
Editorial

Editorial Committee

Articles in this edition raise critical issues lying at the heart of knowledge and pedagogy in relation to context, culture and the state. While the context is (South) African, the issues have a far wider theoretical interest.

Our first two articles address issues that in different ways are central to the well-being and transformation of education in South Africa: HIV/AIDS, and social justice.

As the research enterprise gains momentum in South Africa it is perhaps inevitable that empirical, localised case studies will predominate, and that there will be a time lag before broader reviews and overviews become available. Baxen and Breidlid offer a welcome and timely overview of research into HIV/AIDS and education, arguing strongly for a careful interrogation of the dominant discourses underlying HIV/AIDS research within the education sector through due acknowledgement of the social and cultural embeddedness of the pandemic. The authors develop a rigorous critique of various research orientations over the past ten years, and systematically identify gaps in current research. A critical argument the authors make is that although these studies have relevance, they neglect to provide an understanding of the situated context in which knowledge, attitudes, practices and interventions are produced and reproduced. Many of these studies make questionable assumptions about the individual and context, and fail to take into consideration the discursive nature of perceptions and practices regarding the HIV/AIDS pandemic, in particular in schools. Apart from its important implications for intervention practices, Baxen and Breidlid's coherent argument identifies gaps in current research and provides direction for future research.

Pendlebury and Enslin provide a timely review of South Africa's progress towards the achievement of social justice in and through education. Especially useful to the research community is their broad framework, based on the philosophical underpinnings of social justice, for examining the extent to which both society generally, and education more specifically, are or are not achieving social justice. The strengths of the article lie not in empirical research, but in its ability to construct a consistent and thorough structure for

understanding social justice. It works not from the specifics of oppression outwards, but from the philosophical framework inwards, using specific accounts as examples that test the application of principles arrived at. A particular merit of the paper is that it avoids underestimating the number of obstacles to social justice by viewing them with a too narrow focus. Its use of the word 'exclusion', for example, does not get caught in the trap of seeing inclusion or exclusion solely as aspects of institutional life – the broader societal issues by which people are subject to exclusion are fully recognised. Political and educational inclusion are inextricably interwoven. In a specific case, the nature of exclusion may thus be fairly complex.

We move next to the political relationship between the state and higher education. Globally, the impact of changing social, economic and knowledge contexts upon educational systems has caused a move away from the traditional model of autonomous professionalism in which curriculum was the business of teachers. Governments everywhere have sought to ensure that the outcomes of learning and standards of achievement are explicitly the business of the state (Day and Sachs, 2004). The South African government has been no exception. As Jansen (2004) has shown, recent history of higher education has been one of changing meanings with respect to institutional autonomy and accountability, with the latter being strongly asserted by the emergent post-apartheid state. In our third article, Shalem, Allais and Steinberg criticise current 'outcomes based' approaches to assessment as experienced by the researchers themselves in a recent real life situation. Their proposed course was evaluated by the ETDQA (the quality assurance division of the Education, Training and Development Practitioners Sectoral Education and Training Authority). Evaluators of their programme clearly saw their role in terms of clear steps in a linear, technical/bureaucratic process. The difficulty identified by the authors lay in the gap between two discourses: the discourse of disciplinary knowledge on the one hand, and the discourse of specification of outcomes on the other. They defend the integrity of discipline-specific knowledge, arguing persuasively that decisions about academic quality cannot take place through a process that condenses knowledge into outcomes. In arguing for practitioners themselves being entrusted with responsibility for the quality of their service, Shalem et. al. open up important lines of debate with the potential to impact positively on policy and practice. By implication they also open up fundamental questions about the simplistic linear view of causality inherent in the application of an outcome-based system. Although the case is local, the underlying issue is not. At stake is exactly the same tension John Elliott identifies in 'standards-driven educational reform' in the

United Kingdom. In Elliott's view, policy makers view the learning environment as:

a closed and linear system governed by laws of cause and effect. Such a system leaves little space for the 'personal', for the cultivation of the individual learner as a unique centre of consciousness with a distinctive point of view, endowed with particular talents and abilities, and possessing particular characteristics (2004, p.284).

