

Hopeful pedagogies at Stellenbosch University
Pedagogieë van hoop aan die Universiteit Stellenbosch

Prof Russel Botman, rektor en visekanselier, US

**Colloquium oor die hoër onderwys se bydrae tot die openbare welsyn, aangebied die
 US se Sentrum vir Onderrig en Leer**

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Dankie, voorsitter. Goeiemore, dames en here. *Molweni. Good morning.*

Ek is gevra om die konteks te stel waarbinne hierdie colloquium plaasvind. Dis nie moeilik nie, want ons is lankal besig om debat te voer oor die posisionering van die Universiteit in die konteks van die “Strategiese Raamwerk vir die Eeuwisseling en Daarná”, wat in die jaar 2000 deur die Raad aanvaar is (US, 2000). Die idee was om die Universiteit te posisioneer vir die 21ste eeu. Ons het al nader gekom aan die gedagte dat dit iets te doen moet hê met die openbare welsyn van die samelewing.

Your topic – “How does higher education in South Africa contribute to the public good?” – is of particular relevance at Stellenbosch, because of the 23 universities in the country, we are struggling with one of the most difficult questions: That of how do you have an impact on both the institutional programme of a university, but also ensure that its outputs play a role to the benefit of society. We have brought this all together under this notion of Stellenbosch University’s HOPE Project (US, 2010).

It is important that we remember that we are speaking of HOPE Project in the singular, not in the plural. The idea is that it is the combined strength of an institution that should have an impact, not the sectoral strength or individual actions. If we put everything together, if we use our common skills, where will it take our society? This is what we’re trying to look at.

Die argument onderliggend aan die HOOP Projek lui as volg: Is daar behoeftes in die samelewing? Ja, ons weet daar bestaan baie behoeftes. Op watter behoeftes moet ons fokus? Op daardie behoeftes waarvoor daar wetenskaplike getuienis is dat bereikbare uitkomst moontlik is. M.a.w. ontwikkelingsbehoefte, want jy kan iets aan hulle doen – in jou dorp, jou land, op jou vasteland en in die res van die wêreld.

Nou, Stellenbosch het 'n baie duidelike bestaansdoel gedefinieer in die jaar 1999, en dit is “om in verbondenheid aan die universitêre ideaal van uitmuntende wetenskapsbeoefening ’n omgewing te skep en vol te hou waarbinne kennis ontdek kan word, [én] gedeel kan word, én tot voordeel van die gemeenskap aangewend kan word” (US, 2000).

Alle universiteite wil kennis ontdek, deel en aanwend, maar nie almal meen dit moet “tot voordeel van die gemeenskap” strek nie. *Clearly then, in 1999 Stellenbosch University took*

the major step to say if we now walk away from where we've been and we look into the future what is it that we want to become? And that is where Council defined the idea of what we want to be as a university using knowledge to the benefit of society, i.e. the South African society at large.

When I took this job in 2007, my view was that I would do precisely that Council decided to do in 1999 (Botman, 2007). I would try to establish it and make it work. We wanted to be of relevance to society – this is the challenge of the Strategic Framework. The idea of the Strategic Framework was that by the year 2010 the whole positioning of Stellenbosch University would have been done, based on this understanding of what the University wants to be and wants to become.

So, after I became rector, the whole University went through a process culminating in our distillation from the international development agenda five themes. They are (1) the eradication of poverty and related conditions, and the promotion of (2) human dignity and health, (3) democracy and human rights, (4) peace and security, as well as (5) a sustainable environment and a competitive industry (Botman, 2010).

There are three major actions within the HOPE Project. The first is a set of (currently) 22 specific HOPE Project initiatives within the University's faculties and divisions. These are being managed by the Deans and by leaders within the different divisions. The challenge they are trying to address is how do you translate the notion of hope into concrete initiatives that are – most importantly – deeply rooted in the academic endeavour of the institution?

The second action within the HOPE Project is a capital campaign for the University. The idea is we need partners, including our alumni, to make serious and strong investments in this repositioning of the University. In this way, others support the public good as well. It's not just a matter of the work that we do. It is also the work that our alumni and others must do to support what we are doing. Whether it is our students, academics or our staff in support services, the people who received their degrees in the past and our other partners can show their support for our work so that it can be sustainable.

The third action of the HOPE Project looks at hope as a question of the sciences. How can we use the academic endeavour to improve the lives of our people and our continent?

Kom ek speel 'n bietjie duiwelsadvokaat. Is daar nie 'n kontradiksie tussen diens aan die samelewing en akademiese vryheid nie? Presies hoe ver strek ons verantwoordelikheid teenoor die samelewing?

Ek verwys in dié verband na 'n uiteensetting deur prof Anton van Niekerk van ons Departement Filosofie (Van Niekerk, 2007). Hy gebruik 'n beeld van prof Marlene van Niekerk van ons Departement Afrikaans en Nederlands, wat die samelewing beskryf as 'n ossewa wat stadig beweeg en nie vinnig gedraai kan word nie. As dit die geval is, sê Anton,

dan kan die universiteit beskou word nie as die drywer wat die sweep klap nie, maar as die touleier wat die weg wys.

'n Baie belangrike onderskeid wat Anton tref, is tussen diensbaarheid en dienstigheid. Daar is niks verkeerd daarmee om ons navorsing en onderrig ten behoeve van die samelewing aan te wend nie, maar weens ons verbintenis tot die wetenskap lê ons lojaliteit by die waarheid, al is dit nie wat die owerheid wil hoor nie.

Nog 'n onderskeid wat hy tref, is die verskil tussen waardebemiddeling en indoktrinasie. Dis nie 'n universiteit se rol om idees voorskriftelik af te dwing nie. Dis ons rol om universele akademiese waardes deur middel van ons onderwystaak wyd te vestig.

Hier ter sprake is waardes soos “rasionaliteit en objektiwiteit, verdraagsaamheid en die oop gesprek, onafhanklike ondersoek en die eerlike oorweging van alle beskikbare getuienismateriaal, kritiese denke en die openheid vir alternatiewe standpunte, gegronde oordeelsvorming en die gewilligheid om jou idees deur ander te laat kontroleer”.

One of the goals under this University's statement on graduate attributes is to produce students “who can play a leadership role in society as responsible and critical citizens in a democratic social order”. The HOPE Project is a useful way of looking at these questions and dealing with them.

In the learning and teaching context, the way to exploit this potential is to return to our very academic foundations – by stimulating debate, like Socrates did more than 2 000 years ago. It was Socrates who famously said that “the unexamined life is not worth living”. Socratic hope, as defined by Jeffrey Duncan-Andrade (2009) of Harvard University, asks of both educators and students to scrutinise their “lives and actions within an unjust society”, however painful such a process may be.

There is still injustice in our society, even though we are in a post-oppression stage. Contributing to the public good is especially important in our situation. What is required is a common learning process on both sides of the former divide. We need a common commitment to the future.

'n Kritiese pedagogie bied hoop deur die waarheid te soek en die ware uitdagings wat ons in die gesig staar te konfronteer, nie te ontduik nie. 'n Egte pedagogie van hoop is 'n kritiese pedagogie.

Langs dié weg is die universiteit se verbintenis tot die “openbare welsyn” nie 'n vae doelwit nie, maar is dit daarop afgestem om die moeilike situasie wat gewone mense in die samelewing om ons elke dag ervaar te help verbeter.

Sterkte met die res van die colloquium. Ek sien uit na die uitkomst wat uit vandag se verrigtinge gaan voortspruit. Baie dankie.

VERWYSINGS

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