education. When asked about the role of CLING women facilitators, Mrs. Tsholo, who is a parent, affirms this: "…it… helps us as parents because we don't have time and when children are from CLING they come home, done already with their homework (sic)" (Tsholo, 2014).

Parents also view CLING women facilitators as keeping children focused. "CLING has really improved the quality of my child's life…she used to out playing after school but now from school she goes directly to the CLING centre" (Mncube, 2014). This also shows the transformative aspects based on CLING women's contribution to the community education.

Similarly, Mr. Khumalo said "CLING plays a very critical role in taking children off the street. There is a lot of 'nyaope' abuse in the area, it is our responsibility as parents to work hand -in -hand to encourage our children to attend CLING classes and stay off the streets. As you can see, all the medals are proof of her [referring to his daughter] improved performance" (Khumalo, 2014).

Their work has also been appreciated by educators from the local schools who have observed the difference between learners attending CLING activities and those who do not. When Mrs. Modikwe was asked about CLING she said "… it is helping learners even when you check spelling, expression, they differ…than those who do not attend CLING classes" (Modikwe, 2014).

However, even though CLING facilitators are highly motivated by the work they do and the positive effect it has, they operate under very depressing conditions which limits their potential.

A CLING woman facilitator, Patience Mashaba describes this.

"…there are lot of challenges; we do not have financial support to run our programmes. We don't have toilets and access to water. We rely on our neighbour for water. Our place is small since we operate from a container. One part is used as a library, yet we still have to work from there, there is no privacy" (Mashava, 2014).

Mr Khumalo a parent echoes this view:

"Children suffer a lot during winter because the zinc structure is cold in winter, and because the containers are so small, in winter they struggle fitting in the container…" (Khumalo, 2014).

A CLING woman facilitator adds:

"We are volunteers and we do not get paid. In as much as we try to recruit new volunteers we end up losing them because of these challenges. At the end of last year we had 20 something volunteers now we only have 7 left…"

There was a time when CLING facilitators did receive a stipend, but this has ceased. Zusange Hukwe, one of the women facilitators, highlighted how '…there was a time when we [the women facilitators] met and agreed to contribute money and cook for the children when we were still receiving stipend from the government' (Hukwe, 2014).

Another challenge pointed out by them is a lack of a feeding scheme.

'…most of the children come directly from school and they are usually hungry by the time they get here. Ideally we would have wanted to give the something to eat but we are forced to teach them on an empty stomach which affects their concentration levels. As facilitators we find ourselves helpless since we cannot even offer them a snack to get them concentrate again.'

CLING women tried to secure support in terms of food for CLING activities from local chain stores. However, this has been erratic and some classes were suspended as a result.

Conclusion

CLING women facilitators have had a profound effect on community education at Freedom Park. This has been shown by the views shared by both CLING women facilitators, parents and teachers with children attending CLING activities.

So far, support for CLING has primarily focused on training to improve facilitators' skills. CLING activities must also be understood as instruments to analyse power relations in society to develop educational programs that respond to the needs of communities. A crucial issue is how this relates to the experiences of women and their agency in addressing the challenges facing the Freedom Park community.

There is also an urgent need to address the difficult conditions in which CLING activities are conducted. Government institutions, in particular the Departments of Education, must support initiatives such as CLING. This can contribute to consolidating the work already done and ensure this can be expanded to address the numerous challenges facing learners in communities like Freedom Park.

Thamsanqa Hamilton Hukwe (CERT)

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Workplace-Based Learning (WBL): A Conceptual Frame for WBL Pedagogy

Ronel Blom

Introduction

The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) has initiated the development of a policy framework for workplace-based learning (WBL). This comes at the back of claims made in the White Paper on Post-School Education and Training that (DHET, 2013: 64):

Learners exiting universities, [Technical and Vocational Education and Training] colleges and programmes funded by [Sector Education and Training Authorities] are not, in general, finding work easily. They are often described by employers as lacking the skills needed. Sometimes this seems to relate to a lack of practical workplace experience. Workplace learning must be seen as an integral part of qualification and programme design.

While there are no arguments against these intentions, and the development of a policy framework which will enhance a systemic implementation of the practice, is supported, there are some concerns: the explicit link to employment as seen from the excerpt above, presents a dangerous move away from the educational value of WBL.

Internationally, the educational value of WBL in authentic workplace settings is well documented, and has been practiced for many years in technical, vocational, occupational and professional settings (see for example Boud and Solomon, 2001; Malloch, Cairns, Evans, and O'Connor, 2011; and Coll, and Zegwaard, 2011, to name a few). In South Africa, as elsewhere in the world, there is a renewed focus on WBL, but this interest is almost always closely linked to economic concerns, particularly in seeing WBL as a means to solve the problems of a struggling economy and poor uptake of new entrants (Blom, 2015). This is because practitioners all over the world know that WBL can significantly ease the transition of learning to work; and, that it contributes to the development of the skills and attitudes of new entrants that make them much more attractive to potential employers. These skills and attributes have become known as 'employability' qualities or skills.

Nevertheless, while improved employability is undoubtedly an important aspect, to be a catalyst for a smoother entry to workplaces, the rationale for WBL should firmly remain within the realm of the educational value of the practice.

This paper therefore focuses on the educational rationale and the appropriate WBL pedagogies that will enable learning in and at the workplace.

