



# Faculty of Education Research Bulletin

Stellenbosch University

| February 2016 |

## CONTENTS

Introduction .....	2
Bridging the gap between teaching and learning and research: Is scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) the answer? .....	3
<i>Arend Carl</i>	
The potential of the politics of emotion in a critical community psychology: some reflections.....	6
<i>Ronelle Carolissen</i>	
‘I see you’: The essence of campus transformation .....	8
<i>Karliën Conradie</i>	
On reconciling curricular reform with teaching democratic citizenship education.....	9
<i>Nuraan Davids</i>	
Does the ‘broken home’ need fixing? .....	12
<i>Carmelita Jacobs</i>	
Rietenbosch project set to benefit learners, community.....	14
Continuity and change in cricket at Stellenbosch.....	15
<i>Francois Cleophas</i>	
Teaching with heart: exploring adult education and training in a medium security prison .....	17
<i>Doria Daniels</i>	
Uncovering the stories of university students: let’s listen before moving forward.....	20
<i>Elza Lourens</i>	
Closing the gap between secondary school and higher education: The story of a Mathematics and Science University Preparation Programme in South Africa .....	23
<i>Anneke Müller</i>	
Where have all last year’s Grade nines gone? Exploring learner disengagement in SA high schools.....	27
<i>Lynette Collair &amp; Doria Daniels</i>	
Improving student teachers’ in-school experiences is a smart investment.....	29
<i>Maureen Robinson</i>	
Afrikaanse grammatika-onderrig kwyn in hoërskole .....	31
<i>Michele van der Merwe</i>	
Language at University: Finding a constructive balance .....	34
<i>Michael le Cordeur</i>	
Your university future is English - or is it? .....	37
<i>Christa van der Walt</i>	
In search of the elusive educational subject: Priorities for research in the field of education in South Africa today? .....	39
<i>Aslam Fataar</i>	

# Introduction

This is the first issue of Stellenbosch University's *Faculty of Education Research Bulletin*. We intend to publish the Bulletin annually. It consists of articles of between 800 to 1500 words by our academic staff members, students and postdoctoral fellows.

The aim of the bulletin is twofold: the first is to showcase the broad range of research in the Faculty, and the second is to illustrate how academics in the Faculty are making research-based connections to key aspects of our educational functioning in various formal and non-formal educational institutions, and broader connections to debates around community, citizenship, and democracy.

Articles take the form of an opinion piece. They can be reflections on theory and method, discussion of education policy and practice, community and higher education service projects or a deliberation on outreach, teaching/learning and research, teaching practice innovations, student learning, community issues, and sport science and history.

In this edition we feature articles by academics from all our departments and units in four thematic clusters. The first set of articles concentrates on aspects of teaching and learning in higher education by Arend Carl, Ronelle Carolissen, Karlien Conradie and Nuraan Davids. The second is a set of articles on the community-education nexus by Carmelita Jacobs, an article featuring faculty work on environmental education, and articles by Francois Cleophas and Doria Daniels.

A third set of articles focuses on students' educational engagement in higher and secondary education, written by Elza Lourens, Anneke Muller, Lynette Collair and Doria Daniels, and Maureen Robinson.

The final set of three articles focuses on the topical issue of language-in-education. They are by Michele van der Merwe, Michael le Cordeur and Christa van der Walt.

The concluding article is by Aslam Fataar who discusses what he regards as priorities for research in the field of education policy research.

The articles in this Bulletin provide a snapshot of the quality and relevance of research-based work that is being done in the Faculty. They underline the 'research-intensive' approach to the various dimensions of our work, including, teaching and learning, thesis supervision, community and higher education service and research publication.

As one of South Africa's leading faculties of education we strive to sustain our current research orientation to our work, and we are continually involved in finding ways of improving across all dimensions of our academic work in pursuit of educational excellence, quality and relevance.

**Maureen Robinson, Arend Carl and Aslam Fataar**

**Dean and Vice-Deans, Faculty of Education, Stellenbosch University**

# **Bridging the gap between teaching and learning and research: Is scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) the answer?**

**Arend Carl (Vice Dean: Teaching)**



The purpose of this article is not to give an extensive definition, critique and literature study of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) but rather, by reflecting on a process in which I was involved in 2015, to sensitise colleagues to the value of SoTL in enhancing the quality of teaching and learning by integrating one's research with these two activities. In doing so, I hope that staff who see teaching and learning as being separate from research or believe that research is neglected if one focuses on teaching only, might find an answer in SoTL.

In 2015 I was a member of a cohort of 10 SU staff members who participated in the International Faculty SoTL Leadership Programme: UBC Certificate on Curriculum and Pedagogy in Higher Education. This certificate course on SoTL was offered by the University of British Columbia (UBC) in Vancouver, Canada. It afforded all of us the opportunity to reflect on teaching and learning as well as our research. The course consisted of two four-day contact sessions in June and November 2015, as well as several Skype sessions with the course presenter. The course required one to reflect extensively on one's practices in the teaching and learning context and how, through SoTL, evidence-based research could enhance the quality of both one's own practices as well as the learning opportunity of students.

Five assignments were submitted, namely (1) a personal dossier in which one had to reflect on one's context, one's teaching and learning

philosophy, impact statement (indicators of successful practices) and methodology of assessment (how one assesses one's successes); (2) an extensive literature review of relevant literature; (3) a report on an investigation into programme renewal in the faculty and the institution; (4) a research proposal based on an aspect of teaching and learning and (5), a PowerPoint presentation to the cohort (and reflection of the presentation after being peer reviewed). There was also a final assignment in which one had to do a post-programme meta-analysis and self-reflection.

The research proposal in Assignment 4 consisted of a thorough discussion of the rationale for the context, a literature review, the research question, data collection methods, possible outcomes, and limitations of the intended research. This assignment provided an opportunity to directly integrate research in one's teaching and learning context.

The assignments were assessed internally by UBC and if found in order, they were submitted for external, independent assessment and review (the final assessment was a one-hour interview with the external reviewer per Skype). This confirmed my view that there does not have to be a gap or conflict between research on the one hand and teaching and learning on the other. These two core functions can be closely integrated so that one's research can grow and increase, instead of seeing these two functions as different silos or functions.

Why the above context? I believe an academic continually needs to be exposed to professional development opportunities to prevent stagnation and my involvement in this course proved to me that this might be the way to go for those of us who want to focus on teaching and learning, without neglecting our research (in fact, to enhance our research outputs).

My message is that if one takes one's teaching and learning seriously, it should be closely linked to research; these aspects need not be two separate entities. Research on one's teaching and learning can not only enhance the quality of the teaching and learning practices, but it can also enhance and increase research. SoTL is indeed a way of marrying these two core functions.

The following may help to understand what SoTL is essentially about and why I argue that SoTL can assist those who prefer to focus on teaching and learning. Universities around the world are increasingly recognising the importance and complexity of offering high quality, high engagement student learning experiences in diverse undergraduate and graduate programmes (Hubball, Clarke and Poole, 2010:117; UBC Course Syllabus, 2015:3). Hubball et al. (2010:118) state that SoTL

... is a distinctive form of research within higher education, with an explicit transformational agenda at the local level (... a fast-maturing field of study with international conferences, journals). SoTL is shaped by multi-disciplinary research contexts and focuses on practice driven institutional/curricula/classroom inquiries with particular epistemological (i.e. how we know what we know), methodological (i.e. approaches to data collection and analysis) and ethical (i.e. informed consent) considerations. SoTL internalizes theory and practice through a systematic and clinical process of inquiry that may involve

at various points hypothesis, testing, planning, observing, analysis and action.

The above-mentioned need not be done in isolation. Academics are increasingly expected to work effectively in teams and collaborate on issues of research, curricula planning, pedagogy and administration; in other words, developing effective communities of practice.

However, Hubball et al. (2010:119) warn that the individualistic nature of reward systems might hinder one's ability to establish such communities in multidisciplinary settings. Communities of SoTL practice do, however, provide an effective forum to conduct, support and assist staff through challenges of conducting SoTL research within and across disciplines (Hubball et al., 2010:119).

Felten (2013:121–125) elaborates on principles of good practice in SoTL: Inquiry is focused on student learning, the practices are grounded in context, good practices are methodologically sound, it is conducted in collaboration with students and it is appropriately public (disseminating results at appropriate forums).

Felten (2013:125) argues that taken together, these principles can be used as guideposts for developing and refining both individual SoTL inquiries as well as larger SoTL initiatives. These principles can “also help clarify and demystify SoTL to those who evaluate his work”. Felten (2013:121-125) argues as follows:

Not only would guiding principles help us do our work, but they would also help clarify and demystify SoTL to those who evaluate this work. On many campuses, administrative and faculty colleagues may not understand scholarly inquiry into student learning, and some are sceptical of claims about a “scholarship” of teaching and learning. One way to change their minds is for SoTL practitioners to come together in articulating and upholding norms that reflect the best of our work. Principles of

good practice can act as lenses for them, and for us, focusing on what we already do well, and establishing vision for what we aspire to do. Shaping that vision is essential for making the case for institutional resources and support for our work, and even more importantly, for upholding our professional obligations as teacher-scholars.

One question one needs to ask oneself when involved in SoTL is whether one is doing “scholarly work” or whether one is busy with scholarship. In my reflection in my meta-analysis, I honestly said: “I was struck at the beginning of the course by the difference between the notions of scholarly work and scholarship. I was actually confronted with the question of which one I have been doing.” There is a difference and I leave it with you to read more. (See Brew, 2010, for example, and reflect on where you are located and how you see scholarship – SoTL might have an impact on your research practice.)

In conclusion, I share with you some of my final reflecting comments from my meta-analysis:

I have learned that despite faculty and disciplinary boundaries, one should get out of isolation and collaborate at institutional level to enhance the learning of students. SoTL is not just about staff and myself; the student is at the centre of curriculum and if SoTL can contribute towards unlocking the potential of our students and preparing them for life, we have succeeded. It’s not just about our own learning; it’s all about our students.

Through evidence-based research, one can investigate – in a systematic and rigorous way – one’s teaching and learning with regard to

curriculum practice. This need not be done in isolation, but through collaboration effective communities of practices can be developed. SoTL might just be the answer to bridge the gap between research and teaching and learning in an integrative way to enhance the quality of scholarship of teaching and learning.

## References

- Brew, A. 2010. Transforming academic practice through scholarship. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 29 April, 15(2):105–116.
- Felten, P. 2013. Principles of good practice in SoTL. *Teaching & Learning Inquiry*, 1(1):121–125
- Hubball, H Clarke, A & Poole, G. June 2010. Ten-year reflections on mentoring SoTL research in a research-intensive university. *International Journal for Academic Development*, (15:2): 117–129.
- OTHER RELEVANT READINGS
- Chick, NL. 2014. “Methodologically sound” under the “Big Tent”: An on-going conversation *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 8(2):15.
- Hubball, H & Clarke, A. 2010. Diverse methodological approaches and considerations for SoTL in Higher Education. *The Canadian Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 1(1):1–11.
- Hubball, H, Pearson, ML & Clarke, A. 2013. SoTL Inquiry in Broader Curricular and Institutional Theoretical Underpinnings and Emerging Trends. *Teaching and Learning: The ISSOTL Journal*, 1(1): 41–57.
- Kreber C. 2007. What’s it really all about? The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning as an authentic practice. *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 1 (1): 1-4.
- Pratt, DD. 2002. Good teaching: One size fits all? *New directions for adult and continuing education*, 93, Spring: 5–15.
- Svinicki, MD. July 2012. Who is entitled to do SoTL? *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 6(2): 1–6.
- Zakrajsek, TD. January 2013. Scholarly teaching: Suggestions for a road more travelled. *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 7(1): 1–7.

# The potential of the politics of emotion in a critical community psychology: some reflections

Ronelle Carolissen (Department of Educational Psychology)



Over the last 23 years, I have taught many students during their journeys to become clinical, counselling or educational psychologists, with many promising their allegiance to community psychology. Yet the presence of community psychology has increasingly and systematically been minimised in university curricula, especially at undergraduate level. In this short reflection I would like to argue that a politics of affect/emotion in community psychology may be one approach that could contribute to revitalising community psychology and reconnect us with its critical liberatory roots. In order to do this, a brief overview of the current state of community psychology, its challenges and potential will be considered.

In South Africa, community psychology was firmly established as being central to a liberatory discourse in psychology during the 1980s. It was very popular but soon numerous critiques arose; it was atheoretical; it limited notions of community to geographical space; it assumed that communities were poor and black and antithetical to spaces dualistically demarcated as privileged. Some therefore have a community, others do not. Community psychology interventions (with some exceptions) furthermore appeared to reinscribe critiqued models of individualistic psychology, merely reproduced in poor, black spaces.

