
Editorial

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Abstract

Utilitarianism has a proud intellectual history but has become a current swear word in educational circles critical of neo-liberal managerialism. It started with Leibniz's dream of a 'characteristica universalis' where rational men, faced with a moral problem, could get around a table and say 'let us calculate'. It is a dream that has refused to die, and, although often mocked, it is becoming a modern reality. Bentham initially chased it by trying to calculate what would make the most people happy most of the time, but got pleasure and happiness confused, Mill corrected him but forever afterwards, pleasure and utilitarianism went their different ways and now we face utilitarianism in our universities with no pleasure at all, or so Ntshoe would have it in the third article of this edition. I, for one, remain unconvinced with the use of Utilitarianism as a catch all bogey name for all that is wrong with modern forms that calculate and quantify productive living, and would prefer that we use utilitarian measures built over three centuries of debate, critique and defense as a robust tool to critique current formulations. On a broader level, when one is dealing with the messy question of what it means to provide a quality education for as many people as possible, Utilitarianism has a range of tools that help avoid already worked through pitfalls and dead-ends. We need to understand how Utilitarianism and Education intersect, rather than using it as an imaginary monster.

Underpinning the intersection of Education and Utilitarianism is a universal language of education, a project that currently has a number of curious forms. One of the strangest is the universal design of 'learning objects' producing teachable education content units with descriptors attached, making possible an 'ars combinatoria' where teachers and students can chart their way through the teachable universe, picking and choosing what they need from the web. Another is a universal analytical language that can recognise, delineate and operationalise educational structures in whatever space/time/content world they appear. Bernstein is the harbinger of this universal educational language, still in its infancy. Some are currently trying to work through Bernstein's combinatorial matrix and its elaborations and additions. A good example of this project is found in the first paper written by Whitty Green and Devika

Naidoo and can be most clearly seen in table 6 on p.26 where the pedagogic code of three schools are captured using universal codes drawn from Bernstein and Bloom. An experienced diagnostic eye will immediately pick up on the issues – only the school with ample resources has weak pacing in learning knowledge and weak framing of regulative relations between teacher and learner that emphasise a personal touch. The school with adequate resources and the school lacking resources both have more strongly framed pacing and more positional authority relations between teacher and learner. As revealing is the poorest school showing very weak framing of evaluation, with almost no clarity and explicit feedback given to the learners, with the other two schools showing strong framing of evaluation indicating that the teacher is explicitly providing both the criteria and feedback that make clear what it is learners should know and when they are successful in the endeavor. Absent from the poorest school is any attempt to work with processes of understanding and evaluation, rather the emphasis is on rote learning with a mimicking of application. It provides a DPA rather than a DNA code of schools, DPA standing for Diagnostic Pedagogic Analysis. With a universal analytical language of education we can begin to approach the question of what the best education for the most learners would look like, otherwise we continue to scrabble in contextual dark lands.

Bentham plays an interesting role in this project with his credo that the common end of every person's education is happiness. He was the original mind tasked with opening out the possibilities of an embryonic Utilitarianism to the world. He was also intimately involved in its attempted actualization. Part of this project involved the precise negative of bringing the most happiness to the most people. He also asked how to bring about the most discipline for the most people in need of it, developing plans for a panopticon prison he then spent most of his fortune trying to build. Here the issue was of obtaining power over the mind through mind as cheaply as possible. Foucault famously brought this out for us in his best seller text currently taught in French High Schools, *Discipline and punish*, and it is used by Dixon and Dornbrack to analyse school discipline in an ex model C post apartheid school. Most of the kids landing up in detention at this school were black boys, and this was not considered in anyway remarkable by the school. Dixon and Dornbrack open out for us the racialised and gendered workings of the disciplinary matrix in a post apartheid school.

As useful as Foucault is for analysing discipline, Kai Horsthemke certainly believes Foucault is not of much use when talking about 'truth', especially when the overused mantra 'truth is power' bleats itself in thousands of under-

graduated heads. Under Foucault's charming acolytes 'Indigenous Knowledge' springs forth equal to 'Scientific Knowledge' for the supposed reason that both are implicated in power relations. Horsthemke spends much of his paper disabusing us of the legitimacy of this move and its unfortunate consequences in education where constructivism and the social construction of knowledge degrade 'a fundamental education task – that of the transmission of knowledge' p.84. He points out that 'as a pedagogy and as a learning theory, constructivism is likely to be disturbingly disempowering' p.84. If any statement throws down the gauntlet to Ian Moll to write his book defending constructivism in South Africa, then this is it. Horsthemke plumps for Realism as a more viable epistemology for teaching and learning. The result is educative discourse that 'should consist only of statements of sincere belief that are true and suitably justified – other things being equal' p.92. This reminds me of the attempt of the logical positivists to stay true to their principles in the Vienna Circle meetings and only say things that were either logical or empirically justifiable. Carnap was appointed as the person to point out whenever a logical positivist stepped out of these confines of truth. When almost every statement got a raised hand of disqualification they eventually decided that Carnap should do the opposite and raise his hand whenever a statement complied with the rigours of truth (and his arm got lots of rest). If the best philosophers of logical positivism could not get it right one has to wonder about our teachers in the post apartheid classroom.