Staying within higher education, we move next to a study of students' research learning. In his very successful *A sociology of educating* text, with editions spanning almost two decades, Meighan has consistently included a perspective on pupils/students as clients, noting that their views and realities are seldom represented in the literature. With learner-centredness being one of the underpinning principles of curriculum policy in South Africa, the dearth of views and perspectives of learners is even more surprising. In our third article, Jansen, Herman and Pillay bring students into the research gaze in an innovative and refreshing study that tracks students' research learning in a PhD programme. Academics with supervisory experience will identify readily with some of the problems, such as candidates approaching research problems with a 'missionary-like' purpose. However, the contribution of this study lies in the categories of analysis that emerge. One of the significant changes was that in seeking to make a difference to the world, the relentless focus on having to formulate and reformulate their research questions ultimately left students with the realization that change and growth had occurred instead at a personal level.

As in the Shalem *et al.* article, here we have another study that points out the limitations of recipe-type knowledge grounded in linear assumptions about causation. In this exploratory study, Jansen and his colleagues thus open up an important and fruitful line of inquiry. An obvious further step would be to track student growth from the proposal development stage through to project completion.

In different ways, our final three articles deal with the issue of knowledge. With disciplinarity in teacher education seemingly on the retreat (e.g. see Harley and Wedekind, 2003; Parker, 2003), Hugo provides a rich theoretical argument that draws on Plato and Bernstein. In a strikingly original juxtaposition, he develops a theory of pedagogic hierarchy that both Plato and Bernstein could reasonably be regarded as ascribing to. From Plato, we follow two different vertical paths. One is for the heart, the other for the mind, but both entail a similar shift from the physical to the abstract. For Plato,

structured guidance up the Ladder of Beauty is what pedagogy is in its essence. The ladder increases in both depth and breadth as it expands upwards and inwards. Following the Cave metaphor, it is argued that the challenge for pedagogy is to turn the learner around to look into what is causing the display. In this way the learner transfers from the instability and momentariness of immediate context towards the more stable force lying behind the production. Hugo's interpretation of Plato is interestingly infused with Bernsteinian terminology, such as in: "The first thing a prisoner sees who is set free from dependence on one classifying device is a higher ordering device that regulates its lower field." From here there is an easy movement to Bernstein's pedagogic device and images of ways to free ourselves from the grip of context-bound understanding in a way that enables movement from the profane to the sacred. Bernstein's distinctive contribution is locating the process within the power and control relationships in which the terrain is embedded.

Although Hugo does not address South African curriculum policy, his position has an interesting resonance with arguments pointing out the shortcomings of policy rooted in strong pedagogy, but weak epistemology (e.g. see Review Committee, 2000; Muller, 2000; Taylor, 2001). However, the distinctive appeal of Hugo's contribution lies in its promise of transformation beyond the cognitive domain. Knowledge, truth, goodness and beauty are all at stake in the journey we undertake.

Our final two articles contributed by Waghid and Le Grange arise from a debate in *Journal of Education* 30. In that issue, Higgs' (2003) quest for a philosophical framework that respects diversity and challenges the hegemony of Western forms of universal knowledge leads to his argument that African philosophy as a system of African knowledge/s can enable communities in South Africa to participate in their own educational development. Higgs argues for the recovery of communalism, ubuntu, and humanism. In the same issue, Parker responds by arguing that Higgs' discourse is disembodied from particular contexts and their histories. Parker himself presents Africana philosophy as a coherent sub-set development within the broad field of African philosophy: it is an umbrella term that covers a range of approaches, at least some of which are explicitly opposed in their orientations. Notwithstanding this apparent difference, Waghid maintains that the Higgs and Parker arguments are in fact closer together than appears to be the case. In particular, he sees Parker's (2003) call for Africana philosophy of education as a kind of activism which could cultivate critical, argumentative reason and