Though much has changed in community psychology since the 1980s, community psychology has been relatively marginalised in everyday higher education practices in the post-apartheid period. In many higher education institutions, community psychology no longer exists at an undergraduate level (with some exceptions). It is taught mostly at postgraduate

level (if at all) which may symbolically communicate to students (and practitioners) that community psychology is a small area of interest not central to the canon of psychology. In this context, much of community psychology in post-apartheid SA has also been displaced by health psychology approaches with a public health focus (in psychology departments and national policy).

Similarly, modules on inclusive education in educational psychology departments and national education policy have had similar impacts on community psychology in educational contexts. All of these shifts have taken place in a broader context of higher education where national education policy strongly encourages “community engagement” as a central function of higher education. This means that much of the focus in psychology has shifted from community psychology to a focus on “community engagement”, often devoid of some of the (transformative) theory inherent in (critical) community psychology.

All these shifts, in turn, are immersed in a more powerful container of global neo-liberalism that actively encourages individualism, meritocracy and insatiable acquisition at the expense of a politics of caring and democratic practices. In these macro-contexts, many students engaging in community engagement sometimes unwittingly reinscribe well-meaning, charity-based approaches to community engagement. These approaches may place the emphasis on the hapless, disadvantaged individual that is to blame for his/her misfortune (of poverty, poor education and so forth) and in need

of intervention. Students may interact with communities outside the university as part of service learning modules that are often accommodated in circumscribed academic calendars. Their experiences of working in communities for a limited time may, in fact, perpetuate dominant notions of community.

The essence of a critical community psychology is to critically interrogate knowledges and practices that are taken for granted and that often produce myopic versions of phenomena and power relationships in our social worlds. Though there is some resurgence of rejuvenating critical activity in South African community psychology, one area in which criticality and a continuous rethinking of issues is required, is the teaching of a critical community psychology. Teaching community psychology often leads to many contradictory and deeply concerning experiences for both teachers and some students. It is well documented that many South African teachers of community psychology are concerned about the racialised, gendered and classed stereotypes attached to notions of community that impact on the curriculum and learning contexts. Dominant narratives about “community”, “community psychology” and “community engagement” remain in spite of many years of teaching about “the community” in psychology and many other associated disciplines. Students are left feeling scared of “the community out there” and often fearful and angry about perceived political content in community psychology.

On the other hand, some students are excited about the prospect and potential of community work, sometimes motivated by voyeurism about poverty and “the other” but also at times inspired by a keen desire to engage in activities that can be construed as facilitating social change. The challenge and opportunity is that very few students of community psychology hold onto just one of these emotions. Multiple, changing and powerful emotions often sweep over them during a module on community psychology. This is understandable, given that so

many feelings are produced, denied, acknowledged and accepted during the learning process.

Nevertheless, emotions are not embodied in students alone during the teaching and learning encounter. Many teachers have deep visceral experiences during teaching-learning engagements that remain largely unacknowledged in and outside of teaching spaces. Emotions, as a central component of learning, are often minimised during encounters where difficult knowledges, such as discussions about differences (human diversity) are raised as they potentially produce discomfort among teachers and students. Yet, emotions have a social and collective potential to ignite an appetite for change, as a collective. Emotions are seldom exclusively individual experiences, they are inherently social. Even though emotions are experienced at a bodily and individual level, they are socially produced. Hence a large body of literature that distinguishes between affect and the politics of affect over the last 20 years.

What are the implications of pedagogy for community, community psychology and community engagement? When using participatory teaching methods and pedagogical approaches that allow students, irrespective of their backgrounds, to highlight their experiences of community, nuanced perspectives on community are produced that expand limiting notions of what community may be, disrupting stereotypical engagements with community. Critical dialogue is encouraged in classrooms facilitating transformative opportunities that sow the seeds for critical engagement and praxis. Moreover, a discourse of critical dialogue co-existing with compassion and praxis is modelled in the classroom, encouraging practical ways of building active citizenship in a democratic society. This may be one way in which community psychology in South Africa can indeed reconnect with its Freirian roots of a liberatory pedagogy. In short the burden and benefits of having or not having a community is shared, giving way for more productive and transformative engagements with community.

# ‘I see you’: The essence of campus transformation

**Karlien Conradie (Department of Educational Psychology)**



Maternal practice as one of many philosophical scholarly frameworks might provide us with the necessary interpersonal sensitivity and insight to engage in current dialogues about language in an even more sensible manner. As described by scholars in this area of human experiencing maternal practice, in its most simple form, refers to men and women’s distinctive way of thinking, grounded in their experiences of caring for growing children. Inherent to this kind of thinking is the notion of double consciousness, requiring from us to simultaneously hold competing imperatives in contention in order to have a fuller understanding of humanity. This inevitably gives rise to the experience of psychological challenges, delineated by Sara Ruddick and Regina Edmonds in *Maternal Thinking: Philosophy, Politics, and Practice*, which could include negotiating paradoxes like feeling and reason, stability and change, joy and anxiety, and so on.

How do I connect this very interesting and useful paradigmatic lens to the current dialogue about language that prevails on the tertiary campus I find myself? I would like to argue that it is because of our unquestionable intimate connectedness as human beings. This requires of us to “see” each other in a felt sense (an inner knowledge or awareness that has not been consciously thought or verbalised), like the Na’vi people of Pandora in James Cameron’s *Avatar*. It implies that we can only engage with each other meaningfully if our own being becomes the question. In other words,

how can I create openness within myself to thoughtfully hold the multiple personal complexities of both myself and others?

This Socratic disposition seems to be absent in much of our dialogue about the democratic role of language within transformation. Maternal practice as a philosophy emphasises the element of nurturance that fosters growth which, in turn, implies change (transformation). What am I hinting at? Precisely this: all people are responsible to provide each other with a profound sense of security that would influence self-acceptance and positive self-regard. Could this maternal way of thinking serve as a parallel for our thinking about language and transformation on our campuses? Does our current engagement in dialogue reflect a practice of maternal thinking? How can we *be* differently in order to *see* each other as if for the first time? It is my contention that it is only from a psychological secure base that people can begin to have empathy for each other’s lived realities and not devalue each other’s very legitimate experiences. We need to constantly remind ourselves that for healthy change to develop out of our growth together requires from us, as Regina Edmonds would say, a deep “humility”, indicating our ever incomplete ability to really know what is best for each other. With this comes a sophisticated interpersonal sensitivity which can help us to really “see” each other and therefore *meet* each other in more transformative and even transcended ways of being.

# On reconciling curricular reform with teaching democratic citizenship education

Nuraan Davids (Department of Education Policy Studies)



Two decades into a democracy it would seem an opportune time to ask two questions. Firstly, has the curricular reform, as promulgated through OBE, indeed yielded the type of citizenship desirable for the society for which it was intended? Secondly, are the current curricular practices – as embodied in the NCS – reconcilable with the type of democratic citizenship education necessary for the emergence of a democratic South Africa?

## A post-apartheid curriculum and citizenship

The introduction of a new curriculum to assist South Africa in its transition from an apartheid regime to a democracy has justifiably attracted as many descriptions and analyses as it has been criticised and brought into contestation.

In light of apartheid SA's deeply splintered past, it was hoped that OBE would offer the adhesive necessary for racial reconciliation, social cohesion, and a shared citizenship. In echoing the values of a democratic South African Constitution (Act 108 of 1996), the amended national curriculum – from Curriculum 2005 to the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) (DBE, 2013) – aims to:

- Heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights;
- Improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person;
- Lay the foundations for a democratic and open society in which government is based on the will of the people and every citizen is equally protected by law; and

- Build a united and democratic South Africa able to take its rightful place as a sovereign state in the family of nations.

In turn, there have been a number of curricular policies and initiatives as iterated in the 'Manifesto on Values in Education' (DoE, 2001); re-iterated in 'Building a culture of responsibility and humanity in our schools: A guide for teachers' (DBE, 2011); and most recently again in the NCS (DBE, 2013), which has heralded the National Department of Education's commitment to notions of democracy, social transformation and justice; active and critical thinking; human rights; respect and reconciliation.

## Education as a means to cultivate democratic citizenship education

While there have been numerous debates about curriculum content, learning outcomes, and assessment practices – particularly in relation to the poor National Senior Certificate (NSC) results, as well the exceptionally poor literacy and numeracy levels of primary school learners as reflected in the Annual National Assessment (ANAs) – debates about democratic ways of thinking, being and acting have been relatively silent. The perceived silences might be ascribed to an array of factors.

These include an unfamiliarity on the part of teachers of what it means to teach in, and towards cultivating a democratic classroom (Waghid, 2009; Schoeman, 2006); or an unwillingness on the part of certain teachers and school leaders to break from the past by persisting with practices

that continue to be couched in a language of authoritarianism and alienation (Moloi, 2007; Ngcobo & Tikly, 2008). At this stage, the closest we venture towards discussions on the state of democratic citizenship education is in relation to the desegregation of schools or the high levels of violence in schools. Thus far, we have continued under the mistaken belief that the desegregation of schools would somehow automatically facilitate the promotion of democratic principles, such as inclusion, belonging, participation, and a common and equal citizenry. Not only has the desegregation of schools not translated into the integration of learners, but schools in post-apartheid South Africa have remained largely polarised along racial lines. Yet, as Gutmann (1995) notes, schools cannot teach mutual respect without exposing children to different ways of life. And if we thought that the myriad policies pertaining to safety at schools would somehow ensure safe learning spaces, then the observation by Mncube and Harber (2013) that children are more inclined to encounter violence at their schools than in their homes, reveal another story. And so while the silences about democratic citizenship education might not be as quantifiable as learner results in the NSC exams, or ANAs or TIMMS, the effects of not instilling practices of what it means to be a democratic citizen manifest not only in dysfunctional patterns of co-existence, but also in learner results.

It would appear, therefore, that inasmuch as a democratic form of citizenship requires an education system (curriculum) that propagates its principles, an education system (curriculum) is in need of a citizenry (and a teaching community) that actually understands and believes in the values of a democratic society.

### **Democratic citizenship education as a means to cultivate education**

If one accepts that it is possible to *teach* learners how to be democratic citizens, then we might expect that a teacher of democratic citizenship

education would have to believe in the values of respect, compassion, inclusion, and fairness. To assume that teacher education prepares teachers for the task of democratic citizenship education is to discount two important factors. One concerns the reality that, generally, schools in South Africa continue to be highly authoritarian sites – leaving little room for deliberation and engagement. The second concern relates to the identity of teachers – in that there appears to be either an unwillingness or an incapacity to fulfil the responsibility of teaching democratic citizenship education. In this regard, scant attention has been given to the socio-political identities of teachers, who are required to teach the values of a curriculum from which they are seemingly detached. Consequently, there is an inter-related set of challenges: institutional structures of schools, which are trapped in discourses of patriarchy, authoritarianism, non-consultation, and hegemonic practices of decision-making; and teacher identities that might not be commensurate with the principles of a democratic society. What, then, are the implications for democratic citizenship education in public schools?

Firstly, if one agrees with Biesta's (2010) contention that the responsibility for citizenship learning and hence the quality of democratic life has to be seen as a responsibility of society as a whole, then, perhaps one of the first areas that needs to be addressed is the desegregation of schools into spaces of integrated teaching and learning. The fact that the majority of learners in public schools continue to learn and engage along lines of racial segregation, effectively means that the majority of citizens will never have the opportunity or need to interact with someone different to him or her. And the fact that the majority of black learners in historically advantaged schools continue to be taught by white teachers only, sends particular messages to learners about who holds the capacity for knowledge and teaching, and who does not. It also holds particular implications for how learners

construct their identity, and how they perceive their potentiality in relation to that identity.

Secondly, inasmuch as education is necessary for the cultivation of democratic citizenship education, so, too, democratic citizenship is necessary for the cultivation of education – that is, if education is understood as the capacity to think and reason. To expect, therefore, that teachers who themselves might have jaded views about their sense of self and are unfamiliar with a language of democracy might somehow know how to act democratically, is questionable. Learners, as Biesta (2010) reminds us, learn from what they experience in the world around them and while the classroom represents just one corner of that world, it has the capacity to become a highly influential one. To this end, curricular reform cannot be limited to teacher preparation in relation to content knowledge only. Curricular reform has to be accompanied by consolidated efforts to reconcile the displaced identities splintered by apartheid with what it means to belong, to act with responsibility, and to be willing to be held accountable. If apartheid provided the licence for sceptical undermining of the other, then democratic education ought to be the shift towards co-existence and understanding. Such a shift requires conversation, deliberation, compassion, and disagreement, with a willingness to engage from the perspective of the other – no matter how far removed the view of another might be from the self.

Finally, while serious questions remain about whether OBE has yielded the type of citizenship desirous for a democratic society, these questions are a necessary part of a democracy. In this regard, the debates about curriculum, curricular reform and education are debates about democracy.

If teachers, therefore, are struggling to reconcile their historically oppressed or their historically privileged identities with a national identity of equality and belonging, then this struggle needs to shift from the privacy of their classrooms to larger political concerns. Curricular reform has to be as much about initiating learners (citizens) into something worthwhile (Peters, 1966) as it is about capacitating teachers (citizens).