Workplace-based learning pedagogies

Finding a conceptual frame for WBL pedagogy is by no means simple – it is not possible, for example, to transpose an educational pedagogy to WBL. This is because different pedagogies are at work when we talk about 'learning at work, for work and through work' (Evans, et al, 2011: 159). Furthermore, the taught curriculum at institutions cannot be mirrored by what students are exposed to in workplaces. This is because more than the formal curriculum is taught (and learnt) when a student engages with real-life problems in an actual workplace. Curricula therefore need to incorporate both the institutional focus and the workplace focus. In South Africa, a term first coined by Barnett (2006), namely, 'a curriculum which faces both ways', has become common parlance. This refers to a curriculum which reflects the interrelationship between learning and work, thereby providing education that is not entirely focused on 'work', but which enables young entrants to function effectively in workplaces through an integrated curriculum encompassing both disciplinary learning and workplace practice.

A key factor in the knowledge–practice combination of a curriculum that faces both ways is the need for (Gamble, 2009: 3):

…a mix of different forms of knowledge, drawn from both non-empirical (conceptual) and empirical (situated in everyday life) domains, for the curriculum to enable both knowledge progression and occupational progression.

It is with these issues in mind that a conceptual frame for such a curriculum is suggested. Roughly based on Evans, (et al, 2011:155), the central focus of learning at, for and through work are:

- Enculturation – which refers to 'learning how we do things here' – understanding, and identifying with, the culture of the organisation;
- Building competence – which relates to the taught curriculum that will lead to 'learning to achieve the occupational standard'. This is often also a requirement for professions where the individual is seeking a licence to practice, e.g. a professional engineer;
- Improving practice, innovation and renewal – namely, 'learning to contribute to the organisation'. Students can, and should, contribute to the main business of the workplace. Opportunities should therefore be created for students to engage with and solve real-life problems;
- Fitting in – which refers to 'learning about the ethics, professional practice and social context of workplaces'. Hager, (2011: 19) makes the point that 'the significant role of social, cultural and organisational factors in workplace learning is underestimated. Though some of the theorists … allow [for] a role for such factors, they serve as a backdrop against which workplace learning occurs. [However], later theories of workplace learning provide much more decisive roles for social, organisational and cultural factors in shaping workplace learning and performance';
- Understanding the field – relating to, 'learning about the professional and/or occupational field' for career development; and
- Shaping an identity – which is 'learning about the identity of the vocation/profession', and coming to identify with it.

The curriculum should therefore imagine more than the content or subject matter taught at the institution – it should recognise that learning at, for and through work require a re-contextualisation of knowledge, and that it requires 'multi-faceted, pedagogic practices' (Evans, et al, 2011: 156): Understanding how different forms of knowledge are re-contextualised as people move between sites of learning and practice in universities, colleges and workplaces provides new ways into longstanding and seemingly intractable problems of the relation between 'theory' and 'practice'.

Conclusion

The DHET's policy framework on WBL will have to put its stake in the ground. If enhanced learning is the desired outcome of the policy framework for WBL, then the policy must strongly frame the practice as an educational practice. This position may be at odds with the economic and social expectations of growth and employment so evident in the discourse about WBL. However, Blom (2013) for example say that 'first and foremost, [work-integrated learning] is about learning, and not about working. Work is the vehicle for learning'. An educational policy framework should therefore unreservedly make the case for WBL as an educational practice, not as an economic tool.

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On Things Falling

On all things falling prefixed by hashtags…
Rhodes, Fees, Outsourcing
and anything in between that can't be boxed in…to slogans
when we protest,
let us remember also the things that make homes,
that hone and
fuel the potent pen – the poets spear,
and the bricks that follow…
as reminders of the hollow
promises of the freedom charter
that easily pass for wall paper,
four-walled, to decorate our tug of war.
It papercuts.
If walls could talk what would they to us?
Hee!
HE... Higher Education
HE… Patriarchy
HE…HE…HE, it's not funny Mr. President.
Come to my residence
and you'll understand the violence of inequality
and the gentrification of education
that makes us the lovechild of the sordid affair of corporate governance.
This oxymoron of development
leaves us smudged in the middle
of juxtapositions, contradictions
of a common interest conflict-bridled
by profit-driven corporate interests,
Economic Hitman – speak on it!
Invisible hands
clearly seen orchestrating forces of supply and demand
but yet deny their hand in drowning us in debt.

If walls could talk…
on all things falling, prefixed by hashtags…
Rhodes, Fees, Outsourcing
and anything in between that can't be boxed in…to slogans
when we protest,
let us remember also the things that make homes,
the four-walled struggles that are not seen,
that are wanting,
that are not sexy,
that are not catchy.
That are uncomfortable and messy.
Tedious, less dramatic
like writing the curriculae that paint,
through our four-walled struggles,
horizons of the world our protests beckon.

Khanyisile Ngalo (NMI)

#FeesMustFall: A Counter Voice to the Dominant Discourse on Violence

Nadeema Musthan

Late last year, in the midst of the student protests, Lyn Snodgrass, Associate Professor and HOD of Political and Conflict Studies at NMMU, wrote an article entitled, 'South African Students and Universities May Now Be Trapped in a Cycle of Conflict' (26th October 2015)[1]. At the same time student representatives, workers and intellectuals from around 20 higher education institutions gathered in Johannesburg at the 2nd Neville Alexander Commemorative Conference that focused on 'Students Rising'. Here, students appealed to academics to provide a counter-voice to the dominant discourse on violence, the kind to which Snodgrass was a contributor. So for those who have not read Snodgrass's article I will attempt to summarise it now.

