
Editorial

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Joy Papier's article raises key issues for us to consider as education academics and teacher 'trainers' working in a context of post apartheid educational reform. Three different universities are opened out to our eyes, each with radically different teaching and learning routines. These range from a humanist tradition of intense encounters with the self to a more activist tradition of becoming an agent of change to a managerialist pragmatism taking some kind of middle road. What becomes clear as the article progresses is that there are radically different programmes in place within education faculties across South Africa and that these can vary merely by the changing of lecturers. The question is whether such freedom is desirable? Should there not be some kind of standardization of what knowledge forms and practices are necessary and fundamental to training teachers, and then some kind of insistence that these occur across our education faculties? Can we leave such a key resource to our nations future that is already so clearly dysfunctional in the hands of arbitrary lecturers and their own idiosyncratic ideas or that of their institutions? This question has become even more pressing with the closure of education colleges. University faculties of education have partly become service providers to the government, training up thousands of teachers as a major part of their workload. Philosophers of education suddenly find themselves working day and night not on the deep questions of education but on training up students in what an outcome is and how to reach it. It is one thing to spend months on Plato's Cave trying to elaborate the structuring metaphor of Western Education, quite another to be in the cave training up students on the names of the shadows on the wall. What has become of us? Possibly this is the wrong way of looking at the issue. Another way would be to point to the increasing recognition in our educational faculties that we actually did not know what we were doing when working with education and that suddenly facing the task of inducting masses of students into the profession of teaching has forced us to square up to our own lack of focus on what education actually is and how it works. Certainly, judging from the papers presented at Kenton 2008 there is a burgeoning desire to hone in on what the actual practices of teaching and learning are, and long may this struggle continue.

Veerle Dieltiens critiques the Africanist argument that rural schools should have a rural curriculum. There is an element of truth to the Africanist call for relevance in our curriculum, but it is wrapped up in so many epistemological and pedagogic mistakes that it is necessary, every now and then, to explicitly demonstrate why this tradition is so misguided. Dieltiens does a superb job of setting up what the Africanist position is and then clearly and carefully strips it until left is an emperor with no clothes. We do need to move forward on this and need to work out how to draw specific lines that clearly demarcate what are local indigenous knowledge forms and how these intersect with more scientific knowledge forms. For example, with traditional medicines, a simple study would be to take all the indigenous medicines and isolate their chemical properties so that we can clearly state what their actual effects are and then take these 'medicines' and do clinical trials with them, along with placebo's and all the rigorous protocols needed to ensure neutrality. Studies like this already underway indicate that some traditional medicines do have some medical effect, but that this is erratic (Stafford 2008). The point here is that it is the scientific study that allows us some standing ground for working out what in the muti carries its effect chemically and this then helps us to work the separate but related field of cultural effects. It is also simply undeniable that modern forms of medicine are able to deal with an astonishing range of illness with ever more effectiveness. To not facilitate the ability of a learner to move from traditional knowledge forms into the world of modern knowledge forms would be the educational equivalent of giving muti to much of our population struggling with HIV/AIDS.

Renuka Vithal negotiates the charged border between the two opposed but complimentary spaces of local context and specialized mathematical knowledge. Using the concept of complementarity, taken from quantum physics, she works through the paradoxicality of mathematics both needing and obliterating context. Mathematics is a self referential system that bootstraps itself higher out of its own fundamental axioms. By definition it destroys contextual reference and works in a higher world of pure forms where links are non arbitrary and traceable to first definitions. But Mathematics also somehow contains within itself the operating principles of the world as we know it with applications that hold across that strange border between real and ideal. Yet we all know that mathematics is not the only language we have for the world, indeed there is a far more flexible and supple tool that catches paradox, metaphor, emotions, rambling thoughts within its cool web. And then beyond the language we speak are languages without words in our actions and our eyes. These worlds have existences so different

that it is difficult to imagine them together at the same time. The point is that they do exist at the same time and we need some way of holding these together. Vithal points to ‘complimentarity’ as being one key way of thinking through the combination of necessary but contradictory spaces.

Joanne Hardman’s article provides a useful counterpoint to that of Renuka Vithal’s. As useful as the notion of complimentarity is, it is a concept taken from quantum physics and applied to education. As valuable as these structuring concepts are, the problem is that they provide generic answers to highly specific educational problems. Enormous amounts of refining work must then be done to articulate the concept across knowledge forms and work out how to make it specifically apply to the details of pedagogic analysis. Certainly, Vithal’s paper points to the complexity of pedagogic activities in Mathematics, but with Hardman’s paper we begin to see what a detailed pedagogic tool looks like in its own terms. Rather than using a foundational conceptual metaphor (like complimentarity) she appropriates Activity Theory to develop a model for pedagogic analysis. Activity theory certainly does enable us to grasp the dynamic complexity of human activity and this is a major component of what classroom interactions entail. As the model is unfolded and then demonstrated one gets a sense of what a detailed analysis of pedagogy would look like. After the demonstration, however, a number of questions remain. Firstly the huge shadow of Bernstein hangs over the analysis. Some of his work is clearly used to think through the shift from activity theory per se to pedagogic analysis in specifics, however this remains largely implicit. It is a question I do think we need to ask ourselves. Why do we continuously take tools and concepts from other disciplinary areas when we already have adequate tools within education. I do think our own tools need improvement, but we should at least start from them. How else are we going to get our own disciplinary boundaries strengthened? The move should be from Bernstein or Dowling to Activity Theory or Complimentarity, not the other way round.