## References

- Biesta, G.J.J. (2010) *Learning democracy in school and society: education, lifelong learning, and the politics of citizenship*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers
- DBE (Department of Basic Education). 2013. *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement*. Pretoria: Government Printers.
- Department of Basic Education (DBE) (2011) *Building a culture of responsibility and humanity in our schools: A guide for teachers*. Pretoria: Government Printers.
- Department of Education (DoE) (2001) *Manifesto on values, education, and democracy*. Pretoria: Government Printers.
- Gutmann, A. (1995) Civic education and social diversity, *Ethics*, 105(3): 557-579.
- Mncube V & Harber C. 2013. *The dynamics of violence in South African schools: Report*. Pretoria: Unisa.
- Moloi, K. 2007. An overview of education management in South Africa. *South African Journal of Education*, 27(3):463–476.
- Ngcobo, T. & Tikly, L. 2008. Key Dimensions of Effective Leadership for Change: A Focus on Township and Rural Schools in South Africa. Paper presented to the CCEAM Conference, Think Globally Act Locally: A Challenge to Education Leaders, 8 – 12 September 2008, ICC Durban.
- Peters, Richard, S. 1966 *Ethics and education*. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.
- Schoeman, S. (2006) A blueprint for democratic citizenship education in South African public schools: African teachers' perceptions of good citizenship *South African Journal of Education*, 26(1): 129–142.
- Waghid, Y. (2009) Education for responsible citizenship, *Perspectives in Education*, 27(1): 85-90.

# Does the ‘broken home’ need fixing?

**Carmelita Jacobs (Department of Educational Psychology)**



*“You are doing so well at school, one would never say you come from a broken home.”*

This was something I heard a few times while I was growing up, as though it was expected that coming from a single-mother family automatically meant I should fare poorly at school. What other people were saying soon reflected what I thought and believed about my own family and overshadowed many of my schooling experiences.

The notion that young people growing up in single-mother families are at an educational disadvantage has been suggested by research for years. However, research is also beginning to highlight occurrences of resilience and agency in single-mother families. This raises questions about whether categorising single-mother families as ‘broken homes’ is disabling and about which steps need to be taken to understand this family unit in a new way.

## **Single mothers becoming the norm in SA**

In South Africa, it is estimated that only 35% of all children are being raised in ‘traditional’ families where both the mother and father are present. As part of these statistics, the single-mother family is a common phenomenon, both nationally and internationally. Statistics from the USA revealed that single mothers make up the majority of families there too.

Given that schools are engaging with single-mother families more often, one would assume that they would be knowledgeable about them. However the recipe provided for what parent

support and involvement are and should look like is primarily based on a US model where white, dual-parent, heterosexual and middle-class households are the norm.

This model does not take into consideration that families are shaped by gender, class, racial and cultural factors or how these concepts are socially constructed.

Therefore, if the single-mother family is the norm, research needs to be undertaken that seeks to explore and understand the real-world context of these family units, to identify ways of communication and interaction that is sensitive to culture and socioeconomic circumstances, and to celebrate and acknowledge the strengths and protective factors unique to each single-mother family. The label ‘broken family’ could thus be seen as unfair and unnecessary as it may prevent the family from stepping into their roles and experiencing a sense of efficacy, in other words a sense of ‘I can’ or ‘I am able’.

## **Power in labels**

Single-mother families cannot be marginalised or simply be labelled as being bad for children anymore. It is about time that the changing nature and dynamics of families be acknowledged. Research among African American and Latino single-mother families has revealed that in some cases single-mother families access resources and provide support in context-specific and culturally unique ways that are informal and non-traditional compared to how parents are expected to support their children.

For example, Angie Wilson's research on resilient single mothers who have raised successful black men highlighted the agentic role that these single-mothers played in the education of their sons and the power they wielded to help their sons succeed (Wilson, 2014).

Perpetuating the view that single-mother families are vulnerable and detrimental for their children is also contributing to maintaining an unequal and patriarchal society that encourages women to be dependent on men.

From a feminist perspective this only serves to limit women's ability to care for and support their children. Cognisance needs to be taken of how single-mother families are positioned in society and the agentic roles that single-mothers play in relation to the educational success of their school-going children need to be highlighted.

### **School-family partnerships is the key**

According to Joyce Epstein, we need genuine partnerships between single-mother families and the schools their children attend. Genuine partnership entails the involvement of teacher,

mother and student in a relationship where all parties feel that they can contribute and benefit from the relationship. It is a space in which all voices can be heard.

Understanding the diverse, real-life experiences of single-mother families and the implications for collaborating with single-mothers and their children is an important goal for educational researchers.

My review of the literature indicates that little is known about teenagers growing up in single-mother families, especially regarding their experiences and needs for educational support.

It is with this particular population in mind that my research asks the question: what are the stories that adolescents living in single-mother families tell about educational support?

This research is undertaken with the understanding that single-mother families do not need to be 'fixed' as the title of this article suggests, but that stories need to be told and voices need to be heard so that stronger educational partnerships can be built between single-mother families and schools.

## Rietenbosch project set to benefit learners, community

A wetland rehabilitation project originating in Stellenbosch University's (SU) Faculty of Education is steadily making progress and is on track to benefit more than 20 000 learners in and around Stellenbosch.

The Rietenbosch wetland project, launched in 2013 and run by SU's EEPUS programme (Environmental Education Programmes University of Stellenbosch), aims to rehabilitate and develop the degraded wetland on Rietenbosch Primary's premises in Cloesteville. EEPUS functions as a programme of the Department of Curriculum Studies. Its aims to include environmental education in all the faculty's programmes and to formalise environmental education in schools.

"The Rietenbosch wetland project is now coming into its own," says programme coordinator Prof Chris Reddy, who heads up the EEPUS programme. "We want the wetland area to serve as an educational resource for teachers, learners as well as the broader community of the Cloetesville area," he says. "When we started the project it involved a physical rehabilitation component which required alien vegetation clearance and then landscaping and the development of water sources and ponds. The physical work is nearing completion now, and in the next year we'll focus on creating a volunteer parent system and a youth club as well as developing and distributing learning support material to teachers which will be aligned with Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement."

According to Reddy, funds recently received from the National Lotteries Distribution Trust Fund, will go a long way in ensuring that the goals of this project become a reality.

"The funds will definitely support the professional development of teachers, resource development and final physical rehabilitation of the once degraded wetland," he adds.

"Thus far the process of rehabilitation has spawned partnerships within the university, which meant positive progress. Students from the civil engineering department provided surveying services in the initial stages of the project and developed a contour profile for the site which is useful to the contractor doing the landscaping and shaping of the wetland. The purchasing department of the administration and facilities management staff have also been very useful to us. They provided expertise related to the tender processes and developed work specifications for the contractors."

Reddy says learners, teachers and the school governing body have received detailed information by way of talks and onsite visits. "They are very enthused and excited about the prospects and the development as a whole and we have their full support. We have also planned a meeting with parents and community members for later this year to introduce them to the idea of the wetland as a recreational resource and a community asset."

According to Mr Roy van Rooyen, principal of Rietenbosch Primary, this initiative is beneficial to the school and the community as a whole. "This project is unique and our learners are extremely excited to be a part of it. I hope this initiative will expand and serve as an example to other schools and communities of what can be done."

Reddy indicated that the project seems to be an example of a partnership as described by Randolf (2002:10): "Partnerships combine the talents and resources of many individuals and create opportunities that address the increasing demands we face in education. In addition partnerships may provide resources, networks, additional funding and forums to communicate with communities, greater accessibility to teaching tools and become the bridge that links students to the world outside."

# Continuity and change in cricket at Stellenbosch

**Francois Cleophas (Department of Sport Science)**



Two accounts exist of a relatively unknown event that happened in July 1865 in Stellenbosch: a cricket match on Die Braak between boys from Zonnebloem College (Cape Town) and Stellenbosch. This event was used as a vehicle for examining continuity and change in schooling, society and sport spanning the 19<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

Cricket was in its infancy during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and Governor Wodehouse supported the development of the game in the Cape. The bat was unwieldy, being fashioned out of a single piece of wood and being of nearly uniform thickness throughout its length. Overarm bowling was only legalised in 1864.

Two of the Zonnebloem boys – the 16-year-old Nathaniel Cohon and 13-year-old Walter Monde – kept a diary of the day's events that made it possible to re-enact this match 150 years later. Janet Hodgson brought this event to the attention of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century scholars in her Master's thesis.

After the independence of the Xhosa people and the power of the chiefs were broken in the 1850s and chief Mhala and a few others were sent to Robben Island, their sons were sent to a special college in Cape Town in 1858. Zonnebloem was one of the few schools in Cape Town that prepared young boys for positions of privilege in colonial society; the others being Bishops, SACS and Wynberg Boys. Hodgson postulated that Zonnebloem played cricket against these schools and that they could field two teams. Walter Monde referred to cricket as the Zonnebloem boys' favoured game.

On Saturday 1 July 1865, the Zonnebloem boys travelled to Stellenbosch by train. They left Cape

Town station at 11:00 and arrived at their destination at 13:00. They were enthusiastic cricketers and took their cricket gear along with their mattresses and books in the third-class carriage.

The Zonnebloem boys had a mixed experience in the town. According to Hodgson, the warden described the trip as an unhappy expedition. It was probably planned to cheer them up after the recent death of one of the boys from consumption. However, the locals were overly curious, the rented house belonging to Mr Cloete was uncomfortable, the weather was bitterly cold and the change in food and water brought much illness. Nathaniel Cohon complained that they were very hungry on their arrival since they had had nothing to eat since breakfast at Zonnebloem. Much of what the Zonnebloem boys saw in the town of Stellenbosch in 1865 is still visible today. Walter Monde wrote about the oak-lined streets with water running down the sides and described the Dutch Church as the best church he had seen in his life.

Roundabout the same time that Zonnebloem was established, a theological seminary was started by the Dutch Reformed Church in Stellenbosch on 1 November 1859.

These boys played games on the open field known today as *Die Braak*. It was officially named King's Square on 19 March 1818 but was known as *Die Braak* in the common tongue. This open field was a typical recreational space in the Cape colony and had much in common with Green Point Common, Rondebosch Common, Die Kas (Claremont), Van der Poel Square (Paarl), Southey's Field

(Wynberg), Jones Field in Mowbray and the Paddock in Government Avenue (Cape Town). In his Master's thesis Gavin Stander claims that a cricket club was established in Stellenbosch in 1865. *Die Braak* was the sport headquarters at the time and Petrus Borchers mentioned in his *memoir* that the boys flew kite and played ball games there during the late 1700s and early 1800s. Cricket was the most popular game to be played on *Die Braak*. Matches were played on grass or any reasonably even surface. The captain often had to collect one shilling from each player to buy a ball and pay for sandwiches and ginger beer for the opposing team. The players usually met on a Friday afternoon to prepare the field. If the team could not be bowled out twice, the match would be decided on the score of the first innings.

Before the Zonnebloem boys had lunch on that Saturday (1 July 1865), they saw some Stellenbosch boys playing cricket on die Braak and asked if they could join them. On 24 September 2015, a cricket match was played on *Die Braak* to commemorate this event.

The match took place between boys from Zonnebloem and Paul Roos Gymnasium. One or a few of the boys from both schools will write a brief report on the experience and it will be framed for display alongside the reports of Walter Monde and Nathaniel Cohon to indicate continuities and changes in society over the past 150 years of cricket at Cape schools. This time, the Zonnebloem boys travelled by bus from the school to Stellenbosch. This re-enactment adds new dimensions of interest to the Stellenbosch Cricket Club's history and act as a reflection about the reasons for the state of cricket dysfunctionality at Zonnebloem Nest School.

The event also helped social historians who are interested in witnessing, comparing and reporting on changed attitudes between people. Further, it also helped these historians to explain the continuities of social inequalities over the centuries. It will therefore be of great interest to researchers to examine the forthcoming reports of the Paul Roos and Zonnebloem boys on their 21<sup>st</sup> century experience of the day.



Zonnebloem and Paul Roos Gymnasium cricket players in 21<sup>st</sup> century. Photo: F Cleophas

# Teaching with heart: exploring adult education and training in a medium security prison



**Doria Daniels (Department of Education Psychology)**

As I make my way through the security checkpoints at the New Malmesbury medium security prison, I reflect on educational freedom and access to education and what it looks like in an incarcerated space where all information is filtered, and where access to the outside world happens by appointment.

The Universal Declaration on Human Rights (1948) and the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960) affirm education as a basic human right (Swain, 2005). The South African government pledged its commitment to equalise education (Department of Education, 1995) for all its learners by developing an education system that respects all individuals' right to a basic education, a sentiment that is echoed in the country's constitution and educational documentation. However, basic education for adults appears to be less of a priority for government than basic education for children, as less than 3% of the annual education budget is allocated to adult basic education. Given Adult Education and Training's (AET) situational challenges, it is thus surprising to find that there are AET centres that consistently produce excellent results in the external national exam in the General Education and Training band. Successful candidates are awarded the General Education and Training Certificate (GETC), a qualification at level 1 on the National

Qualifications Framework<sup>1</sup> and the equivalent of Grade 9.