Snodgrass examines the 'worrying trend of victory through violent conflict' by admitting universities are sites of struggle, potentially, and initially uses the conflicts that occurred outside Parliament and the Union Buildings to illustrate her point. Beyond her introduction however, she refers to the protests in general, as they occurred across the country.

An attempt is made to historicise and contextualise higher education in South Africa to explain the conditions of those alienated by it, and concludes that '…when social systems are unresponsive to fundamental human needs like identity, autonomy, participation and security, frustration is inevitable.' Snodgrass offers us a simple equation: frustration leads to aggression and the potential for collective violence, a 'precursor for revolution in society'. Based on this, she predicts that there will now be an 'escalation in violence, increasingly unrealistic demands, negative emotions of anger, hate and fear, polarisation and negative stereotyping, morally outrageous collective behaviour, and the emergence of militant hostility.' These 'destructive dynamics' have triggered a cyclical pattern of violent behaviour. The learned behaviour of gains through violence, so prevalent in service delivery protests, has now moved onto our university campuses.

In her concluding section entitled 'Too little, too late', issues raised by students in the #FMF movement, namely the lack of substantive transformation, highly problematic curricula, the absence of participation, intersectional issues of race, class, gender and sexuality, are raised. Snodgrass writes that these issues, as well as the 'destructive' conflict that has occurred in reaction to them, will hamper the 'real' transformative efforts that need to occur. She wonders if the higher education sector has 'missed its chance'.

There are many disturbing things about the Snodgrass article. It seems that she has not had any sustained engagement with the #FMF movement, nor with students or workers in it, around the issue of 'violence'. Sarah Godsell's article was published in the Same publication before Snodgrass published hers, yet she chose to not engage with it. Godsell addresses the highly problematic nature of dominant understandings of 'violence'. As a student she calls for the violence that maintains the status quo to be named. Snodgrass generalises the 'violence' that occurred outside Parliament and the Union Buildings to all student protests, a bizarre, but common trend in public discourse. Then there is the problematic absence of what she means by 'violence'. So I will focus on what constitutes 'violence', and the seduction of labelling what were overwhelmingly non-violent protests 'violent'. And with the students' and workers' words, I will try and bring their voices into the conversation as we reflect on what has been and what may come.

At the recent Neville Alexander Commemorative Conference, I refer to earlier students came together to talk, discuss, strategise, attempt to understand and analyse what had occurred and how to go forward with the various issues. The first question put to us all by them was about 'violence'. Students, workers and academics said and asked the following (paraphrased):

- How can the generation of 1976 condemn the protests and call us 'hooligans'?
- Little is said about the everyday epistemic violence experienced by students on campuses.
- What is 'violence'? Burning tyres is not a violence act, except for the tyre.
- The university does not respond to us. We have a culture of protest at our institution. It is only when we damage property that they talk to us.
- Please, academics, when you write about the 'violence', ask what came before.
- There are no less than six different security companies/units on our campus.
- Decolonisation is a violent process.
- Please understand, we don't want to burn, but we are prepared to burn if we have to.
- We cannot live on what they give us. There are no increases and they do not listen to us.
- It is hard to talk about what happened here. Police were hitting our mothers and fathers (outsourced workers).
- Most of the cleaning staff are single mothers. I am a young single man and the money is not enough. How can those mothers live?
- 'Bringing violence onto our campus via the private security and the police created an atmosphere of fear and intimidation and was counter to any good faith negotiations between UJ management, students and workers. The right to protest was seriously challenged by these violent acts of intimidation at UJ (academic).
- The discourse around violence in South Africa is anti-poor and anti-black. The criminalisation of students…outsourcing and workers' conditions on campus is not considered violence. Vice-chancellor's salaries are not (student).

It was clear that notions of 'violence' were highly contextual, unequal and subjective. The definitions are partial, skewed, and as Godsell notes in her article, anti-poor and anti-black. I will not discuss the issue of the nature and the right to protest here. Pierre de Vos, an authority on Constitutional Law, wrote a compelling piece on the right to protest and police violence in the same publication, suffice to say that the majority of protests (not riots) across the country around the #FMF movement were overwhelmingly non-violent. Much of the physical violence occurred against students and workers by armed security personnel and the police force. On this basis, the blanket use of the word 'violent' to describe the protests is rejected.

In moving beyond a simplistic understanding of what constitutes violence, to go beyond what Snodgrass offers, I draw upon Zizek and Fanon. The violence Snodgrass claims has been initiated by the students is what Zizek calls 'subjective' violence. It is the burning, the beating, the teargas, the rubber bullets and stun grenades (that was directed at students and workers). It is the visible violence. But it is not the only kind there is. There is also 'objective' violence that Zizek writes, is constituted by symbolic violence (through language and its forms), and systemic (or structural) violence (that arises from economic and political systems). This objective violence is invisible. Furthermore, you cannot 'look' at subjective and objective violence from the same place.

Visible violence is seen as occurring 'out of the blue' in a 'normal' peaceful state. Indeed, Snodgrass asks, 'Where did all this anger and fury come from?' Objective violence is that which is inherent in the 'normal'. It cannot be 'seen' and must be historicised. Without an understanding of the two, one cannot make sense of what

appears to be sudden, irrational, irresponsible, subjective violence. When Snodgrass labels the students and workers all 'violent' she is criminalising them, and in doing so, removing all need to listen to them, to engage with them, to change anything. The same was done on campuses all across the country.

