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Academic agency and hope: *beyond COVID-19*

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Learning and Teaching Enhancement Seminar

23 September 2020

Higher education in a time of

This is the time of GIS, GPS, Google Earth, and Yahoo! Maps. I can navigate around this globe.

Educators, help me to understand how I fit & to build skills so I can contribute & thrive in this rapidly changing world.

<http://www.digitaleducation.org>



WHERE IS GOD

7 BILLION AND COUNTING



The COVID-19 "moment"



I SEE HUMANS

BUT NO HUMANITY

So, what is agency?

Agency is...what it is to be human (Bandura, 2001)

Intentionality, self-reactiveness, self-reflectiveness

Multifaceted self-directedness, linking thought to action

If people do not believe they might achieve intended outcomes and prevent potentially harmful ones, they have little reason to pursue such outcomes

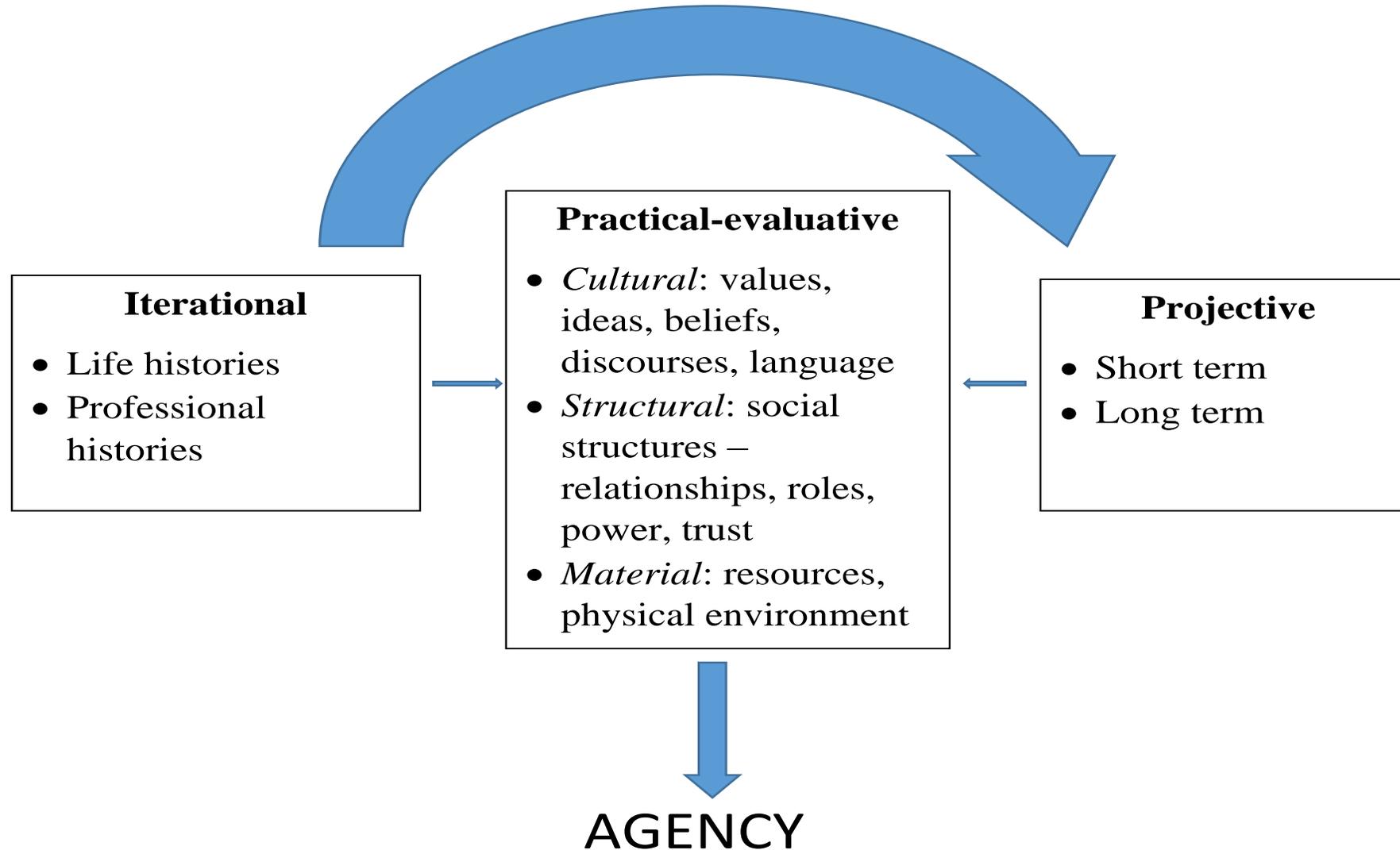
Shaping appropriate courses of action through efficacy beliefs