I was curious about what happens within these AET centres and interested in gaining insights into the social and collective impulses present in these AET contexts that, collectively, contribute to learner successes. In 2015 I, together with three other academics, researched the institutional efficacy of 12 purposively selected adult education centres in the provinces of KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng, Limpopo and the Western Cape<sup>2</sup>. We defined institutional efficacy as the capacity of AET centres' students to perform well in the General Education and Training Certificate, and on other relevant national or provincial assessments.

We also considered recruitment, retention and throughput of students, and the perceived efficacy of the centre according to key stakeholders in the adult education field as part of a centre's success profile. The AET centre in the New Malmesbury Prison, a medium security prison for males, was one of the three Western Cape centres that I researched. Since its inception in 1999, this AET centre has maintained a 90%+ average pass rate in the ABET Level 4 exams, which is the exit exams for the General Education and Training band. This qualification is supposed to provide adult learners with the fundamental basics of general education

---

<sup>1</sup> The GETC certificate is the equivalent of a Grade 9 qualification.

<sup>2</sup> This research was made possible through funding from UMALUSI.

learning and aims to promote lifelong learning as an enabler for further learning.

### **Visiting New Malmesbury Prison**

On the first day of my visit the centre principal takes me on a tour of the educational facilities. Adult learners are streaming into classes. The sights and sounds of rowdy young men in orange overalls roaming through the corridors rekindle memories of senior high school boys behaving in unruly ways. At first, my untrained eye does not notice the warders until they are pointed out to me. Despite the warders' presence in the corridors and outside classes, incarcerated inmates are moving freely between classes and between offices and classrooms on the floors allocated for AET purposes. As we pass through the skills section, which is quieter than the school section, occasional murmurings can be heard coming from some classes. Here I see small groups consisting of five or six men, all in prison uniform, gathered in front of a blackboard, some explaining, others asking questions or listening. I find out that some of the men are fellow inmates who are assisting and peer tutoring others who are eager to learn a trade. If I could ignore the bright orange overalls that the men are wearing, these could be university students busy with a tutorial. I am told that there is a shortage of educators for the skills training sector and that the Department of Correctional Services is struggling to fill the vacant positions.

### **Culture of learning**

A culture of learning is cultivated from the first day a new inmate steps into the New Malmesbury Prison. Education is engaged with as a tool of rehabilitation; thus when a person is sentenced to New Malmesbury Prison, an assessment panel is tasked to review his life history, school history and aspirations in life, and to then recommend an educational pathway for him. The panel consisting of a social worker, an educator, an educational administrator and a representative from the skills department presents an educational plan to each new inmate.

I initially found it hard to believe that hardened prisoners would willingly accept the plan the Department of Correctional Services panel proposes for them. Surprisingly, they do. Prisoners are locked up in a cell for 23 hours a day, 7 days a week. With that as prospect, AET classes become an attractive option because it buys them nearly five hours of freedom (outside the cell), four days a week. After breakfast, the AET students are accompanied by a warder to the school building where they attend classes from 08:30 to 13:00.

Initially, education represents freedom from the cell and an escape from the monotony of being cooped up in a confined space with nothing to do. However, the school space also brings them into contact with other adult learners who become the mirrors in which they see their own potential and the opportunities that an education can bring. Teachers name former AET learners who went on to complete matric and obtained degrees whilst being incarcerated. They have found that educational accomplishment puts many adult learners on a track to claim back their freedom and the dignity that they lost, or never cultivated.

Observing the educational environment and talking to educators made me understand how important relationship building between educator and learner is. One of the teachers who had worked in various Western Cape prisons, stated that in the older prisons such as Pollsmoor and Brandvlei being an educator is challenging because teachers are seen as law enforcers, not educators.

At the New Malmesbury Prison a healthy relationship seem to exist between educator and adult learner. According to the centre principal the quickest way to get these adult learners to rebel, is to treat them like children. "You need to know, many of them are still very angry at the world, and they can become very rebellious if you do not approach them in the right way." He emphasised the importance of age appropriate communicative behaviour in the classroom and stated that it's a process that is refined over time.

These educators are also very aware of the vulnerability of their learners and of their dependency on them as educators. I found the language these educators used when they spoke about the adult learners very insightful. It provided me with a glimpse of their philosophy as educators. When I referred to a learner as a prisoner, a teacher interviewee suggested that I rather use the term candidate. He referred to his learners as “candidates” who live in “housing units”, not prison cells. Another teacher interviewee talked about “learners”, never prisoners. He confessed to me that if he was to think about them as prisoners, he would be confronted with the acts that they were sentenced for. Therefore he preferred to not dwell on knowledge that would impose on his educational engagement with them and the relationships that he is building with the learners.<sup>3</sup>

I found that the educators assist students in various ways. One way is to facilitate their learners’ education beyond matric. Prisoners do not have access to the internet and cannot make calls or correspond with the outside world unless it is through correctional services means. Teachers then serve as their correspondents and liaise with FET and tertiary institutions on their behalf.

At this AETC a teacher assists students with administrative tasks such as registration and communication regarding assignments and exams. All telephonic inquiries are made on behalf of the student and all email correspondence between the student and the institution are sent and received by the teacher. Another important area where the teachers use their influence is in the decisions that the prison authorities make about the living arrangements of prisoners. Annually, the principal will negotiate for better prison cell circumstances

for their students and will help organise the prison cell into a pedagogical space. He will motivate that senior students be allowed a second table and chair in their cell and that prisoners be paired with cellmates that are on their educational level. This is to create the opportunity for intellectual exchange and peer support with homework and studying and it advances an educational culture in cells and prison units.

Reflecting on my week at the New Malmesbury prison, I hear an educator remark that inmates are people just like us, who, for various reasons, find themselves incarcerated. The outside world assigns a homogenised identity for the orange uniformed inmate, and “others” him as a dangerous criminal. Prisons incarcerate offenders from all walks of life, even those with university degrees and professional qualifications. It also houses those who did not go to school or did not complete primary or high school. The term “second-chance learner” takes on an added meaning in the New Malmesbury Prison. It is a place where many get a second chance to further their education. Through education, however, many also find themselves and discover what they are capable of. Antonie<sup>4</sup> who teaches ABET level 1, used to be the “tea boy” in the teacher’s staffroom, a prisoner who is serving time for murder. The principal offered him the job after finding out that he used to be a tutor in one of the five prisons where he had been incarcerated. This high school dropout with his grade 10 education is now studying towards a bachelor’s degree in religious counselling.

At New Malmesbury prison there are many Antonies who, through education, are being given a second chance in life because they have educators who teach with their hearts.

---

<sup>3</sup> Three of the men that I interviewed were serving sentences for murder.

<sup>4</sup> This is a pseudonym.

# Uncovering the stories of university students: let's listen before moving forward

**Elza Lourens (SUNCEP)**

**Supervisors: Magda Fourie-Malherbe (CHAE), Mdutshekela Ndlovu (SUNCEP)**



Stellenbosch University (SU) made headlines last year when the *Luister* video about the experiences of 32 black students on campus hit social media. Newspapers, magazines, blogs, Facebook pages and other media sources commented on the video. Some were supportive of the plight of the students while others accused them of spreading untruths. I realised that I had to contribute to the debate since much of what the students in the video alluded to, was found in research I conducted in 2012/2013.

I have been involved in a bridging programme, SciMathUS, at Stellenbosch University for the past 15 years. This programme creates opportunities for students who, due to educational and/or socioeconomic factors were not admitted to higher education, to improve their NSC marks in order to gain access to higher education. 75% of the students who complete the programme enter Stellenbosch University, while the rest enter other HE institutions in the country. During informal discussions with former students I realised that gaining entrance to HE did not mean succeeding. Many of them were struggling due to several challenges of which academic pressure was only one. I therefore conducted a study to understand more about their experiences at SU.

These students have worked hard to gain entrance to HE and were ready to conquer their studies. For them this was a route to a credible degree and ultimately the way out of poverty. They entered SU at a time in SA's history that offered them 'the-sky-is-the-limit' opportunities in HE. Reality, however, portrayed a different picture.

The students realised that they would enter a predominantly white Afrikaans university, but since SU symbolised a 'top quality' education and they did not want anybody to question the value of their degrees, they still chose SU.

"Yeah, everything has a price," one said, but they were not prepared for the reality. The students were in the minority in their classes and they were acutely aware of the fact that they came from schools with limited resources. They perceived themselves as of a lower status and were afraid to ask questions due to the fear of being humiliated. Although the work load was overwhelming, they maintained that they had everything under control. Despite the 'need' to be at SU, the students struggled because of their self-perception and the academic pressure.

Financially, most of the students were supported by either NSFAS or another bursary-loan scheme of the university. The funding was not sufficient to cover all the fees including text books, printing, internet credits and living expenses. For the students in residences limited funds implied limited participation in residence activities and an inability to buy merchandise such as residence T-shirts. For those in private accommodation limited funds contributed to their limited interaction on campus. Lack of finances constituted a challenge in terms of having the necessary resources to participate in the academic practice and also contributed to feelings of inferiority when the students compared themselves to more affluent students.

In the residences, the students formed part of a peer group where many students were top achievers from former Model C schools, leaders in their schools and/or exceptional sport people. The level of inequality between the students was evident as one student highlighted: “A lot of the kids were head girls, or they excelled in sport or class. So many of them get into that res with strong personalities.” The perception of inequality between the students was further highlighted by the fact that room allocations were not random, but was perceived to be done based on race. Black and coloured students were placed together and only in exceptional cases were they placed with white students.

On campus at SU, the students had to negotiate tension and ambivalence related to values, attitudes, beliefs and everyday behavioural norms. The home or family values instilled in the students were different to what they were experiencing at SU and they realised that to be part of this culture they had to participate in activities and ‘fit in’. One student reflected that “in order to find comfort in this place, you also have to change a bit of who you are, or who you were”. He explained: “Let’s say, where I come from, it’s unusual as a young person to maybe argue with an elder. But here it’s different. Students or younger people have a right to argue and express their views in terms of whatever or in terms of what he or she thinks....acting on my own way in this place, it’s not viewed as disrespectful, so I think, I’ve been trying to adapt to that. I’m still trying to find my independence.”

Incidences of racism perceived and experienced by the students portrayed attitudes of some white students towards them. In one such incident a female residence had a social event with a male residence. The first-year men stood facing the first-year ladies. When members of the residence committee instructed them to socialise the male was supposed to dance with the female opposite him.

But as one student explained: “The guy walks past you towards some white girl behind you and they leave you. Then all of us coloured girls are just standing there, and there was one Indian girl, and nobody comes to us.” These incidences reinforced the perception the students had of ‘not belonging here’. The social context at SU, and other historically white universities, are still directed by the norms and values of the dominant culture and as a result institutional and cultural racism exist.

As part of the transformation process at SU, language practices are in place to support students who are not Afrikaans speaking. Parallel as well as double medium offerings at undergraduate level should be available where academically possible, justifiable and affordable. The students did not experience the implementation of this policy at grass-roots level. A student described his impression when he arrived in Stellenbosch: “I knew it was an Afrikaans university, but I thought maybe it had English. So, when I got here, I saw that it was really, really just Afrikaans!” The predominantly Afrikaans environment proved to be challenging to the students. They struggled in the academic context since even when double medium classes were offered they experienced that some lecturers were reluctant to speak English.

The experiences the students had with administrative systems further intensified their perceptions of ‘not belonging’ to SU. Due to acute appendicitis, one student missed two tests during a June examination in her second year. The result of missing a part of the examination was the suspension of NSFAS support as well as not being allocated a place in the residence for the following year. The system did not allow for exceptions. Only after intervention from SciMathUS staff was she provisionally funded again and did she receive placement in the residence. Exactly the same thing happened when she had to apply for residence placement at the end of her third year. Even though she passed all her modules in her third year, the previous year’s illness caused her to still not to

meet the criteria for re-entering residence, and again she had to re-apply. Although she explained her situation at the administrative office, they did not offer much assistance.

The challenges the students faced on campus on a daily basis repeatedly confirmed their perception of being ‘outsiders’. They did not participate in organised or impromptu activities on campus but rather “chilled” in their rooms or “withdrew”.

Although they were ‘Maties’, they were outsiders and functioned as such. They were not part of the majority group, they struggled linguistically; they were financially constrained and were overwhelmed by the academic pressure. These challenges contributed to intense emotions of stress.

The challenges the students experienced have been echoed repeatedly in research articles, written media and social media as in the *Luister* video. In a statement released after the *Luister* video, SU rector Professor Wim de Villiers said that SU management is not indifferent to these challenges.

However, from the findings in our study it seems that there is a disjuncture between SU’s institutional policies and initiatives and what the students experienced in day-to-day reality.