Snodgrass acknowledges the violence in the 'normal'. She writes of the exclusionary language policies (both Afrikaans and English), the anti-poor, racist, sexist, Eurocentric habitats of the higher education landscape. But she does not call this 'violence'. She does not make the links between the objective and the subjective violence. But the students have. Snodgrass not only focuses very narrowly on 'violence', but also misappropriates it and lays it at the feet of protesting students. Even a rudimentary examination of the various protests shows that overwhelmingly, police and security personnel have initiated the visible violence that has occurred.

More insidiously, Snodgrass's (and others') focus on the overt violence serves to distract us from the other forms, and in doing so, do they not participate in them? The privileged position of NOT having to focus on systemic and symbolic violence allows the subtle forms of coercion that maintain and sustain the relations of dominance and exploitation - including the threat of violence -to go unnoticed. While it may not have been a conscious decision to collude symbolically with the very violence that has caused students and workers to disrupt, that is exactly what Snodgrass has done.

The decision by the higher education sector to adopt corporate culture as transformative practice has meant that decisions are made with business principles in mind, not educational principles. Outsourcing, performance management systems, human capital theories, increasingly large numbers of students with no increases in staffing, research agendas that are irrelevant, not socially useful and don't address problems outside the academy, have been named, and are some of the consequences. Other issues such as the problematic curricula, the demographics of academic staff and management that have not moved their thinking nor their practices in decades, the presence of progressive staff that are rendered effectively immobile in the face of large workloads, bureaucracy and 'tradition' that in some instances align directly with the intersectional problems of racism, sexism, homophobia etc. that the students have raised, are not local problems, but global problems. All these are but some of the issues that until now, and perhaps even now, are invisible. A system like this mimics the national, and indeed, the social conditions of a global system in which most people are excluded and dispensable.

One of the students' demands is for the decolonisation of the university (not just the curriculum). Fanon tells us that this, as with colonisation, is a violent phenomenon. And the students have read Fanon. This call makes it clear that they see the university as a violent, colonising and colonised space. To continue with Fanon, he tells us that decolonisation means that the 'last shall be first and the first last'. The measure of success of decolonisation is when the entire structure is changed, from bottom up, and in doing so a new person, a new language, a new humanity will come into being. Colonisation is the division of the world, and it is not by chance that the student movement calls for an intersectional approach to the ways in which the university divides. Fanon tells us what to expect as a response to calls for decolonisation: a focus on overt violence (from those most oppressed by the systems), though we know that the systems themselves bring into being this violence. Calls are made for 'reason', 'morality', 'civility', yet little is displayed in return. Fanon tells us that colonisation and decolonisation are 'simply a question of relative strength'. Students are going back to these texts, so too must we. And we must commit ourselves to engagement, self-critique and the vision of a truly transformed society.

Nadeema Musthan (NMI)

End notes

1 Snodgrass, L. (2015). South African students and universities may now be trapped in a cycle of conflict. The Conversation. Retrieved from

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NSFAS, Fees Must Fall and the Struggle of the Working Class and the Poor in South African Post-School Education

Khomotso Ntuli

The year 2015 saw a new wave of campaigns at different academic institutions in a way that has not been seen in post-apartheid South Africa. The movement known as 'Fees Must Fall' had students rising up to question, not only the fees but also made a call for inclusive public African tertiary institutions. Bond (2015:28) notes that:

For those in the society and rooting for the students, this was a critical moment, perhaps ultimately as important as the breakthrough Treatment Action Campaign's fight for free AIDS medicine 15 years ago.

The question has to be asked about whether these protests and campaigns are actually something new and what is the common thread in these struggles?

This article will look at a study by the Centre for Education Rights and Transformation (CERT) on the experiences of young people in the Vaal. Included in the issues raised was the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) as the main route to education funding for the majority of the working class and the poor in the country. One of the points informing our critique of NSFAS, which is also at the center of the Fees Must Fall campaign, is that NSFAS virtually provides the only means to higher education for working class and poor youth (Zwane, 2014: 3).

It is therefore crucial that NSFAS is properly managed to holistically support the working class and poor. This should be responsive to the conditions and challenges they face. We posit that it is not enough to simply allow access for the poor students without holistic support. This article will focus on the working class and poor people's struggle to access a commodified education system.

NSFAS and the working class and poor's struggle for access to education

Students at various institutions have responded in different ways. From using dialogue with university management, to pickets, protests and disruption of the normal functioning of the universities. In an interview about a protest at Vaal University of Technology (VUT) a chemistry student from Giyani in Limpopo, explained:

….they were not providing us with money for food you see, yes and people sometimes it's hard to get money from home, enough money in fact yes, we needed assistance from NSFAS, so we were not surviving at all. (VUT Student A, 2014)

These difficulties are not exclusive to VUT. The national nature of these experiences was brought to the fore by the national character of the Fees Must Fall movement.