An ecological notion of agency

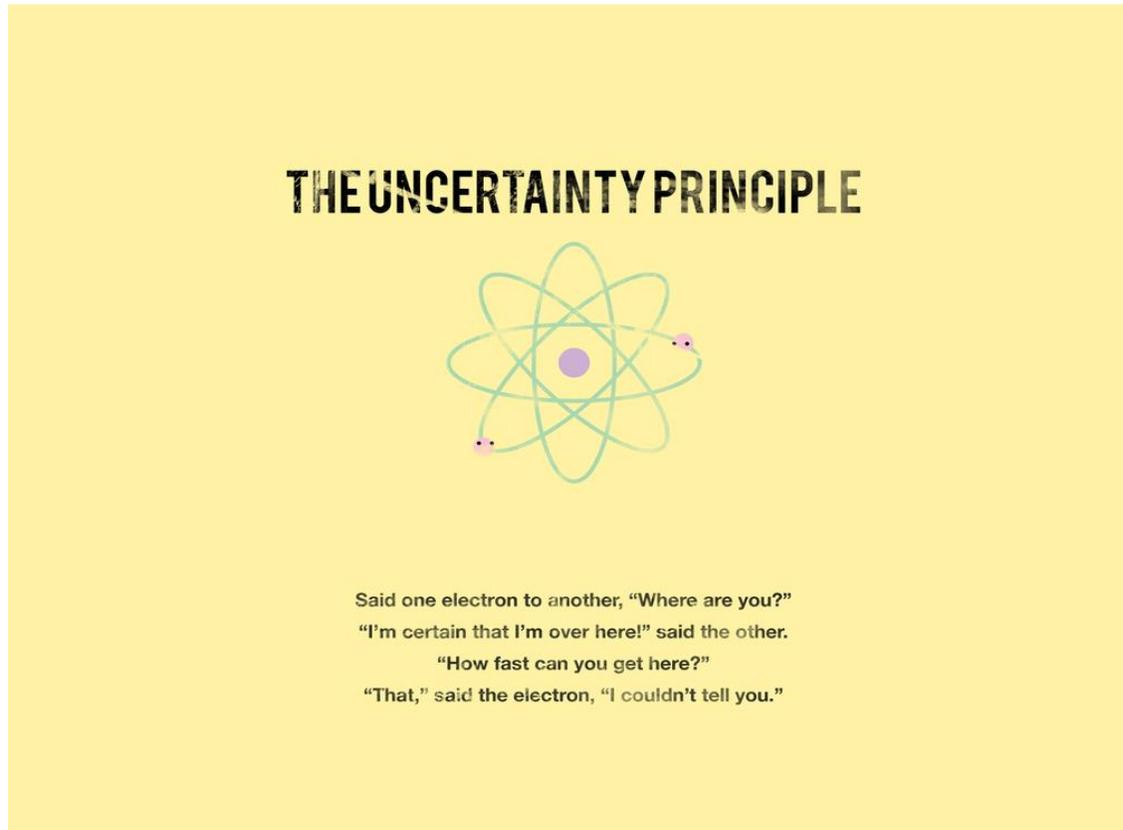
- not something people *have*, but something they *do* (Priestley et al. 2015).
- “an emergent phenomenon” of the ecological conditions through which it is enacted’ (Priestley et al. 2015)
- the capacity to critically shape responses to challenging situations (Biesta, 2006)
- an individual and collective commitment to action
- a quality of the engagement of actors, not of the actors themselves

A chordal triad: a heuristic for agentic orientations



(Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Priestley et al. 2013)

And hope



Once you have glimpsed the world as it might be, as it ought to be, as it's going to be ... it is impossible to live compliant and complacent anymore in the world as it is... And so you come out and walk out and march, the way a flower comes out and blooms, because it has no other calling. It has no other work (Victoria Safford)

Reflections on hope

“Hope locates itself in the premises that we don’t know what will happen and that in the spaciousness of uncertainty is room to act. When you recognise uncertainty, you recognise that you may be able to influence the outcomes – you alone or you in concert with a few dozen or several million others. Hope is an embrace of the *unknown* and the *unknowable*” (Solnit 2016).