Language policies promise support to non-Afrikaans speaking students but the reality is that some lecturers are not willing to accommodate these students’ needs. The students receive residence placement but are marginalised by traditions, customs and levels of inequality. Financially they remain constrained and under immense stress to meet the criteria for continued financial support. Changes are needed in the academic, residential as well as social context in order to build an institutional culture that allows all students to integrate and become part of the university community.

Now is the time for all of us on campus to bear the responsibility of the needs of each other and, as William Tierney’s states to “create conditions required for a reconfigured democratic public sphere, and this sphere enables voice and a diversity of public stances...”

# Closing the gap between secondary school and higher education: The story of a Mathematics and Science University Preparation Programme in South Africa

Anneke Müller (Stellenbosch University Centre for Pedagogy)



Over the course of the 20th century, the type of skills people needed to feed economic growth evolved. During the so-called industrial economy people worked primarily in factories, whereas during the knowledge economy, the need for people 'to think' grew.

“They no longer hired hands, they hired heads,” says Dov Seidman (2014)<sup>5</sup>. The knowledge economy’s need for ‘head’ skills led to an increased influx and participation in higher education (HE) (Osborne & Shuttleworth, 2004; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2005). This increase in the number of people entering HE not only puts pressure on the availability of places and resources at the respective institutions (Lee, 2010), but also leads to issues such as how to deal with a more diverse student population.

However, as in the rest of the world many South African learners are inadequately or ill-prepared for HE<sup>6</sup> (Negash, Olusola & Colucci, 2011; Osborne M., 2003; Letseka, 2009; Scott, Tolson & Huang, 2011; Spaull, 2013). Alternative access routes to HE developed internationally to address this challenge of ill-preparedness (Mabila, Malatje, Addo-Bediako, Kazini & Mathabatha, 2006; Osborne & Shuttleworth, 2004).

Access programmes vary between countries and by type of programmes offered. Lee (2010), for one, divides these programmes into pre-entry, entry and post-entry. What all access programmes have in common, though, is that they take students one step closer to entering HE and that students have to invest additional effort and time to successfully access HE.

I find the term epistemological access very useful to discuss access as it implies action by the student. This term was coined by the late South African philosopher of education Wally Morrow to democratise access to HE in the apartheid regime. Morrow describes epistemological access: “...[t]o learn how to become a participant in an academic practice is to learn the intrinsic disciplines and constitutive standards of the practice” (Morrow, 2009). This is the approach of the university preparation programme offered by the Centre for Pedagogy at Stellenbosch University (SUNCEP). The programme strives to assist students to acquire skills to become successful students as well as lifelong learners.

## What is SciMathUS?

SciMathUS<sup>7</sup> is a year-long university preparation programme offered by SUNCEP. It offers students

---

<sup>5</sup> To indicate how this changes, Seidman, indicates that we are currently in the “human economy” where the most valuable workers are those with hearts (Seidman, 2014). The know-how that is needed to be successful, is humanity.

<sup>6</sup> The reasons for this will not be discussed in this article. It is a topic in its own right.

<sup>7</sup> The acronym is derived from the words Science and Mathematics at Stellenbosch University.

from educationally disadvantaged circumstances who do not meet the entry requirements for HE a second opportunity to be admitted to HE for undergraduate studies in STEM<sup>8</sup> and commerce-related careers. Only a Bachelor's pass<sup>9</sup> in the final National Senior Certificate (NSC) examination in SA qualifies students to enrol for tertiary education. Students in SciMathUS redo Mathematics and Physical Sciences to improve their NSC results to be able to reapply for HE a year later. Students may also choose to do Mathematics, Accountancy and Introduction to Economy. This group only rewrite NSC Mathematics as the commerce subjects are taught and assessed by Stellenbosch University (SU).

Although the programme offers tuition in line with the school curriculum, it is not a revision year. It prepares students for independent study in HE.

In order to be successful in HE, students are expected to work hard from day one. They have to realise the importance of continuous improvement and not only work hard to obtain a good mark in a test or examination. To be successful at university, students need more than just sound subject knowledge. They need to be skilled students equipped with well-developed reasoning, interpersonal and problem-solving skills. Students in SciMathUS attend classes in additional subjects such as academic literacy, study and thinking skills to improve these skills.

Students also have to realise that good time management, a balanced lifestyle, good meals, enough rest, the development of a good self-esteem and the ability to make a valid and valuable contribution during an argument in class are just as valuable as improving their results in Mathematics and Physical Sciences. Additionally, students complete a basic computer skills course designed

to prepare them for the ICT skills required at undergraduate level.

The programme follows an active learning pedagogical approach. Active learning is defined on a number of international universities' websites as "a process whereby students engage in activities, such as reading, writing, discussion, or problem solving that promote analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of class content. Cooperative learning, problem-based learning, and the use of case methods and simulations are some approaches that promote active learning." Active learning in SciMathUS also entails a shift from what educators teach to what students learn; lecturers act as facilitators and actively manage the learning process as it occurs in class. The programme expects the students to take responsibility for their own learning and to become actively involved in the learning process. This challenges them to discover how they learn, how others learn, how to find and apply appropriate learning resources and strategies, and to learn how to think critically. This approach further emphasises self-directed learning as the students have to reflect upon and control their own learning activities: these skills are necessary in HE and critical to lifelong learning.

Active learning in SciMathUS is also expressed through the presentation of research projects in Mathematics, Physical Sciences or Economics at the end of the academic year. Apart from submitting written assignments, they have to exhibit their presentation skills (verbally and technically) when they present their work to the rest of the group.

### **Success of the programme**

Since 2001, SciMathUS students have on average improved their results in each of the core subjects by more than 15 percentage points. Some students

---

<sup>8</sup> STEM = Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

<sup>9</sup> The minimum admission requirement for undergraduate studies in South Africa at the time of this article is a National Senior Certificate (NSC) achievement rating of 4 (adequate

achievement, 50%–59%) or better in four subjects chosen from a designated subject list and a minimum of 30% in the language of learning and teaching of the higher education institution concerned. (Umalusi, 2015).

manage to improve their results by more than 30 percentage points.

Approximately 100 students are accommodated in this programme each year. Over the past 15 years, just over 1000 students qualified to gain access to HE after they had successfully completed this programme. On average, 75% of the students per intake enrol at Stellenbosch University in different faculties such as Medicine and Health Sciences, Engineering, Natural and Agricultural Sciences as well as in Economic and Management Sciences.

The programme attempts to keep track of all former students but only has verified data on students who enrol at SU. Tracking students at other higher education institutions is a huge challenge as the data is not available. What further complicates the tracking of students or the reporting on the progress of the students as a cohort, is the fact that not all SciMathUS students enrol at SU directly after finishing the programme successfully. Some do so later.

In the process of collating the statistics about former students, it has become very clear that there are many students who have to overcome many difficulties and obstacles while studying. This is confirmed in a study by Lourens (2013) about student experiences at Stellenbosch University. It is also in line with findings of numerous international studies such as those by Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak and Terenzini (2004), Tierney, Colyar and Corwin (2003), Tierney and Colyar (2009) and Tinto (2006-2007; 2012) over time.

Most of the SciMathUS students are so-called “first generation” university students. Some of them are under huge pressure to perform well and to finish as soon as possible so that they can start supporting the rest of their family. Some are even

expected to do so while they are studying. Some students leave the university after a year or more with nothing but a huge debt. Others leave to earn something and may return when they have sufficient funds to continue with their studies. Others don't return to finish their studies at all. Only a small number of students manage to finish their degree programmes in the minimum number of years required to do so<sup>10</sup>.

The programme, however, is excited about each student who successfully completes his or her degree (some with distinction!), even if it takes a year longer. Between 20015 and 2014, one third of the SciMathUS students who had enrolled at SU graduated with a degree. A further 30% of these graduates obtained a second qualification (degree or certificate) and another third of this group, a third degree.

SciMathUS is extremely proud of two former students who completed PhD degrees (a fourth qualification) at the end of 2014. It is enormously encouraging to see how people's lives change from one without hope to one where the sky is the limit.

One former SciMathUS student, who obtained a Master's degree in Science in 2015 and who is enrolled in a programme towards obtaining a PhD, says the unlimited support and motivation she received during the year-long programme, contributed to her success.

"SciMathUS has given me a second chance to get the marks I needed to be accepted into the study programme of my choice, and ultimately, it opened the door to a world I never knew outside of the community I lived in, where my future prospects were bleak at best."

---

<sup>10</sup> The reasons for this are numerous and are not discussed in this article. Volumes of literature about access and success put forward by the multitude of research studies about this emphasise the complexity of the issue and this is also acknowledged by this author. Success and performance cannot

be discussed without acknowledging the factors that influence them.

## References

- Kuh, G. D., Kinzie, J., Schuh, J. H., & Whitt, E. J. (2005). *Student Success in College: creating conditions that matter*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Lee, M. F. (2010). *Inventory of Access Programs. International Examples of Practice in Increasing Post-Secondary Participation*. London: European Access Network.
- Letseka, M. (2009). University drop-out and researching (lifelong) learning at work. In M. Letseka, M. Cossier, M. Breier, & M. Visser, *Student Retention and Graduate Destination: Higher Education and Labour Market Access and Success* (pp. 88-105). Pretoria: HSRC.
- Lourens, E. (2013). *Understanding the experiences of educationally disadvantaged students at Stellenbosch University*. MEd thesis. Faculty of Education, Stellenbosch University. <http://scholar.sun.ac.za/handle/10019.1/85812>
- Mabila, T. E., Malatje, S. E., Addo-Bediako, A., Kazini, M. M., & Mathabatha, S. S. (2006). The role of foundation programmes in science education: The UNIFY programme at the University of Limpopo, South Africa. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 26(2), 295-304.
- Morrow, W. (2009). *Bounds of Democracy Epistemological Access in Higher Education*. Pretoria: HSRC Press.
- Negash, Z., Olusola, O., & Colucci, E. (2011). *Access To Success: Project Compendium Part 2b: Access, Participation And Retention In Africa: Evidence from a survey on tertiary institutions*. Brussels: The European University Association.
- Osborne, M. (2003). Policy and practice in widening participation: a six country comparative study of access as flexibility. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 22(1), 45-56.
- Osborne, B., & Shuttleworth, I. (2004). Widening Access to Higher Education in the UK: Questioning the Geographic Approach. *Higher Education Management and Policy Widening Access to Higher Education in the UK: Questioning the Geographic Approach B Osborne I Shuttleworth*, 16(1), 101-118.
- Pascarella, E. T., Pierson, C. T., Wolniak, G. C., & Terenzini, G. T. (2004). First-Generation College Students: Additional Evidence on College Experiences and Outcomes. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 75(3), 249-284.
- Seidman, D. (2014). *From the Knowledge Economy to the Human Economy*. Retrieved from Harvard Business Review: <https://hbr.org/2014/11/from-the-knowledge-economy-to-the-human-economy>.
- Scott, T., Tolson, H., & Huang, T.-Y. (2011). Haunted by high school performance no more. *Journal of College Admission*.
- Spaull, N. (2013). *South Africa's Education Crisis: The quality of education in South Africa 1994-2011*. Report Commissioned by Centre for Development & Enterprise (CDE).
- Tierney, W. G., Colyar, J. E., & Corwin, Z. B. (2003). *Preparing for college, building expectations, changing realities*. Los Angeles: Centre for Higher Education Policy Analysis, Rossier School of Education, University of Southern California.
- Tierney, W. G. & Colyar, J. E. (2009). Urban high school students and the challenge of access. Peter Lang Publishing Inc. New York.
- Tinto, V. (2006-2007). Research and practice of student retention: what next? *Journal of College Student Retention*, 8(1), 1-19.
- Tinto, V. (2012). *Completing College: Rethinking Institutional Action*. The University of Chicago Press. Chicago.
- Umalusi. (2015). <http://www.umalusi.org.za>

# Where have all last year's Grade nines gone? Exploring learner disengagement in South African high schools



**Lynette Collair & Doria Daniels (Department of Education Psychology)**

## **Introduction**

Teachers in many South African high schools, especially in poorer areas, wonder what has happened to all those learners who had started high school at their schools but are no longer there at the beginning of Grade 10. In some cases the number of classes in grade eight are reduced by half at the start of Grade 10. While some learners leave school to take up places at FET colleges, it is of concern to South African education policy makers and educators that more than 43 000 learners in South African high schools “disappear” from the education radar during or after the first two years of high school to join a population of unemployed, unoccupied youth with bleak economic outcomes (Education for All country progress report; Department of Basic Education (DBE), 2014). Approximately 13% of South African learners leave school prematurely, during or after Grade 9.

South African literature attests to an understanding that the causes for dropout are complexities of an interface of systemic and individual factors, and much attention is rightfully given to systemic factors (Porteus et al., 2000; Flisher et al., 2010). Although we agree that macro-systemic factors that affect student disengagement from school need to be addressed (such as poverty), micro factors within the school, such as inter-personal relationships and learning difficulties, also need attention in order to find ways to minimise

students’ disengagement from school and subsequent dropout. It is well-documented that school dropout is the culmination of disengagement from school, a gradual process of withdrawal from participation in academic, social and emotional aspects of school life. It usually begins several years before dropout (Appleton et al, 2008). It is during this “window-period” of systematic disengagement that identification of and intervention with at-risk learners should prevent learners from dropping out.