A section of students referred to as the 'missing middle', who are students judged ineligible for the scheme, even though in reality their parents cannot actually afford their fees. A student from Limpopo, who is in this position, explains what his mother goes through:

….I don't think she can but she's trying her hardest because she is taking loans and all that, but then I think I deserve it, I think I deserve it because I have three other siblings, my sister who is doing Grade 11 and my other two sisters who are doing Grade 2 and Grade 3, so my mother is paying for all of us, you see so I think I deserve to get the NSFAS… (VUT Student B, 2014)

This is a point echoed by the Higher Education Minister in Phakathi (2015). "It's… your ordinary civil servant. Your teacher, your nurse, your police (officer) who are earning significantly more than (R122, 000)."

Noting the strengths of the scheme in providing education funding for the majority of the poor and working class students, the 2010 NSFAS Ministerial Review Committee Report also pointed to various shortcomings in the scheme. Included among others is the failure to timeously channel funds from one institution to where they are needed when they have not been used. The report also pointed to the challenges in the scheme's debt recovery which was at the time was 26% of the total funds loaned. This low recovery rate could either be as a result of inefficiencies in the recovery process or the lack of employment of the beneficiaries of the scheme as part of the wider youth graduate unemployment challenge. The latter is an important concern when looked at through the anxieties that some of the participants in the research related about feeling indebted during studies and without certainty of employment post graduation.

With the challenbges related above, the difficulties to access education, with rising fees is an important concern, which when looked at through the lens of education being a right, especially in the context of post-apartheid South Africa are important elements of the post schooling sector.

Kassa (2015:5) in Ikamva notes that:

The Fees Must Fall movement was triggered by a protest at the University of Witwatersrand over a 10.5% fee increase. Soon after other universities raised similar concerns. The movement quickly made links with broader demands for decolonization and the call for Free Education Now. It's roots can be traced to the Rhodes Must Fall Movement and protests against the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS).

It is important to put the fee increase in the context of the above mentioned challenges already faced by students. These include unsettled fees at the end of the year, difficulties with accommodation and lack of food, especially for those who do not have relatives in the area where they study.

It is in this context that we agree with Bond (2015) that the double-digit increase was the flash point that led to the nationwide protests. It is also worth appreciating that in as much as President Zuma agreed to no fee increments for the year 2016, it would be a mistake to limit this to just the increase. It is in this context that we see the link that students made between the Fees Must Fall movement and the outsourcing of workers in universities as an important one, showing that this is not just about students and fees, but essentially about the experiences of the poor and working class in South Africa.

Conclusion

The Fees Must Fall movement did not just start in the year 2015 but has risen on the tide of generalised hardship that have been experienced by a number of students and workers in South African tertiary institutions. The link between the Fees Must Fall movement and End Out Sourcing is an important one, and this comes to the fore when students view their challenges holistically. We conclude that these are struggles worth taking seriously, not only as those facing students but struggles of the poor and working class in South Africa.

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Some thoughts on the purposes of education in society

Enver Motala, with contributions from members of PPEN

We reprint here an article first published on the PPEN website in 2010

What are the purposes of education in society? Very often the focus is on the achievement of particular skills for the labour market to the exclusion of other important purposes, and at other times, on some other special function of education alone. In our view education has several purposes which are important both for the individual and society; for the development of democratic systems and for genuine socio-economic, political and cultural development. It has meaning for how society is organized and for the relationship between social systems and the natural environment. It has the potential to meet the aspirations and hopes of society as a whole and not only of privileged minorities.

We think that these purposes need to be discussed widely in society so that the broad and inclusive purposes of education are not ignored in favour of narrow ends. The relationship between education, democracy and human and ecological development provides the broader framework for linking growth in individual capabilities and the wider social good.

We choose six such broad purposes as illustrative of the role of education in society. These include (i) effective communication skills; (ii) good numeracy (iii) understanding the physical world; (iv) understanding society; (v) developing meaningful relationships; and (vi) affirming our children and their potential. These objectives are not intended to be exclusive, but rather provide areas of focus consistent with the wider project of deepening democracy in South Africa. We explain these purposes below.

Effective communication skills

Meaningful education implies that all human beings are provided with the means to read, write and communicate effectively. Millions of people throughout the world who cannot read and write find their lives limited by a lack of basic literacy which is essential to human dignity and self-respect. Literacy enhances participation in social, cultural, religious and civic life; enables people to recognise their names in writing; and banishes the ignorance to which so many people have been condemned for so long. Without reading and writing skills, people are vulnerable to exploitation, abuse, discrimination and prejudice, social exclusion and deprivation.

A large part of human knowledge and experience is mediated through language – and especially in the early stages of life, the mother tongue of the individual in her/community. This early use of mother-tongue is indispensible to all future learning and the negotiation of writing and other text. Deprived of this learning, millions will simply not be able to negotiate the world around them fully and will be disadvantaged throughout life. Learning through mother-tongue facilitates becoming a citizen with the capacity to read a newspaper, to fill in a form, to apply for an ID document, to open a bank account, to interpret a till slip, to read a novel, to help a child with homework, and to write his or her own story and to be able to participate in society, as well as to make choices in life. It is important too because it also has the potential to ignite a culture of reading, facilitating the exploration of diverse ideas, and encouraging public debate, discussion and critical thought.

In a world where English is dominant as a global "economic" language, effective skills of communication include the development of other languages. The task of developing other languages in a country with eleven official languages is both daunting and exhilarating. The challenges are many. They include expanding access to the use of English itself as the basis for negotiating a difficult world, and requires, for those whose home language is not English the development of a strong mother-tongue system of instruction in the early phases of education for the development of knowledge. They include an expansion of access to African languages—a child without access to African languages is ill-prepared for life in South Africa.