Hope lies in realising that we are not just onlookers,
but “agents of experiences” (Bandura, 2001).

A pedagogy of hope (Paulo Freire)

- We carry with us the memory of many fabrics (iterational orientation)
- Hope is an ontological dimension of our human condition and a necessary impetus
- The reading of the *word* is always preceded by a reading of the *world*
- Teaching and learning are moments in a larger process of (re)cognising
- A pedagogy of hope (re)cognises knowledge of the living experience (practical-evaluative dimension)

Learning & teaching through a pedagogy of hope

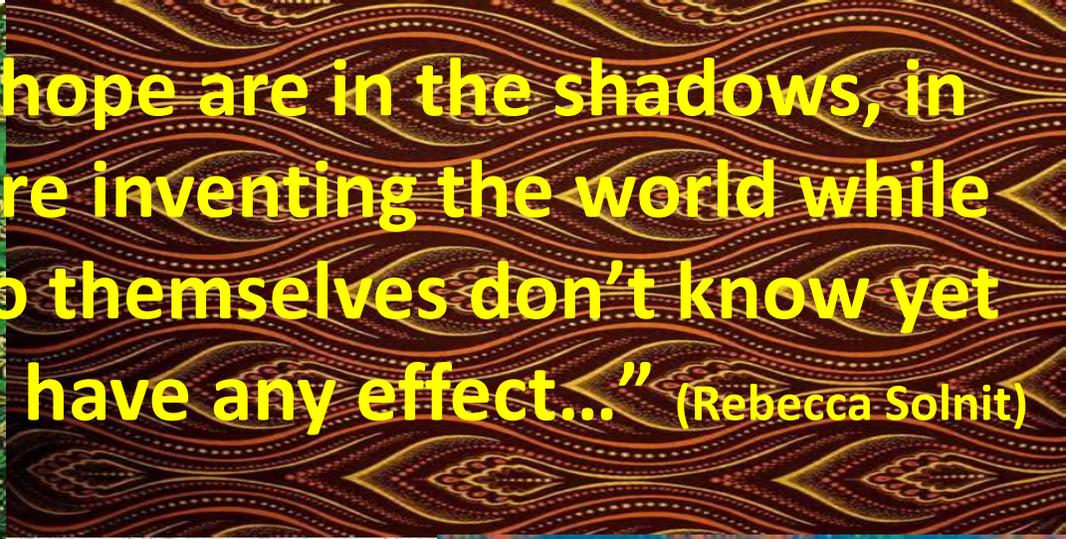
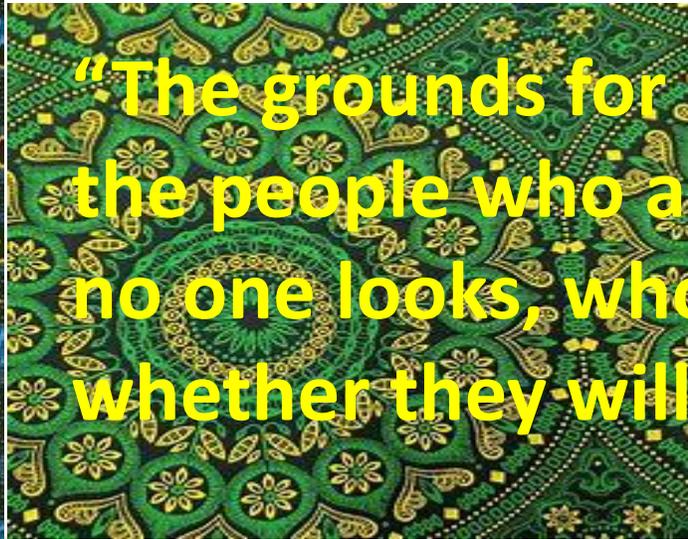
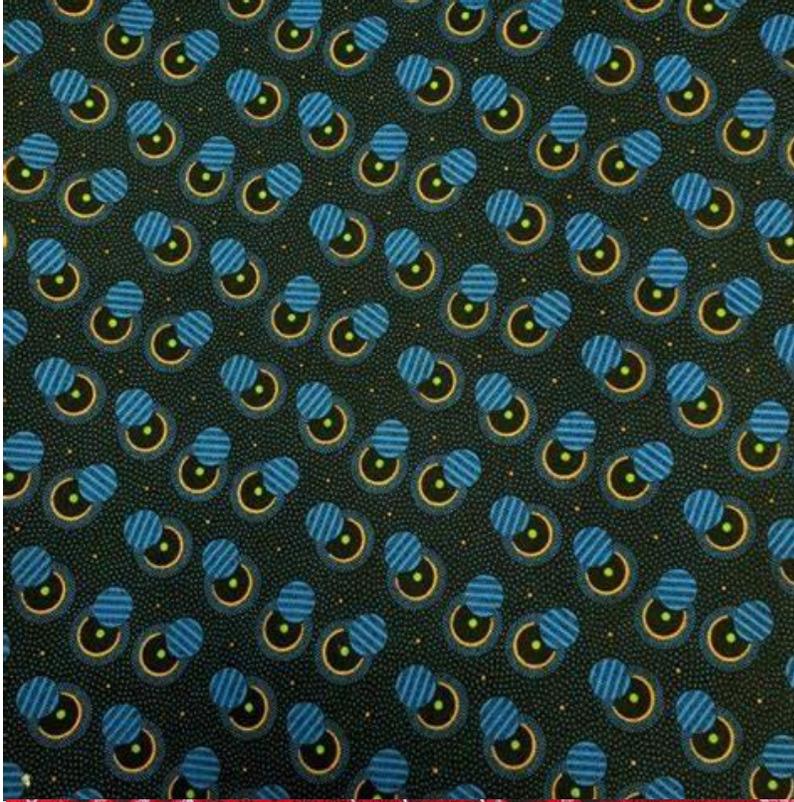
- To teach is to create possibilities for knowledge
- It requires an awareness of our unfinishedness in relation to identity and being human
- Hope is “radical” – *things might get worse yet we might intervene to improve them*
- Cultivate an awareness of our conditioning