This sparked the research question of what makes South African learners disengage from school, with a special interest in the role of within-school factors, such as inter-personal relationships, in the disengagement process. It is envisaged that the outcome of the research will assist educators, support staff and parents to identify and address the indicators of disengagement in learners through appropriate interventions and in doing so, reduce the number of early high-school dropouts.

## **Researching the topic**

We have embarked on a mixed-method, two-phase study which firstly surveyed the constructs associated with school disengagement in all grade eight and nine learners in two high schools in low-income areas in the Western Cape. The second phase of the study entails applying qualitative research methodology to gain an in-depth understanding of factors contributing to disengagement in students who have indicated

signs of disengaging during the first phase of the study.

### **The journey thus far**

The first phase of the study kicked off in 2015. Two high schools in low-income areas were selected as they typified schools serving low-income communities. The total cohort of grade eight and nine learners in both schools formed the survey sample of 430 learners. The survey questionnaire was adapted from the Student Engagement Instrument (University of Minnesota, 2006). The questionnaire consisted of 50 items on the following five constructs associated with school engagement/disengagement: academic engagement/difficulties; teacher-student relationships; peer relationships, family involvement/uninvolvement and belonging. Apart from the 50 items presented on a four point Likert scale, a space was provided for learners to include additional information that would help us understand what contributed to them being engaged/disengaged in school. All 430 records have been captured on Excel and sent for statistical analysis on Statistica.

### **Initial reflections**

Although the results from the statistical analysis are not yet available, engagement with the data and the narratives written in the paragraphs have provided new understandings. Context plays a major role in learners' experiences of their school. While both schools are in low-income areas, one school is isolated with very few learners living more than 5 kilometers from the school. The feeder school is the local primary school situated a few hundred meters away. The area is also affected by drug abuse, family violence, gangsterism and high levels of unemployment. Most learners who attend this school reported experiencing learning problems in primary school. This weak academic foundation results in learners experiencing school as a struggle, providing impetus for school

disengagement. Another factor contributing to disengagement was bullying, especially bullying inflicted by learners influenced by gangs outside the school.

The learners at the second school felt proud of their school. However, themes in the narrative responses highlighted bullying and family difficulties as reasons for wanting to leave school. A number of learners in a particular class reported a particular teacher's disrespect and rudeness towards them as a reason for school being unpleasant. It is expected that the statistical analysis will provide further indications of trends towards engagement/disengagement in the two schools.

### **The way forward**

The next phase of the research will be conducted in 2016 and will entail collecting data from learners purposively selected from the sample of grade eight and nine learners on the basis of being at risk of school disengagement. These learners will be interviewed individually and also asked to complete a drawing exercise. It is with excitement and anticipation that we shall be embarking on the next phase of the study.

### **References:**

- Appleton, James J., Christenson, Sandra L., Furlong, Michael J. (2008). Student engagement with school: Critical conceptual and methodological issues of the construct. *Psychology in the Schools*, 45(5), 369-386.
- Department of Basic Education (DBE), 2014. Education for All: country progress report.
- Flisher, A. J., Townsend, L., Chikobvu, P., Lombard, C. F., & King, G. (2010). Substance use and psychosocial predictors of high school dropout in Cape Town, South Africa. *Journal of Research on Adolescence (Wiley-Blackwell)*, 20(1), 237-255.
- Porteus, K., Clacherty, G., Mdiya, L., Pelo, J., Matsai, K., Qwabe, S., et al. (2000). 'Out of school' children in South Africa: An analysis of causes in a group of marginalised, urban 7- to 15-year-olds. *Support for Learning*, 15(1), 8.

# Improving student teachers' in-school experiences is a smart investment



**Maureen Robinson (Dean, Faculty of Education)**

For some student teachers, the compulsory practical period they spend in a school before qualifying is the highlight of their degree.

During this practicum period, which accounts for about 25% of student teachers' time during their degree, they observe practising teachers and teach their own lessons. They get involved in school life. They experience the joys and tribulations of working with young people.

It can also be a stressful and negative time. Student teachers may receive inadequate mentoring and support or see other teachers acting as less than positive role models. These student teachers can become demoralised and even give up on the profession entirely.

Enrolments into teacher education programmes have significantly increased in recent years. But research suggests that teacher shortages are still looming in some school phases and disciplines. How can the practicum period become such a universally positive experience that the profession doesn't lose teachers where they are needed most?

## **Creating new criteria**

Schools in South Africa operate in hugely varied socioeconomic and educational conditions. Teacher education must prepare student teachers for all of these contexts.

Many student teachers use their placement time to market themselves for a future post. Placements in different kinds of schools will ensure that young, enthusiastic teachers apply for positions across the social and geographical spectrum.

But the reality is that not all schools can offer the same quality of teaching and learning to their own pupils, nor the same quality of mentoring to student teachers. It becomes necessary, then, to identify criteria that universities can use for student teacher placements.

Research on behalf of the Department of Higher Education and Training has outlined what these criteria might be. The researchers interviewed school authorities, university academics and provincial departments of education in five of the country's nine provinces to create this list of criteria.

- 1) leadership and vision - includes characteristics like a positive ethos, a culture of teaching and learning and a caring, welcoming environment;
- 2) professionalism - this manifests in teachers who share knowledge and skills and are willing to learn;
- 3) functionality - includes a good work ethic and ethos, good internal and external channels of communication and an infrastructure which ensures that teaching can actually happen;
- 4) good teaching and learning - knowledge of the curriculum, positive learning outcomes and practices and processes that support learning; and,
- 5) resilience - the ability to prepare student teachers for different contexts and, most importantly, a commitment to ongoing teacher, pupil and student teacher growth.

This list offers a good starting point for selecting schools where student teachers can be placed.

But the promotion of positive and diverse school experiences for student teachers also depends on factors beyond the school gates.

### **Room for improvement**

Many schools complain that university education faculties don't sufficiently communicate their expectations about student teachers' responsibilities. They also don't always explain what is required from the teachers who will act as mentors.

Where communication does exist, it very rarely offers opportunities for genuine and sustained dialogue between teachers and university lecturers. They seldom come together to discuss issues like the purpose and design of the teacher education programme or how to judge the professional competence of a novice teacher. This minimises the opportunity for teacher education to combine insights from theory and practice in mutually productive ways.

Schools and universities have a strong, impressive history of being willing to support student teaching. But a range of broader policies and strategies could facilitate even more positive relationships between schools and universities.

This will ultimately help to promote diverse experiences for student teachers.

These policies could include norms and standards for proper school infrastructure and interventions designed to improve the levels of safety and security in all communities.

Time must be set aside in the crowded school timetable for mentor teachers to meet with student teachers rather than the often rushed way in which such engagements happen.

Designated funding for transport and student accommodation would also enable students to travel beyond the comfort zones of their own neighbourhoods, or the neighbourhood of the - usually urban - university.

We need novice teachers to feel supported and enthusiastic about the professional path they have chosen. They have to appreciate the complexity of teaching and understand what it takes to be a teacher in urban, rural, rich or poor contexts.

By building the capacity of schools and universities across the spectrum to engage actively and positively in teacher preparation, we will be making an essential contribution to a quality education system for all in our country.

# Afrikaanse grammatika-onderrig kwyn in hoërskole

**Michele van der Merwe (Departement Kurrikulumstudie)**



Vroeër jare op hoërskool moes 'n mens die sogenaamde “Groen Bybel van Afrikaans” uit jou kop ken en jy sou jou rieme styfloop as jy nie jou idiome vanaf “agteros kom ook in die kraal” tot by “die vierskaar span” behoorlik kon weergee nie. Dit is nou benewens jou Raka en Ampie ken. Die “Groen Bybel van Afrikaans” was die wet van Mede en Perse en was 'n besonder bruikbare bron van inligting vir skoolkind sowel as onderwyser oor fonologie, woordeskat, semantiek, spelling, sintaksis en morfologie.

Taalkunde-onderrig, oftewel grammatika-onderrig, het in die tagtigerjare sowat 50% van die Afrikaanse kurrikulum op hoërskoolvlak uitgemaak, met die res wat aan letterkunde gewy is. Volgens die 2011 *Kurrikulum- en Assesseringsbeleidverklaring* (KABV) wat tans in skole gevolg word, is daar geen tydstoekening vir die onderrig van taalstrukture en -konvensies gemaak nie, aangesien dit “geïntegreerd met die onderrig van letterkunde en skryfvaardighede” aangebied moet word. Daar word van onderwysers verwag om veel groter klem te lê op prosa en poësie as op sinskonstruksie en spelreëls, soos blyk uit 'n ontleding van die nasionale huistaalkurrikulum. Die drastiese verskraling van Afrikaanse taalkunde-onderrig in hoërskole en die versteuring van die balans tussen taalkunde en letterkunde kan verreikende gevolge vir leerders hê.

Grammatika-onderrig word afgeskeep, want die persepsie bestaan onder leerders dat dit nie nodig is om taalreëls te ken nie, aldus Ria Taylor, adjunkhoof van Paarl HMS met 40 jaar

ondervinding as Afrikaans-onderwyser. Letterkunde-onderrig kry voorkeur, aangesien die matriekvraestel 80 punte tel en grammatika slegs 30 punte. Volgens haar lees leerders nie meer Afrikaans nie, stel nie belang in koerante en tydskrifte nie en as hulle wel nuus lees, is dit op hul selfone en in Engels. Die hedendaagse leerder is ook meer visueel ingestel en daar is nie baie YOUTUBE-materiaal in Afrikaans nie, daarom word daar selfs wanneer prelees gedoen, soms Engelse voorbeelde vanaf die rekenaar gebruik.

Die afname in Afrikaanse taalkunde-onderrig kan toegeskryf aan 'n algemene en eenvormige kurrikulum vir tale in Suid-Afrika wat onlangs ontwikkel en ingestel is om 'n eenvormige benadering tot taalkunde-onderrig daar te stel. In 1997 is 'n algemene kurrikulum vir al elf amptelike tale in Suid-Afrika opgestel, die sogenaamde uitkomsgebaseerde kurrikulum (Murray, 2012:88). Die kurrikulum is gekonseptualiseer en opgestel in Engels, en is grootliks beïnvloed deur Engelssprekende lande soos Australië. Volgens Murray (2012:88) het dit 'n groot klemverskuiwing in die Engelse kurrikulum teweeggebring, maar nog meer in die Afrikaanse en Afrika-talekurrikula. In 2001 is die Hersiene Nasionale Kurrikulumverklaring uitgereik om die kurrikulum te versterk en in ooreenstemming met al die taalkurrikula te bring (Murray, 2012:88). Weer eens is die kurrikulumverklaring in Engels gekonseptualiseer met behulp van 'n meertalige span van taalopvoeders en taalkundiges. Die kerndokument is vertaal na die tien ander tale, alhoewel slegs die Engelse weergawe vir openbare kommentaar gepubliseer is. Sodoende is

kommentaar en konstruksie van die taalkurrikulum beperk tot feitlik Engelsspreekendes. Presies dieselfde proses is met die konseptualisering van die KABV gevolg.

Die groot invloed van die kurrikulum vir Engels op die kurrikulum vir Afrikaans word in die voorafgaande paragraaf verduidelik en dit verklaar waarskynlik die fokusverskuiwing vanaf taalkunde-onderrig na hoofsaaklik letterkunde-onderrig, asook die aansienlike verskraling van die posisie van taalkunde-onderrig. Hudson en Walmsley (2005:593) beskryf die agteruitgang in grammatika-onderrig in Britse skole in die vorige eeu en die gevolglike einde aan grammatika-onderrig teen die 1960's. Dit het ook uitgekring na ander Engelsspreekende lande wat die Britse kurrikulum gevolg het, of hulle kurrikulum daarop geskoei het. Vir dekades tot by 2000 het die meeste staatskole glad nie grammatika onderrig nie en dit is steeds algemeen vir skoolverlaters om oor geen kennis van grammatika te beskik nie. In Suid-Afrika kan dieselfde tendens voorkom, indien kurrikulumkundiges en -opstellers nie erns maak van grammatika-onderrig op hoërskoolvlak nie.

Hoewel grammatika-onderrig kontroversieel is in navorsing oor taalonderrig en die volume en tydsduur daarvan 'n netelige kwessie bly vir taalopvoeders, is dit 'n uiters belangrike aspek van leerders se opvoeding. Dit is veral die komponente semantiek, sintaksis, spelling en etimologie wat saak maak.

Hudson en Walmsley wys daarop dat grammatika-onderrig help om leerders se taalbevoegdheid te versterk. Hulle meen voldoende grammatika-onderrig kan leerders se praktiese taalgebruik – skryf, lees, praat en luister – aansienlik verbeter.