Caroline Kerfoot’s analysis of an adult education initiative at the University of the Western Cape raises enormous issues. Adult education partly works with adults who have very little or no formal education. It therefore exists at the limit point of tertiary education where the academic boundary between what is specialized and what is localized is stretched to breaking point. As a result the pedagogic practices and knowledge structures of Adult Education also exist at the boundary limits of University practices. Much of it works with conversion experiences very similar to religious epiphany where many participants come

out of the courses remade completely from the inside out. Adult educators have a signature pedagogy based on developing a critical consciousness where participants become agents of change, carrying the message into the community through their actions and words. It's a strange combination, to come out of a course imprinted with the insisted on stamp in the soul of critical consciousness. Its effectiveness, however, is undeniable and it behooves us to be clear on exactly what is achieved. There is a definite impact on the locals and the communities who participate in these programmes. Insight is given into what the principles of development and change are through these courses. These principles have practical purchase that result in a range of initiatives from community projects to small businesses to participation in governmental structures. It empowers people to make a difference in their own communities, both by revealing to them what internal motivations are needed, how the external structures can be engaged with and what is locally at hand to make the differences count. At the core of this is a principled engagement with state and civic structures that enable the spread of participatory forms of democracy and empowerment. This is a vital project for the continued protection of growth of democracy within South Africa. The question that niggles at the back of the mind, however, is whether this falls within the ambit of University work. Kerfoot's paper provides the answer, and it is an affirming Yes, or so I would argue. At the heart of university work is specialization through principle rather than concrete immersion and the work of Adult Education holds by this. The students learn through the pedagogics of possibility not how to go from door to door with a memorized set of answers, but how to make a difference in their own lives and that of their communities through the application of principles of participatory development that are carefully theorized and laid open to both debate and revision. Kerfoot provides a subtle theorization of the work of Adult Education through Bourdieu's concepts of practice, field, capital and habitus that illuminates the field, unlocking how it is that the courses offered in this particular instance worked. More work and research in this very necessary part of our educational terrain is needed.

Articles on FET colleges in South Africa are hard to come by. It points to a massive gap in our educational research that has to be both carefully theorized and empirically investigated. Although Salim Akoojee and Simon McGrath do not fill this gap, they do provide a sustained discussion of the marketing strategies this sector is pursuing in the light of more international practices in Britain. The current pressure on educational institutions to brand themselves, then protect this brand and work on reputation management is something we

are all increasingly aware of. This takes on a logic of its own, often divorced from academic and intellectual logics of sharp debate and critique. Increasingly educational institutions interpret sharp intellectual engagement as 'bad' publicity. This partly stems from the increasing specialization occurring within educational institutions where management specialists are employed in management roles rather than co-opting academic staff. This means that marketing and communication discourses derived from for profit logics and driven by competition dominate the marketing strategies of educational institutions. Akoojee and McGrath point to ways this can be circumvented through integrated marketing techniques based on co-operation rather than competition. In the end they begin to show ways forward for marketing FET colleges that take seriously its educational mission within a developing context.

Carol Bertram presents a telling account of what the curriculum reform has done to both the subject structure and assessment of History. It is an abject tale of how good intentions result in terrible consequences. The emphasis of the National Curriculum Statements for History fell on students actively doing history in the way that Historians do History – interrogating sources. The problem is that the archive is very different to a classroom, a professional historian very different to a school kid, a history monograph very different to a textbook. Imitating what historians do at school level in no way guarantees developing historians or a sense of history. There are levels of induction, specialization, and professionalization that historians go through before they can bring their expert eye to bear on their primary and secondary sources. To imagine that kids at school can do the same thing and that this crass imitation will somehow result in history knowledge and skill reveals the limited understanding we have of how school knowledge, pedagogy and learners work, especially in a South African context where we have limited resources and limited skill at school level. Carol Bertram unveils the consequences of this activity based, doing history approach. Assessment tasks use sources that have most of the information already contained explicitly inside of them with kids expected to merely read these off and write them down. There is no interpretation and no insight, and how can there be when the content of history is not the major focus and hardly even required for a history test that has become an exercise in comprehension. And again, as Carol carefully delineates in this excellent article, the schools that do get this activity based approach mostly right are those middle class schools with highly skilled teachers working with learners who already have a history of pedagogic investment both from the school and the family.