fragility and trust among vulnerable (African) communities as being commensurate with Higgs's notion of an African philosophy of education which has the potential to liberate disempowered communities through critical reasoning and humaneness (*ubuntu*). Waghid argues that since the African continent is central to philosophy (and philosophy of education), the African-Africana philosophy of education distinction is a somewhat misdirected debate. By implication, Waghid prefers the concept of an African-Africana philosophy of education because these two concepts are theoretically intertwined. From this position, he explores the nature of deliberative inquiry with a view to informing ways of shaping university teaching in South Africa.

In our final article, Le Grange identifies gaps in both Higgs's and Parker's arguments, and strives for a more nuanced reading of African(a) philosophy. However, he contends that Parker's categorisation of analytic discourses versus the (neo) Fundamental Pedagogics discourses is cruder than that of Higgs. In this sense, Le Grange suggests that Parker is culpable of precisely that for which he critiques Higgs. Parker's notion of Africana philosophy is said to be nothing more than an extension of the universalist position in African philosophy. Le Grange's main project, nevertheless, is to explore the potential of African(a) philosophy as deconstructive force. Possibly still mindful of the hegemonic status of Fundamental Pedagogics in our recent past, Le Grange argues that hope for education in (South) Africa depends on recounting visions of Africa's history and reconstructing it to the present. He urges the displacement of dominant discourses, including those evident in South African policy documents such as the Norms and Standards for Educators.

As an Editorial Committee, we do not believe that the Higgs/Parker debate has run its course. Contentious and unresolved issues – such as the nature of the relationship between African and Africana philosophy – remain. Because of space constraints and our policy of representing a broad research agenda, and because of the risk of one particular debate dominating the Journal,¹ we encourage further comment on the Higgs/Parker 'indigenous' knowledges debate in the form of 'discussion notes' (as outlined in Notes for Contributors) rather than full articles.

¹ Although not addressing the Higgs/Parker debate as their main thrust, one notes that in recent issues the journal has also published articles by Moodie (2003) and Horsthemke (2004) on the theme of western/indigenous knowledges.

At the same time, it is timely to outline editorial policy with respect to ‘right of reply’ in response to critiques published in *Journal of Education*. It is perhaps trite to observe that tightly-focused critique of the work of an individual, or a constituted body, is an inherent and inevitable feature of the research terrain. The Editorial Committee has no doubt that well argued critique should be published if it passes the scrutiny of peer review. More contentious is the issue of ‘right of reply’ in a way that is fair to both the critiquing and replying author. Earlier issues of *Journal of Education* published critique and response alongside each other in the same issue. Readers generally appeared to approve of this practice because of its immediacy and convenience, and the practice was feasible when there were relatively long intervals between successive issues of the journal. However, in the light of commitment to publish at least four issues of the journal per year, coupling critique and response would entail either (a) delaying publication of the critique until a suitable response had been negotiated and peer reviewed, or (b) taking short cuts with the peer review process in order to publish both articles concurrently and timeously. Neither option would be acceptable. We have to add that, for the Editorial Committee, a prior difficulty with arranging a response to critique is deciding when such a practice should justifiably be invoked. For example, should automatic ‘right of reply’ be extended to statutory bodies as well as to individual theorists whose work is of sufficient weight to warrant serious enquiry?² The Editorial Committee has consequently resolved not to initiate responses to published critiques, but to leave the matter of response to the judgement of our readership and to the views of submitting authors.

Once again, we are indebted to the public-spirited anonymous referees without whose kind services this journal could not begin to function.

² Critique arising from the Shalem *et al.* article in this issue is a case in point in this issue. Should automatic ‘right of reply’ have been extended to the ETDQA? Or to Parker in the light of Le Grange’s article?

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