Editorial

Editorial Committee

The thread running through the articles in this edition is that of policy change and knowledge systems lying beneath or alongside change issues. What kind of change is most appropriate is not unproblematic, even though we are generally clear what it is we wish to move away from. Most significantly, this assembly of articles provides theoretically interesting and important practical insights into the difficulties of achieving change.

Philip Higgs is thought provoking and controversial. His project is the quest for a philosophical framework that respects diversity, acknowledges lived experience, and challenges the hegemony of Western forms of universal knowledge. In looking for empowering knowledge that will enable communities in South Africa to participate in their own educational development, Higgs argues for African philosophy and indigenous African knowledge systems. In obvious ways the argument attempts to turn the past on its head. The concern for social transformation also carries with it the search for a new philosophical successor for fundamental pedagogics which in apartheid times dominated a range of competing discourses and served as the handmaiden of CNE. In another sense, however, the argument has some continuity with the past. It invests social groups with an essential and authentic identity. In the case of African identity, Higgs argues for the recovery of communalism, ubuntu, and humanism.

Our gratitude to Philip Higgs for his contribution is augmented by his permission for a response to appear in this same edition of the journal. This follows a number of precedents which were well received: *Journal of Education* 23 featured both Jonathan Jansen's article on the 'Grove' controversy, and a response from Helen Maree and Elizabeth Lowenherz; and more recently, No. 28 carried in the same issue a response from Laurence Piper to Penny Enslin and Veerle Dietliens' argument against participatory democracy in school governance. In both cases, in the interests of a readily accessible debate for readers, authors of the original submissions permitted responses in the same edition. This is a practice we hope to see continued.

Working also within a philosophical framework, Ben Parker commends the Higgs argument for bringing an interesting repertoire of literature to the fore, and for the laudable aims the project embodies. However, he suggests that the case made by Higgs is a little simpler than reality. In particular, the quest for recapturing essential identity and realising a specific form of philosophy is located within tensions such as: unity and diversity; individual and community; scientific knowledge and everyday knowledge. While there are power relations within discourses, Higgs' discourse is disembodied from particular contexts and their histories. How do the concepts it supports differ from similar concepts and practices upheld in other traditions? In addition, Parker offers a reinterpreted, historically nuanced account of African philosophies, which, it is suggested, were also influenced by other traditions. Parker stresses the importance of contextual understanding. Since philosophy, like other disciplines, is on the back foot in teacher education, it is unlikely that an Africana philosophy of education has a context in which to develop either as a discourse or as a community.

In their different ways, both Higgs and Parker make valuable contributions to our understanding of a key topical issue.

Also within a philosophical framework, Jane Skinner is concerned that 'cognitive science' (dealing with the individual) and economics (dealing with social collectives) are moving into the realm of hard science and prediction. As a result, social policy, including education policy, readily becomes the province of 'expert' scientists and economists in a way that undermines the South African social project. Skinner's account reminds us of relevant insights from a bygone period, most notably captured in Smuts' attribution of the failure of nineteenth century science to "fixed dogma that there could be no more in the effect than there was in the cause". Gently written but powerfully argued, Skinner illuminates the limitations of policy rooted in the linear logic of a particular version of economic and social thinking.

An issue that has emerged strongly in recent research is that of the identity dilemma faced by teachers if changed practice is to be achieved (for example, see Jansen, 2001)[1]. In this edition, Jeanne Prinsloo analyses discursive practices of the past matriculation language syllabuses of the 1970s and 80s, showing how learners within racially-based education departments were variously constituted as the globally elite subject, the nationalist subject, and

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[1] Jansen, J. 2001. 'Image-ining teachers: policy images and teacher identity in South Africa classrooms', *South African Journal of Education,* 21(4): pp.242-246.

the deficient learner. Prinsloo reminds us what it is that transformation hopes to lead us away from, and with reference to Foucault, of the extent to which the present holds within it the past. She argues that it is necessary for attempts at educational transformation to be mindful of how these discursive practices were effected, of the kinds of subjects and practices that were normalised, and of their resilience. While valuable in its own right, Prinsloo's article also begs further research questions: for instance, if education is 'relatively autonomous' (e.g., Hargreaves, 1980)[2] how is it that the political project comes to be so explicitly mirrored in syllabuses? Is there a link here with the dominant linearity of the 'hard science' type of thinking Skinner warns against?

Rob Moore takes the issue of identity to the pedagogic domain and its social base. Drawing on Bernstein, Moore draws attention to differing identity constructions inherent in curriculum policy. South African higher education policy aimed at 'programatization', involving the weakening of boundaries between subjects, implies a shift from a 'retrospective' to a 'prospective' orientation. Against this background, Moore offers a case study of one programme developed in line with policy reform. Its impulse was not, however, an extrinsic principle from outside the academy. Rather, policy opened a space for an enthusiast of interdisciplinarity to convene such a programme. The study explores the identity projections revealed by academics participating in the programme, and assesses the limited extent to which a sustainable social form was emerging. The case study leads to some interesting observations on Bernstein's concept of therapeutic identity. And yet again, readers have cause to recollect Skinner's earlier article on why policy can't be implemented.

Staying with higher education, Muller sketches a broader canvas revealing submerged, contradictory impulses behind policy: equity and access on the one hand, and innovation and economic development on the other. In viewing the contradictory logics of equalisation and differentiation to which higher education institutions must answer, Muller discusses two dimensions of institutionality: organisation and management, and knowledge. His emphasis is on the latter, particularly with respect to the degree to which research profiles have changed from basic to applied research. Although the overall picture is (unsurprisingly) neither direct nor simple, rhetorical accommodation to interdisciplinary curricula is evident. In Muller's nice turn of phrase, institutions are "clothing their usual research practice in the lineaments of the

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[2]   Hargreaves, A. 1980. Synthesis and the study of strategies: a project for the sociological imagination. In Woods, P. (Ed). *Pupil strategies*. London: Croom Helm.

new relevance." This is because knowledge systems have a durability born of their own logic. For policy makers, the important message is that the responsive capacity of institutions should not be underestimated.

The final article links interestingly with the central point made by Muller. The issue is still institutional responsivity to policy, and the effect the same: a gap between policy intention and realisation. However, in this case the institution is not higher education, but the *state* itself, responding here to internationally-inspired education development targets. The article itself, appropriately, emerged as the outcome of deliberations which took place between DFID's four education advisers based in East Africa in 2001 and 2002. Michael Ward, Jo Bourne, Alan Penny and Mark Poston ask whether the countries of East Africa base their education agenda on very different values, processes and priorities to those understood by their funding agency partners. Their analysis of policy failure draws on Chabal and Daloz's (1999) theory on the political instrumentalisation of disorder[3]. Instead of adopting the conventional perspective of the *failure* of African states to achieve good governance contributing to meeting education targets, this explanation turns the question around by asking: What do elites in African states achieve by disorder? The answer is that the informalization of politics, and, ultimately, use of *disorder as a political instrument,* serve to profit the vertical links between patrons and clients within the political and social system. The argument is as disquieting as it is powerful. Amongst the many questions it leads might be one linked to the first article in this edition: What happens to 'authentic' African identity in the modern state?

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[3]   Chabal, P. and Daloz, J.P. 1999. *Africa works: disorder as political instrument.* Oxford and Indiana: James Currey and Indiana University Press.