'Quality' education has taken over from 'good' education as a dominant descriptor working with development and reform, to the point where even our radicals use it without hesitation, witness the 'quality education for all' campaign. It's such an empty quantifier in current use. Is quality education somehow one tangible, graspable thing that we can spread around, stripped of actual qualities in the process? 'What are good *qualities* of education?' we might ask to shake the frame a little, as George Lakoff does. Heystek does not have such issues with the term, but he is interested in how the new powers of governing bodies impact on the quality of education delivered in schools. His paper boils down to the following insight – the less principled and professional the management and teaching staff of a school, the more impact governing bodies can have by directly intervening in school affairs to improve quality. Principals and teachers are understandably uncomfortable with this kind of intervention in their professional lives, but as Heystek acidly points out, if they are not behaving professionally then they lose out on the claim for non-interference. We do need governing bodies to play a strong role in dysfunctional schools, to understand what basic education standards are, and to insist that schools deliver on them, but we also need to bear in mind that

rural primary schools (where many of our dysfunctional schools are found) work strongly on traditional forms of patronage, and that patronage bedevils professional growth. Strengthening governing bodies could mean an insistence on local undereducated youths being preferred as teachers to well educated ‘foreigners’ based on all sorts of local demands and calculations we have not fully understood yet. More research on SGBs and the complex, often counter-intuitive, roles they play in post apartheid South African schools is needed.

Another zone recently identified in South Africa as playing a key role in improving the quality of education for all is early childhood care, most notably through the ramping up of Grade R classes throughout the country. It is crucial to ensure that all our children arrive in Grade One already familiar with school routine and its demands both on the body and mind. The move to ensure all our children are properly prepared for school stands in stark contrast with the beginnings of apartheid where almost any kind of state involvement in early childhood care was written off to the family. Ebrahim traces how apartheid twisted early childhood care into its own image and the various responses of NGOs and government over the last half a century to the changing social and political landscape captured in the neologism *educare* and the acronym ECD. The raced and classed nature of early childhood care is clearly brought out by Ebrahim, as are its various phases, making it a good introductory text to academics and students interested in this area.

Going back even further is Muthivhi’s paper on education in Venda from the late nineteenth to middle twentieth century. It tracks the split in early Venda education between missionary and community schools and the evisceration of community schools by apartheid policies. Muthivhi is partisan in her account, the community schools in Venda are granted tragic-heroic status and we read of a grassroots education, filled with potential, corrupted and destroyed by missionaries and apartheid officials. I suspect the lines are not that clear, but what we can see in the account is the stifling of early hybrids. Charles Taylor, in his magisterial account of the rise of secularism in the West, shows how traditional Christian understandings slowly started to crossbreed and incorporate elements of secularism, allowing for a rich and multifaceted in-between world holding both traditional and modern in its fecund grasp. Specific educational openings and hybrids of traditional and modern were closed down both in Venda and South Africa and we are poorer today because of it.

Hlengwa focuses on the current debates around service learning in higher education and uses Bernstein’s theoretical corpus to explore the issues. Service learning seems to offer a direct link between students and the complex

socio political world they are destined to work in, breaking the ivory tower mentality of university learning. Hlengwa notes that some disciplines have service learning as an intimate part of what they do, other disciplines totally ignore service learning. Rather than attempt a one sided support or dismissal of service learning Hlengwa points to the structural conditions within organised knowledge and pedagogic forms that either promote or discourage service learning. She does not give specific detailed examples but does point out some of the possible issues and logics that need to be considered when researching Service Learning within Higher Education.

Msila provides an account of how rural school principals are dealing with the enormous challenges facing schools in poverty stricken conditions. Although the article is substantively around an ACE programme in School Management and Leadership, its interest for the Journal revolved around the interviews with ten principals from rural schools in the Eastern Cape and KZN along with sustained periods of observation at the schools. A picture emerges of the conditions these principals face along with how they set about solving them.

Finally Carol Thomson has reviewed Jonathan Jansen's *Knowledge in the blood*. It is a text that is as seductive, troubling, insightful and humbly arrogant as the man himself and the review attempts a critical unpacking of one of the most striking publications in South African education over the last couple of years.

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