Numerical confidence

The second core purpose of education concerns the ability to measure, analyse, plan, and relate to and use numbers. These abilities are essential in daily life. It is difficult for those who are numerate to imagine how difficult life can be if one does not have a confident grasp of numbers, including sizes, measurements, quantities, dimensions, costs, and interest rates.

Confidence with numbers is essential to the daily survival of families. A young person who is starting a family needs to know how to manage finances and to balance daily household, education and health expenses. What is the relative cost of buying expensive shoes, investing in a business, or buying schoolbooks for one's children? An employed person should have some understanding of wages, inflation, salary increases and taxes. So, too, someone who is starting her own business must have some understanding of interest rates, access to capital, production costs, fluctuations in commodity prices, and the management of input and output costs. Anyone who is trying to make sense of society requires tools to understand the quantity of resources used in society, their value, and how government and society makes choices about its priorities as well as the trade-offs and consequences of the choices made for social equality and inequality, wealth and poverty. Without numerical confidence, how can we assess the trade-offs between investments in education, military hardware, water services, health care or roads? How can we make choices between expenditure that serves the public good and that which serves the narrow interests of social and political elites?

Understanding the physical world

Education needs to provide children with tools for understanding the ecological world and especially the relationship between human beings and the natural environment or as some have put it, between 'nature and culture'. This need has become especially relevant and urgent because of the immensely destructive potential that has been unleashed on the planet by particular forms of social life – especially as a consequence of the global power of corporate capitalist enterprises. At its most basic level, science education must promote both the curiosity of young people and their ability to think critically about how human actions impact on nature.

Understanding the physical world has many aspects. Children who understand nutrients, plant and animal biology, and the human body are in a better position to care for their bodies, families and environment. Hey understand better the relationship between human beings and the physical environment of which they are, like plants and animals, a part. Concepts such as ecology, environment, matter, energy, atomic structure, periodic tables, and the nature of chemical reactions help children to understand the makeup of the physical world. An understanding of the universe, albeit limited, helps place our earth in perspective in its interrelationship with the planets, sun, stars and galaxies. It encompasses wonder in contemplating the many things that science has not fully grasped. It must make all of us more conscious of the impact on and responsibility for the physical environment. It must provide the seeds of inquiry for future scientists and innovators in the areas of

sustainable and environmentally sound technological developments.

An emphasis on the physical world needs to foster a broad approach to science and society, harnessing all of human knowledge as it has developed over the millennia – without privileging some knowledges and ignoring others, since human knowledge has developed over many thousands of years in many parts of the world – certainly many thousands of years before it became associated with the 'enlightenment' in Europe.

Understanding history and society

Another core purpose of education is to enhance our understanding of society and our role as agents within it. Education must provide an understanding of the complexities of society—its social makeup, its demographic, geographic, regional and cultural diversities, its socio-economic realities and patterns. Understanding society implies an understanding of social power in all its forms—the power of government, civil society, the global corporations, organised labour, technology, and individuals; men, women and children. It also implies an understanding of powerlessness, and the social and historical reasons why some members of society are marginalized and vulnerable. In such societies it is particularly important that those who remain marginalized and socially vulnerable are able to develop the agency for and participate in social change.

A good educational system teaches us how to think critically about the things we see around us. It challenges common-sense notions of how society and nature works. It enables us to ask difficult and sometimes uncomfortable questions about the nature of society, with a view to making it more democratic, humane and fair.

Understanding society requires young people to understand history. This includes both their own personal and family histories and the history of the societies and communities to which they belong. Without such knowledge they all of us are disempowered and remain unaware of the important events, traditions, ways of thinking and past and present struggles. Similarly we need to understand the patterns of today's South Africa—and the patterns of poverty and privilege in South Africa and across the world— as a direct consequence of our colonial, apartheid and post-apartheid histories. Passing on an understanding of history is one of the most powerful tools in building social justice. It can provide a defence against social privilege and racism, act as a catalyst in empowering young people to act consciously in transforming society, and can teach empathy, justice and compassion. It provides society with a collective memory of the crimes perpetrated in support of social privilege and can hopefully prevent a repetition of these crimes by deepening our awareness of their danger to genuine democracy.

It should help us all to see the present as history and to participate consciously in the shaping of events and ideas, to be the 'subject' and not merely the 'object' of the ideas and agendas of other interests.

Developing meaningful relationships

In South Africa, the racist and exploitative system developed over the centuries has had a profound impact on relationships in South Africa. Its overarching effect was to deny our common humanity through the development of authoritarian and inequitable social structures which sought to reinforce the value of obedience over creativity, of hierarchical authority over democratic practices, of violence over democratic process and greed over fairness. Historically, there has been an unrelenting attack on social equality, tolerance, openness and compassion. Added to this is the dangerous obsession with 'race' and essentialized 'ethnicity' based on false stereotypes. These should be counteracted consciously through educational processes.

The education system should be designed to provide young people with the possibilities of developing diverse relationships of trust and respect. Young people need to interact with each other in ways that reinforce our common humanity, develop respectful relationships, religious tolerance, combat racism, sexism and gender based violence, prejudice and stereotyping, and oppose the bullying and silencing of children within our schools.

The concept of Ubuntu derived from our history and traditions is a profound call for recognizing our common humanity, and is deeply rooted in the importance of human relationships of compassion and care. That is why a core objective of a democratic education system must be to provide all of us with the experience and skills of developing meaningful relationships.