Emergence-ncy RTLA: beyond COVID-19

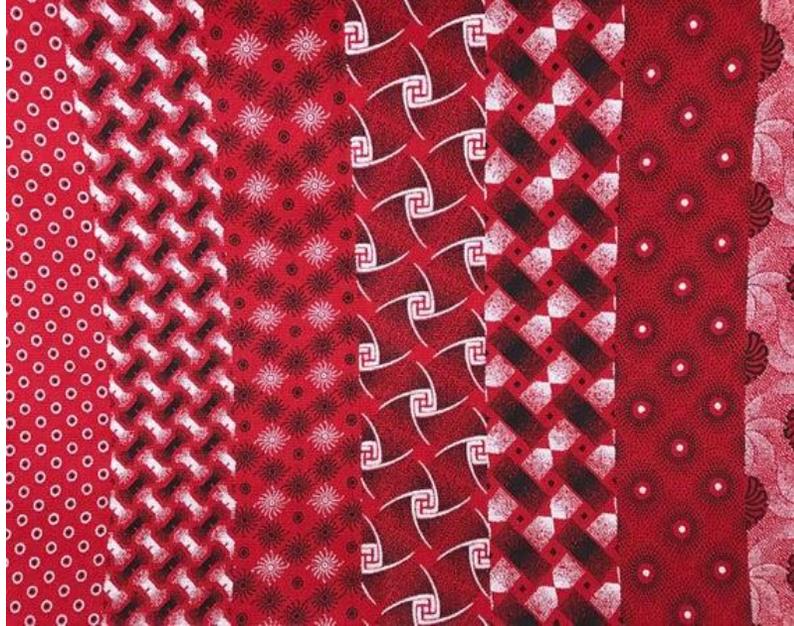
- The struggle for improvement cannot exist apart from hope and dream
- Hope is not enough – it demands anchoring in practice to become concrete. Just to hope is to hope in vain (Freire, 2014)
- Generate hope through connections between the current and desired state (Snyder 1994)
 - *Pathways thinking*: identifying ways towards a desired future state (projective orientation)
 - *Agency thinking*: belief that this state can be achieved

Thriving, transformative, flourishing

- Make hope concrete through action and agency: “to be an agent is to intentionally make things happen by one’s actions” (Bandura 2001)
- Create favourable conditions
- Reflect on how we and others read the *world* and the *word*
- What do we bring into the room and who gets to sit at the table?
- Be present with what others bring into the room
- What does it mean to be human in this space?



“The grounds for hope are in the shadows, in the people who are inventing the world while no one looks, who themselves don’t know yet whether they will have any effect...” (Rebecca Solnit)





Thank you | Dankie | Enkosi