Wanneer opvoeders en leerders 'n gedeelde metataal – grammatika – gebruik, beskik hulle oor die hulpmiddels om oor taalbevoegdheid te kommunikeer en om ingewikkelde skakels te ontdek, byvoorbeeld tussen grammatikale strukture en genres.

Grammatika-onderrig help leerders se ondersoekende- en denkvaardighede ontwikkel, dien as 'n goeie inleiding tot die gebruik van wetenskaplike metodes en bevorder ook akademiese geletterdheid. Dit sluit aan by die KABV waarvolgens taal as instrument vir kritiese en kreatiewe denke gebruik kan word. Grammatika word as leerders se hoofinstrument beskou om oor logiese verbande soos klassifikasie, kousaliteit en tyd te praat. Grammatika is 'n ingewikkelde kognitiewe netwerksisteem, en wanneer dit goed onderrig word, kan hoërskoolleerders dit interessant vind. *HAT-Longman* het verlede jaar 'n opvoedkundige webwerf bekendgestel waar leerders en onderwysers toegang het tot elektroniese skoolwoordeboeke. Op die webwerf is ook talle woordeboekaktiwiteite en aktiwiteite waar leerders byvoorbeeld oefening in die gebruik van morfologie kan kry. Spelling kan daagliks geoefen word deur aan te sluit by die webwerf *Beter Afrikaans*. Dié webwerf maak voorsiening vir verskillende taalvlakke en leerders kan elke dag probeer om hulle spelling te verbeter deur vier vrae elektronies te beantwoord (en wat dadelik nagesien word).

Volgens Hudson en Walmsley kan grammatika-onderrig vreemdetaal-onderrig ondersteun. Eksplisiete instruksie maak 'n belangrike deel van grammatika-onderrig uit en dit is makliker indien leerders reeds 'n begrip het van hoe hulle eerstetaal werk wanneer hulle 'n vreemde taal aanleer. Veral in 'n meertalige land soos Suid-Afrika kan dit baie voordelig wees om geletterdheid in die algemeen te verbeter.

'n Duidelike bewustheid van grammatiese strukture kan leerders help om ingewikkelder grammatikale patrone wat benodig word vir die volwasse lewe, te gebruik. Laasgenoemde patrone kom nie in leerders se informele gesprekke voor nie en hulle sal dit nie noodwendig aanleer sonder doelbewuste onderrig nie. Dit kan verwarring soos die volgende voorkom: “Wie veroordeel vanjaar

die debat?” In plaas van “Wie beoordeel vanjaar die debat?”

Grammatika-onderrig kan help om ’n kritiese reaksie te ontwikkel teenoor sommige wyses waarop taal in die alledaagse omgewing gebruik word. Dit sluit aan by die ontwikkeling van leerders se ondersoekende vaardighede. Pleonasmes soos “’n Ware feit”, “Hulle stap te voet”, “Herhaal dit weer” en “Ek persoonlik” kan ondersoek word. Pleonasmes kom in die taal voor as gevolg van sprekers se gebrekkige kennis van taal. Tegnieke aspekte van grammatika, sowel as meer algemene idees oor taalvariasie en taalgebruik, kan onderrig word. Leerders behoort bewus gemaak te word van die feit dat daar benewens Standaardafrikaans etlike ander variëteite van Afrikaans bestaan. SMS-taal kan byvoorbeeld as ’n variëteit naas Standaardafrikaans ondersoek word en leerders kan SMS-taal oorskryf in Standaardafrikaans as aktiwiteit in die taalklas.

Kennis van grammatika, verbande tussen woorde en die vaardigheid om dit te gebruik, stel die taalgebruiker in staat om taal doeltreffend te kan beheer en kan suksesvolle kommunikasie in die hand werk. Wankommunikasie soos “Sy perspireer om onderwysers te word” in plaas van “aspireer” kan sodoende reggestel en verduidelik word.

Kennis van grammatika kan ten beste deur middel van doeltreffende grammatika-onderrig oorgedra

word. Grammatika-onderrig is belangrik, relevant en noodsaaklik omdat dit leerders die geleentheid bied om taal, veral hul huistaal, te gebruik en te oefen en genoeg blootstelling aan die taal te kry. Opvoeders moet dus ’n gepaste onderrigbenadering gebruik om toe te sien grammatika-onderrig kom tot sy reg in hoërskole. Navorsers in taalkunde-onderrig, kurrikulumopstellers en taalopvoeders kan opnuut kragte saamsnoer ten einde taalonderrig van gehalte te verseker. In die woorde van NP van Wyk Louw, is taal immers ’n klein, klein beitelkje wat geslyp en geslyp moet word om te kan klink en blink.

*\* Dr Michele van der Merwe is verbonde aan die Departement Kurrikulumstudies in die Fakulteit Opvoedkunde aan die Universiteit Stellenbosch. Hierdie artikel is ’n verkorte weergawe van haar onlangse artikel in die Tydskrif vir Taalonderrig (2014, Vol 48, Nr 2).*

#### **BRONNE**

Departement van Basiese Onderwys. 2011. *Kurrikulum-en Assesseringsbeleidverklaring graad 10-12. Afrikaans Huistaal.*

Hudson, R. & Walmsley, J. 2005. The English patient: English grammar and teaching in the twentieth century. *Journal of Linguistics* (41):593-622.

Murray, S. 2012. The challenges of designing a common, standards-based curriculum for all South African languages. *Per Linguam* 28(2):84-94.

# Language at University: Finding a constructive balance

Michael le Cordeur (Department of Curriculum Studies)



With the advent of a democratic dispensation in 1994 it became essential to transform the higher education system. The inequalities in higher education needed to be addressed and a new national identity among all students was imperative. The implication of this was that the offering of English medium classes had to increase, which had a drastic influence on instruction offered in Afrikaans.

Since the dawn of democracy, there has been a prevailing debate on the position of Afrikaans as university language at South African universities. The hegemony of English has led to a gradual decrease in the use of Afrikaans while the legacy of apartheid also impacted negatively on Afrikaans. Historically Afrikaans universities (HAUs) are often accused of using Afrikaans as an excuse for not transforming. These accusations come at a time when students across South Africa are calling on university managements to transform universities and to ensure that language is not used as a mechanism to deny students access.

## What does the Constitution say?

My research is based on the premise that most South African students are not Afrikaans or English speaking. The question being investigated here is whether it is justifiable that one language, English, should be imposed on all universities as Section 6(4) of the Constitution (RSA 1996) stipulates that all official languages have equal status. Further, Section 29(2) of the Constitution affords each South African the right to receive tuition in the official language of their choice.

There is, however, a condition which must be noted because it is the basis on which the whole language debate is waged, namely: “[...] if it is reasonably practicable and fair”. The state thus has the responsibility to investigate all reasonable possibilities, providing they comply with the principles of equality and feasibility.

## International Trends

To put the language debate at South African universities in context, I refer to four international models citing Christa van der Walt and Brink (2005). Readers of this article must look out for similarities to the language debate at Stellenbosch and the solutions each country came up with.

Canada has a population of 32 million people. Of these, 7.5 million Canadians indicate French as their home language, while English is the home language of the majority of citizens. Canada has a bilingual language policy with English and French as official languages. The University of Ottawa markets itself as a French-English bilingual university. According to the university’s statute it must promote bilingualism while it must also preserve the French culture. The financial cost of bilingualism is discounted against the cultural and educational advantages offered by the policy.

The Finnish model is directly opposed to the Canadian model. Finland has a population of 5.2 million people of which only 5% speak Swedish. According to the Constitution, Finland is a bilingual country with Finnish and Swedish as official languages. The Abo Akademi University

is a monolingual and exclusively Swedish university which provides for the Swedish minority. The Helsinki University, with more than 36 000 students, is a bilingual university offering classes in Swedish and Finnish. In practice Helsinki has however become a multilingual university because the university is increasingly internationalising and using English at postgraduate level.

Belgium has a complex federal government system consisting of three regions (*gewesten*) (Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels) and three *taalgemeenschappen* (language communities) namely the Dutch/Flemish, French and German communities, the latter in a small area near Germany. This background explains why there are two Universities of Leuven: the Dutch University of Leuven and the French University of Leuven 25km away. This was the eventual solution after a language conflict of many years in the twentieth century which in its turn was the result of a socio-political conflict.

As a developing country India has managed to make its mark internationally. Researchers (Wolff, 2006) are of the opinion that this is the result of India handling the issue of language in education wisely; both at schools and universities. By utilising local languages as well as English, India manages to empower students to take part in the global economy. Learners receive tuition in their mother tongue as well as English – the mother tongue, because it is the language in which learning is optimal; and English is acquired properly at a young age so that the students can compete globally.

### **Africa**

As far as the African continent is concerned, Van der Walt en Brink (2005:824) note that the language debate has raged between two viewpoints: On the one hand you have a militant group who regards English as the Killer Language that destroys indigenous languages. On the other hand there is the more moderate group who

believes that English is a mechanism of empowerment and that nations voluntarily relinquish their mother tongue. The economic and cultural empowerment of the African continent is increasingly seen as a combination of the recognition of the African language plus the use of English in a similar way as India does.

### **Quo vadis?**

One cannot deny the importance of language in academic success as it determines how knowledge is received, constructed and transmitted. The language issue is undoubtedly one of the main obstacles to academic success for the majority of black students at Stellenbosch. The success of the transformation agenda in higher education – I believe - will stand or fall, in the end, on the altar of epistemological transformation, as this speaks to the core function of universities in relation to teaching and research.

What should be of major concern is that there are unacceptably large numbers of students who are not successful academically; not because of a lack of intelligence but because they are unable to express their views in the dominant language of instruction. This leads to a great deal of frustration and alienation. The cumulative consequences of all this is illustrated by the prevailing poor quality of relations amongst various constituencies of the institution.

The question now is what lessons – if any – can be learnt from the international examples mentioned above. According to my research there is still a place for Afrikaans as instruction and academic language at SU, but SU cannot be a university catering for one language (Afrikaans) exclusively in the way that Abo Akademi or Leuven do because this undermines diversity and transformation in Higher Education (Nzimande 2015; DoBE 1997). The goal is to create universities of which the identity and institutional culture are neither black nor white, neither Afrikaans nor English, but that are unashamedly

South African universities in the truest sense of the word.

I believe SU has much to learn from the Canadian and Indian models. Not only is it aligned to the rest of the African continent, it is also in accordance with the language policy the University Council accepted at the end of 2014, and offers cultural and educational benefits.

What it means to Maties is that while the Afrikaans offering at the University will not be diluted, mechanisms are implemented to ensure that students who do not understand Afrikaans are not excluded from the academic offering. This increases the use of English, without diminishing the status of Afrikaans as a language of instruction. The point of departure must always be to ensure that language implementation does not form a barrier to access and learning opportunities at SU.

Ultimately, those who are committed to Afrikaans can take heart from the fact that the Constitution allows enough opportunity to enhance Afrikaans as language of higher education. However, it is of the utmost importance that Afrikaans-speaking citizens find a constructive balance. While we should continue to strive for the acknowledgement of Afrikaans and other indigenous languages (i.e. isiXhosa), we must be realistic and sensitive about inclusiveness on our campus and the role English will inevitably play in this regard. Even it means that we must sometimes do code switching to English – something I have been doing for years now. Wolff (2006:49) sums it up best when he states: ‘Language is not everything in education, but without language everything is nothing in education.’

Much work still needs to be done before all students will feel at home in an *ubuntu* of languages – something that can only happen by means of an inclusive institutional culture.

Without the tolerance of each other’s differences, the ideal of our country’s motto – *!ke e: /xarra //ke* (unity in diversity) – will remain a long fought for dream.

### References:

- Banda, Felix. (2000). The dilemma of the mother tongue, prospects for bilingual education in SA. *Language, Culture and Curriculum* 13(1).
- Botman, Russel. (2011). The case for the relevant university. *South African Journal for Higher Education* 25(1): 14–21.
- Department of Basic Education (DoBE). (1997). *Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education*. Pretoria: Government Printer.
- Le Cordeur, MLA. 2011. Challenges in demographic transformation at Stellenbosch University. Paper at the International Knowledge Conference. Cape Town: 29 March.
- Le Cordeur, MLA. 2012. The Language divide in Education. *Research at Stellenbosch University*. Stellenbosch University: Sunmedia(44).
- Le Cordeur, MLA 2013. *Afrikaans as medium of instruction within a transformed higher education system in South Africa with special reference to Stellenbosch University*. In Wolhuter, CC (red.). SAERA Conference Proceedings. Cape Town: Oxford University Press. p. 55-76
- Le Cordeur, MLA 2014. Teaching children in a language that they can understand. *Research at Stellenbosch University*. Stellenbosch University: SunMedia ( 47).
- Le Cordeur, MLA. 2015. Luister na die jeug. *Die Burger*. Cape Town: 24 April: 11.
- Nzimande, B. 2014. *Budget Speech of the Minister of Higher Education of South Africa delivered in parliament on 29 November*. Cape Town: Government Gazette.
- Van der Walt, C. & Brink, C. (2005). Multilingual universities: A national and international overview. *SAJHE*: 822-851.
- Vilakazi, HW. (2002). African indigenous knowledge and development policy. *Indilinga: African Journal of Indigenous Knowledge Systems* 1(2): 35 - 49.
- Wolff, E. (2006). Language politics and planning in Africa. *Research on Mother Tongue and Bilingual Education*. Gabon: Libreville.