Moreover, this approach to education is necessary to confront the rampant individualism that is so pervasive in all societies. This individualism, based on the idea that 'my own needs' are the only thing worth striving for, breeds uncaring competitiveness, greed and a disregard for the needs of others. It leads to contempt for those who are less able or fortunate in society. It provides fertile ground for the development of anti-social values based on consumption, greed and an uncaring attitude. The education system must find ways to support the development of caring attitudes and values which support the creative abilities of individuals in ways which are socially meaningful and uplifting and which support the development of collective approaches to the many challenges faced by society. This is entirely possible through the schooling system and in educational processes taking place in communities, villages and townships. The education system should strive to teach the idea that 'enough is as good as a feast' and that the 'dog-eat-dog' approach that is so widespread in the world today is immoral and has no place in caring and just societies.

Affirming our children and their potential

The system of education under Apartheid served to undermine children's belief in their own capacity, their beauty, and the strength and capacities of their home communities. This legacy has had a devastating effect on our society—culturally, socially, psychologically and economically. One of the most important objectives of public education is to provide young people with a sense of confidence in their own potential and in the possibilities for them. It is true that when a child can read, write and communicate, is numerate and can understand society better, her self-confidence is enhanced greatly. This means that education should not be limited to the achievement of a specific skill alone. It is about providing children with a sense of "I can"—I can learn, I can do new things; I can contribute to my community and to the world. It is fundamentally about teaching young people both how to learn and the love of learning as a tool for understanding a complicated world. It is importantly about a belief in the intrinsic beauty and capacity of all young people, and providing them with a guide to finding their strengths instead of reinforcing patterns of fear and self-doubt. We take it for granted that there are some fundamental purposes of early education. One purpose of education is simply to expand children's knowledge of things they previously did not know. And as we said another purpose would be to enhance their ability to read and write and to enjoy the world of written text so that their reading can augment their knowledge though the wonder of learning.

These purposes of education need to be discussed more fully so that the appropriate actions are taken to achieve the objectives that are related to these purposes. It would mean a thoroughgoing re-think of the most appropriate and meaningful ways of designing the education system, what its focuses should be and the choices that must be made by society and government to give effect to these core purposes and objectives which are essential to the development of a humane, fair and just society.

Book Review:
'The Universe of Science' by H. Levy

Enver Motala

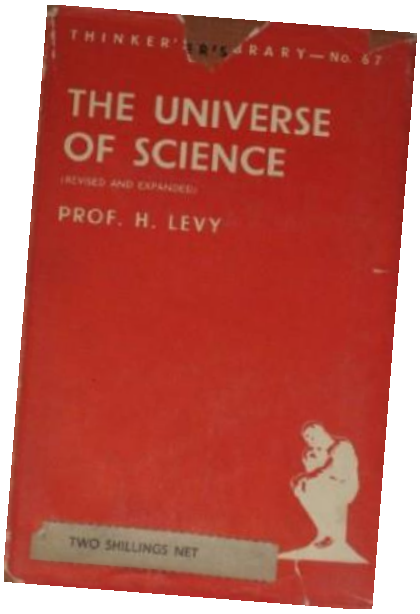
I recently came upon a little book published some 80 years ago titled The Universe of Science and written by H. Levy then Professor of Mathematics at the Imperial College of Science, University of London . What a gem it is. Professor Levy takes issue with an idea that still pervades so much of thinking about science. He says that:

The assertion of contemporary scientists, who state that the Universe is a fickle collection of indeterminate happenings, and a great thought in the Mind of its Architect, a Pure Mathematician, serves merely to divert the activity of the scientific brain from its concentration on the contradictions and confusions of the all too real outward world to a state of passive and unreal contemplation. (Page vii)

Levy reminds us of the of the importance of the lessons we might learn from history in all its fullness and the importance of science as an 'outgrowth' that is intended firstly to promote social ends. He argues that understanding science in this way prevents its isolation from 'social ends.' Such isolation he says, 'can lead to nothing but false and dangerous conclusions'. He complains that science is taught as though it has its 'own ends' and is not so connected to social issues and about how schools treat subjects as if they are disconnected from each other. In this way the subject of 'social culture,' for instance, which for him is a 'primary subject' finds no place in what is taught and learnt and the values that inform how an individual develops bears no relation to social issues. He refers to the ever present danger that 'only those fields of study may be encouraged that bear an immediate relation to the industrial practice of the day … but it inevitably builds up systems of values in each subject that cannot be reconciled as between subjects.' (Page x) Referring to the subjects of mathematical physics in particular (and he was a renowned mathematician) he warns about it becoming an almost separate science 'where facts about the world are proved rather than discovered by observation and experiment'. In this way numbers which were intended to be measures of quality and quantity are separated from reality.