# Your university future is English - or is it?

**Christa van der Walt (Department of Curriculum Studies)**



Nobody would dispute that English is the world's academic language. With a global academic 'market share' of just over 90% when publications and the value of academic programmes are considered, the role and status of English is hardly surprising. Also, many students, their parents, colleagues and most higher education managers believe that English is indeed the academic lingua franca.

The growth of English as *the* language of higher education is fuelled mainly by the need of higher education institutions across the world to find sources of income beyond their borders. This phenomenon in the USA, Britain and Australia means that higher education institutions not only recruit international students but also establish English branch campuses in other countries. In Europe, Asia and Africa the use of English means that extra income is generated thanks to a bigger student population.

Internationally, the USA is the most desirable destination for international students, although European students also like to travel in Europe. When we look at the growing number of transnationally mobile students, there seems to be an obvious need for a common teaching and learning language. Consequently, the number of English-taught programmes in Europe increases annually as institutions try to attract students from neighbouring countries as well as from Asia and China.

In Africa there are similar cross-border movements, but former colonial languages also play a major role as an access mechanism to universities. Even in Francophone countries,

English is making inroads as a language of learning and teaching alongside, and sometimes instead of, French.

Unfortunately, the downside of this phenomenon is not mentioned often. The poor throughput rate of transnationally mobile students is a concern for European, British and American institutions and the poor throughput rate of higher education students in South Africa and Africa is also well-known. The number of 'language centres', 'academic support centres', 'English language proficiency tests' or 'English access tests' shows the effort that goes into developing and supporting academic language proficiency. But even though English language proficiency is crucial, it is not enough to improve the throughput rate of students or the quality of learning and teaching.

The fact that our students and lecturers are multilingual raises the question of how much teaching and learning actually happen in English in our classrooms. When we look at the use of English as a language of learning and teaching in countries as diverse as Sweden, South Africa, Spain, Germany and Lesotho, lecturers who share a home or community language with their students will use that language alongside English both in and out of class. If quick clarification in another language can sidestep misunderstanding, why would you stick to only one language? If one word from another language can explain a difficult technical term in English, why would you avoid it?

We all know that higher education differs from school education: by the time students enter a higher education institution, they will have

developed advanced academic literacy in a particular language which may not be English. Moreover, multilingual students will have developed strategies to discuss and think about their academic work in other languages, even when their schooling was in English. Researchers from Spain, Hong Kong, Germany and South Africa record how students and lecturers use a variety of languages to discuss their assignments, to grapple with difficult concepts and to plan their projects. They do so whether or not these languages are used in the academy. Ignoring these abilities of students is not only wasteful, but also unrealistic.

If we want students to succeed, we need to draw on the resources they bring to the classroom. We would use pictures, YouTube videos and graphs, among others, to explain academic content. Why not other languages? This view of multilingualism in the classroom says that languages are resources, just like students' ability to access information online or from the library. From the perspective of language as a resource, all languages become useful for learning and teaching, whether they are acknowledged in a particular language policy or plan or not. When students are discouraged from using the languages at their disposal for learning, either actively or by pretending that other languages do not exist, they are deprived of practices and tools that they could access and mobilise with relative ease.

More importantly though, higher education institutions cannot afford to ignore the multilingual world of work that awaits students. Academic English will definitely not be the main

language of communication in students' professions and trades: not in Africa, Europe, Asia or South America. Surely vocational and professional training should also enable students to communicate at a professional level with clients, patients or colleagues? Again, a monolingual, English classroom would fail students and the community supporting the institution.

University lecturers and administrators often argue that they cannot provide instruction or communication in all possible languages. However, is this necessary? If we use English as a 'traffic' language, lecturers do not have to use all the languages that their students know. Many opportunities for multilingual interaction emerge as lecturers and students meet in formal lectures, question and answer sessions, group and individual discussions, project work, e-mail communication, etc.

Every lecturer's aim should be to create spaces for students to use the languages that they have at their disposal by modelling multilingual learning behaviour. When you ask students how they express a concept in their language and show the different nuances that language systems bring to such concepts, you not only deepen understanding by building on existing knowledge, you also prepare students for the challenges of working in multilingual communities.

*\*Prof Christa van der Walt is the Chairperson of the Department of Curriculum Studies at Stellenbosch University. She is author of the book *Multilingual higher education: Beyond English Medium Orientations* (2013).*

# In search of the elusive educational subject: Priorities for research in the field of education in South Africa today?

**Aslam Fataar (Vice-Dean: Research, Faculty of Education)**



Eschewing popular media views that education is 'in crisis', I ask instead what kind of research would be able to bring the complexity of our current educational experiences into fuller view. My ethnographic work in a number of township schools sites in Cape Town shows that where governmental policy interacts with impoverished material conditions reform is tenuous, complex and largely ineffectual. Governmental policy in townships takes on an unintended and unanticipated life, worked over by the survivalist circumstances of the township. Policies are 'recreated' or 'reworked' beyond normative recognition.

As education academics we have to invest in finding alternative languages of descriptions for education-community-citizenship connections, which is constituted by a type of global-localist or 'glocalist' imaginaries at work, establishing diverse and heterodox publics. Calling these languages into being is the job of serious, courageous and imaginative academic work, and could be applied to the study of leadership, governance, teacher identities, professional practices, curriculum and pedagogy, language and literacies, student learning, teacher education, adult literacy, worker education, and institutional cultures.

At the level of the emerging institutional landscape, we have to develop a better grip on what Bernstein calls the emergence of a 'totally pedagogised society' and the 'pedagogisation of

everyday/everynight life'. We have, for example, seen struggles around the differentiation and de-differentiation of educational institutions, which have problematised or enlarged our definitions of what we might see as educational institutions and their attendant curriculum and pedagogical practices (Young, 2008). In reaching for the so-called knowledge society and knowledge economy, learning is everywhere and directed through policies, both direct and indirect, around institutional forms, curriculum and pedagogies.

Research into the variegated institutional forms would allow us to come to grips with where and how education now works, for which purposes, to which ends and to better understand and establish joined-up connections between education, economy and society. Such research might require a strong *research for policy orientation* which would help to answer questions or generate policy options that are more directly related to optimising institutional differentiation and responsiveness. It is in such a context that education research, both the 'research for' and the 'research of' type, has to respond to developing understandings of our changing education landscape.

We have to research the impact of political and policy authority that now works at multiple scales, including national and provincial levels, but also regionally and globally. Here the nation state remains important in policy terms, but it works in different ways. Processes of governmental values allocation have changed as the state has become

restructured under new public management and privatisations of various kinds.

The state now steers education institutional behaviour through target setting, performance indicators and performance management. We have also seen the emergence of new forms of educational accountability often linked to testing in schooling systems as part of what has been called the ‘audit culture’. Policy as numbers has been a related development (see Lingard, 2013).

Policy convergence has occurred at the level of global meta-discourses, though not so much in the specificities of policy enactment in different nations or even into systems and schools. What is important to consider is how this convergence works into the political body *politik* and into our policy discourses. Crucially, the challenge is to locate the analysis of policy and practice at the localising intersection, what has been called the vernacularisation of these global discourses, which refers to the ways the global meta-discourses or hyper-narratives meet the specific cultural, political, structural and historical backdrop of given nations and local systems and thus manifest in context-specific ways (Lingard, 2013).

We would then get to see how public policies and those in education framed at one level by concerns about equity, efficiency, security, liberty and community are reworked and vernacularised in local policy-making processes. These processes involve local, interest-bearing policy actors in diverse institutional sites. It is thus at the level of policy implementation or enactment where the symbolic, the discursive, the material, and subjective dynamics of locales provide the articulating terrain for policy meanings.

### **Towards an account of the Human(ities) in education**

This analytical task requires new analytical tools that enable the researcher or analyst to ‘see’ the myriad of complex and contested co-constituting policy processes and meanings. A recent book,

*Education Policy and Contemporary Theory* (edited by Gulson, Clarke and Petersen, Routledge, June 2015) on education policy and contemporary theory focuses on how a range of social theories could be applied to these new problematics. It offers theorists such as Bourdieu, De Leuze and Guattari, Derrida, Foucault, and Lefebvre; and different types of theoretical perspectives such as actor network theory, assemblage theory, feminist genealogy, the material turn, and the mobilities paradigm. My appreciation of this book lies in its privileging the interaction between the contemporary manifestations of educational complexity, the emergence of newer knowledge problematics and application of fecund theoretics that would inform the analytical task.

My own work is an example of such an approach. I have used the notions ‘trialectics of space’ and ‘the spatialisation of learning’ as theoretical lenses to catch some understanding of the lived dimensions of education in impoverished urban contexts. However, an enormous gap in these accounts, useful as they are, is the failure of theoretical indigenisation, operating as they do on a type of blindness to the theoretical generativity of southern and post-colonial, in our case African, epistemological universes.

As Connell explains in his book *Southern Theory* (2007), these analytical categories are built on Western / Eurocentric conceptual structures worked out in the empirical contexts of the West. We tend to apply these categories without question, instantiating a limiting set of frames onto what are very diverse publics. The implicit and explicit application of class as an analytical category in South African education is an example of where we miss, almost entirely, local frames that co-construct what is analytically knowable.

We should be searching for theoretical frames that are able to pluralise our social understandings, in an attempt to build out, or ‘catch’ the realities of our complex educational worlds, of bringing in from the margins, via our robust theoretical

languages, the complexity of the human or the 'human in the educational'. In this light, my just published book, *Engaging Educational Subjectivities across Post-Apartheid Urban Spaces* (2015, Sun Media, Stellenbosch), focusing on educational subjectivity in urban spaces, starts from the view that the sociology of South African education lacks a rigorous account of the educational subject. I therefore asked the following framing questions: Who are the teachers, students and managers in our schools, universities and colleges? What worlds do they come from? How are they positioned to encounter and engage in the process of education? And how do educational policy and institutions engage with the complex subjects that now come through their gates?

I suggest in the book that responding to these questions requires thinking at the limits of our epistemological frames and our methodological orientations. This is a moment of complex and engaged theorising and responsive methodological orientations that are able to comprehend the complexity and elusiveness of the education subject. As my research on young school going people show, the educational subject is on the move and on the make, across the city in search of educational provenance, with their myriad of languages and literacies. The cultural, curricular and pedagogical registers of their receiving schools, colleges and universities are largely out of sync with, or unable to fully recognise, the complex educational identifications that they are now making while working out their aspirant educational trajectories.

It is my contention that the priorities for research and postgraduate teaching in the field of education policy in South Africa today must contribute to changing the terms of the debate about education in our body *politik*, in policy outfits, institutional governance structures, our curriculum offerings and pedagogical orientations.

The commitment to disciplinarity and specialisation is extremely important. I entirely

oppose epistemological constructivism, which leaves us without a generative picture of the verticality of education. Bringing knowledge back in as the *sine qua non* of education is entirely the correct position to take. I am, via my scholarship, committed to what I would describe as sociological analysis that pluralises our understandings of our educational publics, a kind of sociological contextualism or perspectivism that expands the boundaries of our educational knowing, and sets up a more inclusive conversation about the human in education. I would, however, challenge, gently, the overly cognitivist assumptions that embed our knowledge commitments. 'I would caution about placing an 'agency-less' conception of teachers, students and educational workers as central to our educational endeavours.

Anxiety over getting side tracked by varieties of knowledge constructivism should not tilt us too far to the other side, so that there is little to no place for the ethical, the political, the redemptive, and the social transformative. In other words, I am conceptually and pragmatically committed to a robust and inclusive version of social justice, what I have labeled pedagogical justice, which places knowledge redistribution and specialization at the centre in full recognition of the deep and complex, even unknowable worth, of the educational subject. I challenge my students to develop a type of conceptual literacy to work across boundaries in order to engage with the full complexity of the education subject, draw generative knowledge distinctions, and employ languages that are able to accord educational actors, students, teachers, adult learners, principals, and managers full agency in their engagement with their educational becoming in these complex times.

### References:

- Fataar, A. 2015. *Engaging schooling subjectivities across post-apartheid urban spaces*. Sun Media: Stellenbosch.
- Gulson, K, M Clarke and E Petersen. 2015. *Education policy and contemporary theory. Implications for Research*. Routledge, London.

Lingard, B. 2014. *Politics, policies and pedagogies in education: The selected works of Bob Lingard*. Routledge, London.

Young, M. 2008. *Bringing knowledge back. In From social constructivism to social realism in the sociology of education*. Routledge, London