In the first chapter he deals with how important it is to understand social and natural phenomena by asking the right questions. This was of prime importance because how the question is framed determines the answer that follows. And because change is continuous even the questions asked would need to be modified to suit their particular contexts. Moreover, he argues that these questions take place in a social context since we are not 'isolated threads' of personal experience alone given that we too have passed through a variety of experiences and a 'succession of environments' intrinsic to our being. And often each of us thinks that our experience is entirely unique 'ignorant of the fact that each one of us largely 'mirrors' the ideas that are dominant in our society. As he says 'each of us has inherited a social environment, home, school, friends and acquaintances, science music, literature, churches, prisons, trade unions, works and professions, societies and laws.' (Page 3) Indeed we think that we have inherited an already existing 'social machinery' when in fact 'it has inherited us'. We enter into existing society through what has been established through history and we need to bear in mind the contributions made to the present by a long line of previous generations. And even in so-called modern societies many of the problems that have existed for centuries are prevalent, despite the many 'cultural' achievements of human beings. In this he talks of

These modern cultured people, have hardly recovered from a world-wide slaughter and starvation of men, women, and children. In an age outstepped by its limited scientific knowledge they can only gape in superstitious surprise at the mysterious disease that



condemns whole classes of society to perpetual penury. They invent their justifications and their explanations as glibly as they demonstrated the ethical need for international murder.

Although he was obviously referring to Europe and its leaders in the War years of the 20th century, what he says has profound meaning for us today and suggests that for the great majority of the world's most oppressed populations very little has changed. Despite the huge advances in science and technology since the end of the World Wars, 'penury' affecting so many people in the world continues and 'justifications and explanations' are no less apparent than they were when Levy wrote his book.

He reminds us that science cannot be associated with the 'absolute moral and religious beliefs erected … as beyond criticism, imposed upon a changing society from above', nor can it be taken to be a 'rigidly prescribed framework'. One assumes that he is referring to the dogmatic ideas of those in power who often maintain it by refusing to accept that there could be other ways of pursuing social issues. What he says can be as much an indictment of the present in which those in power have no inclination to listen to the ideas and perspectives of those who are not - and especially of those members of society and their communities that are totally marginalized through the exercise of power.

He is c critical of the idea that the scientific worker can be separated from the 'social movement' of science or that, relying on the privilege of education, we can study phenomena in an unbiased way to somehow produce knowledge and the solutions to social issues as 'dispassionate observers'. He is critical of what is often

regarded as 'objectivity' because the apparent objectivity of this outlook is fallacious' since 'our thought and our estimates are coloured by the environments through which we have passed.' (Page 14.) Accordingly, as he avers, we cannot separate ourselves - our body and mind, from the processes by which they are formed and the institutions through which 'we have passed'.

There does not exist a separate and completely isolated entity "I" … What we call "I" is inseparable from the moving piece of matter that will still bear our name when it has crumbled to dust.' (Page 17)

Even the language we use to describe our experience of the world has a history and a context and it carries with it a set of assumptions about what meanings we give to particular concepts and words which are inseparable from the usage of such language. These assumptions, unless they are made explicit can give rise to 'false explanations' and require us to understand the limitations of particular usages of concepts outside the context of their usage given the 'illusion of the permanence and separate existence of objects in the universe.' (Page 20.)

Levy explains how the process of 'isolating' oneself from the real world takes place and the role played by mathematics in this since the idea that 'the architect of the universe is a pure mathematician' has taken hold and this has in turn resulted in separating mathematics form the 'real' physical world. In his view mathematicians have 'forged a colossal weapon of thought that has tended to obscure the physical basis on which the whole structure rests, and science and the modern world have taken on the appearance of a terrifying mathematical theorem'. (Page 33)

Scientific work, as he calls it, has distinct activities in it. The first has to do with the classification, sorting and measurement of objects usually followed in the natural sciences by experimentation under carefully controlled conditions. These are very much a part of what has come to be known as the empirical scientific method. Arising from this can be the logical deductions that can be made about what is empirically testable. The experimenter's logic is based on physical properties in the first place and requires therefore that a mathematical proof be backed by physical experience otherwise the development of theories or laws remains essentially a 'field of speculation'. (Page 35)

What is remarkable about Levy's book is that it is an explanation of what has come to be even more pronounced in the present world. Now even more than before so much of science is taught in ways that remove it from the real world and so many scientists and others regard science as simply 'objective' knowledge and as if it is 'neutral' in relation social power and its effects. Yet, for many people it is clear that the bulk of the expenditure in scientific research is closely related to its military purposes especially in countries like the US which is more-or-less permanently engaged in conflicts in so many parts of the world. He teaching of science too is implicated in this because it is taught as a discipline that has little relevance to those questions that are 'political' even though science is hugely implicated in the political economy of the world and especially in the choices about what research should be funded. Science is also taught in ways that does not permit students to learn about the interconnections between the various areas of knowledge and the need for their integration. You will sometimes hear a mathematics student saying that everything can be reduced to numbers, making other explanations redundant. In this way particular types of knowledge are favoured against others and especially against a broader and more general understanding of social and environmental questions.

Levy warns against overstating the distinction between the particular and the general as follows

If the process of verification of the generalization is to convert it by a system of isolated symbolism (such as in mathematics) to a verification of particular groupings of symbols, every so-called generalization is a particular. It is, if we like, the particular case of the wider Isolation, and therefore in this sense again it is valid only within the limitations that allow of the sub-isolate. (page 117)

What Levy is suggesting is that while symbols, such as in mathematics – might have an important value for mathematical thinking, they should not be used to isolate particular phenomena from wider, and especially social, interpretations. The further implication of this is that we should examine all knowledge – whether in the social or natural sciences and humanities, critically and that this should be done specially to seek greater integration of the types of knowledge that comes from the discipline based academic knowledge and the boundaries constructed for their separation from each other. By doing this the important issues we face in society, including in the natural environment, can be examined and understood more fully and knowledge made more socially useful.

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