COGNITIVE JUSTICE AND THE ADVANCEMENT OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

by
Gert van der Westhuizen

UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG

Arusha Conference

LEARNING TOGETHER FOR CHANGE

27-29 April 2015

http://www.learningforchange2015.com/program/speaker-presentations/

Presentation by
Gert van der Westhuizen
University of Johannesburg
SOUTH AFRICA

[gertvdw@uj.ac.za]

UNIVERSITY
OF
JOHANNESBURG

ARUSHA CHALLENGE OF 2015

- Recognizing EFA as narrative, as global story of shared intentions to grow education for all.

- Recognizing the role of higher education, the quality imperative, past achievements and challenges, the framework for learning, and Learning in the post-2015 Education and Development Agenda (see various Unesco documents).

- The call in Arusha for more clarity on the role of higher education in EFA has been made by various African authors, raising questions about quality, assessment, gender, and knowledge politics – see Odora Hoppers (2013), Jansen (2011), Sayed and Ahmed (2015), Soudien (2013), Verger and Sayed (2012), and others.

UNIVERSITY
OF
JOHANNESBURG

THIS SUBMISSION: RETHINKING TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Challenge of rethinking teaching and learning in higher education as a contribution to the quality of education for all worldwide.

- EFA narratives include **texts** and **talk** on learners' cognitive development as objective, and as central to teaching and learning, and as indicator of quality (Unesco, The Quality Imperative; Unesco re-interpreting learning; Unesco Statement on learning).

- The **focus on knowledge and cognitive development** in EFA narratives remains unproblematized with few references to higher education, knowledge politics, and equitable learning.

UNIVERSITY
OF
JOHANNESBURG

QUESTIONS ABOUT TEACHING AND LEARNING

- This submission makes the case that the advancement of quality of teaching and learning requires a **deeper understanding** of what is meant by cognitive development; clarifying the "crisis of cognition", and articulating **cognitive justice** as premise of meaningful education for all.

- Focus question: **What kind of educational content and process is most essential for the realization of *Education for All*?**

- AND: How can the advancement of teaching and learning be informed by **dialogues between cultures and knowledge systems**?

UNIVERSITY
OF
JOHANNESBURG

THE CRISIS AND CHALLENGES OF COGNITION

- "We have faced (and are still facing) a **crisis of cognition**, which has left us repeatedly falling back into the safety of minimalist tinkering with change, instead of pro-actively innovating deep inside the system in support of Africa's development. We must acknowledge that the repeated failures to achieve Education for All arise from problems within the education structure and because of the system's inability to re-configure itself for the provision of lifelong learning for all human beings" (Odora Hoppers 2000:2).

- The crisis is prolonging – university education is driven by regimes of European text books; Teacher Education programmes are filled with Eurocentric world views and philosophies of education, content, curricula and pedagogy.

UNIVERSITY
OF
JOHANNESBURG

THE CENTRALITY AND PROBLEMATIC OF KNOWLEDGE AND COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

- Considerations of the advancement of teaching and learning need to recognize the **politics of knowledge**, how knowledge is used in society to create and maintain social order, division of labour, and commercial value (Weiler 2009: 2).

- The continued mainstreaming of "**power system of knowledge**" which privileges modern science over traditional systems of knowledge is problematic, i.e. "…science as an enclosure movement which is destroying or **museumizing alternative knowledge forms**….", and "… the citizen (is looked at) as a layman before the priests and experts of science…", acknowledging that the citizen is a person of knowledge… every man is a scientist, every village a science academy" (Visvanathan 2002: 184, 185).

KNOWLEDGE DOMINANCE AND ABYSSAL THINKING

- **Science is a hegemonic form of knowledge** which is "reducing and museumizing other forms of knowledge" (Odora Hoppers 2014; Visvanathan 2001: 7).

- The dominance of **science** in society works as **"enstrangement, distance, alienation"**, and as the historical dominance of "communities of science and markets" pursuing self-interest and excluding people (Visvanathan 2002: 184).

- Western Abyssal thinking which divides social reality into two realms – the realities of existent and "non-existent" , i.e. 'non-scientific'.

- The struggle for global social justice must be a **struggle for global cognitive justice**, building on notions of 'ecologies of knowledge' (De Sousa Santos 2007).

UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG

COGNITIVE JUSTICE AS IMPERATIVE

- Cognitive justice is about the **right of different forms of knowledge to survive** – and survive creatively and sustainably. Cognitive justice is about **returning to life IKS** (indigenous) forms of knowledge and restoring their '… place in the livelihood of communities so that they can, without coercion, determine the nature and pace of the development they require" (Odora Hoppers 2009: 16). Knowledge rests in people – for Africa the challenge has to be that of **how to build on local knowledge that exists in its people as a concomitant to working with global knowledge and information** (Odora Hoppers 2009: 2).

COGNITIVE JUSTICE AS IMPERATIVE

- Cognitive justice is about the **'democracy of knowledges'-** recognizing the right of different forms of knowledge to co-exist; a plurality of knowledges which is an active recognition of the need for diversity (Visvanathan 2009: 5). **Knowledges are not methods, but ecologies, ways of life** "… connected to livelihood, a life cycle, a lifestyle; it determines life chances" (Visvanathan 2009: 6).

- Cognitive justice as **"the right of many forms of knowledge to exist, seeing that all knowledges are partial and complementary"** (Visvanathan 2001: 7). It is about the "equality of knowers" (van der Velden 2006: 1), and giving meaning to the relationships between different knowledges (van der Velden 2004: 78).

UNIVERSITY
OF
JOHANNESBURG

COGNITIVE JUSTICE AND TEACHER EDUCATION

- Question:

- What is involved in advancing cognitive justice and equitable education for all through teacher education?

- Teacher education needs to be premised on the plurality of knowledges through **research** on teaching and learning, and through the development of **teaching and learning** practices and pedagogy.

COGNITIVE JUSTICE AND TEACHER EDUCATION RESEARCH

- **+ Research** on teaching and learning – how can multiple understandings of philosophies, assumptions, purposes, practices, learning relationships be advanced?

- Problematising (American, European) traditions of research methodologies

- Chilisa's (2008) arguments for indigenising research to be based on relational ontologies, ontologies of connectedness…

UNIVERSITY
OF
JOHANNESBURG

COGNITIVE JUSTICE IN THE CURRICULUM

- **+ Teacher education content and curricula**
- What is taught? Curricula as content, as official knowledge - traditions of curriculum work

- Regimes of text books – as mediators of multiple knowledges - [Text books have live cycles of their own and they often take decades to be replaced…

- Content made up of multiple knowledges – example of home economics

UNIVERSITY
OF
JOHANNESBURG

COGNITIVE JUSTICE AND TEACHER EDUCATION – TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Deeper analyses of **epistemic morality**, i.e. epistemic access, primacy and responsibility – learning interactions are discursive and political

- Rethinking **learning relationships** - restoring the humanity of the other (Levinas)

- What makes learning equitable?

- We have a shared **moral responsibility** for honouring multiple knowledges, world views, life ideals - examples set by community knowledge holders – how they do conversations for learning

UNIVERSITY
OF
JOHANNESBURG

SUMMARY –

- COGNITIVE JUSTICE is about rethinking the purposes, content and processes of teaching and learning in ways that would open up and acknowledge the validity and primacy of multiple knowledges.

- In teacher education this implies rethinking knowledge about teaching – content and processes, as consisting of multiple knowledges.

UNIVERSITY
OF
JOHANNESBURG

INQUIRY CONVERSATION

- Can teacher education advance multiple knowledges in university and school curricula?

- What space is there in the EFA post-2015 goals for COGNITIVE JUSTICE?

- What could be the indicators of cognitive justice in EFA?

REFERENCES

- Odora Hoppers, C. A. 2000. Turning the Monster on Its Head: Lifelong Learning Societies for All - Unfolding Learning Societies, Volume 31, Numbers 9/10. November/December 1999.

- Odora Hoppers, C. A. 2001. IKS and its Implications for Research and Curriculum Transformation in Tertiary Institutions. Keynote address to the University of Venda conference on *IKS: An African Perspective.* September 2001.

- Odora Hoppers C.A 2006. Literacy and Globalization: Towards A Learning Society In Africa: Growth Points for Policy and Practice. Background paper prepared for ADEA Biennial Meeting Libreville, Gabon, March 27-31, 2006.

- Sayed, Y. and R. Ahmed. 2014. "Education quality, and teaching and learning in the post-2015 education agenda." International Journal of Educational Development, 40 330-338. doi:10.1016/j.ijedudev.2014.11.005

- UNESCO. 2012. Education and Skills for Inclusive and Sustainable Development Beyond 2015: Thematic Think Piece. Paris, UNESCO. (Prepared by UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda.)

- UNESCO. 2014. EFA Global Monitoring Report 2013/4 – Teaching and Learning: Achieving Quality for All. Paris, UNESCO.

- Van der Velden, M. 2004. From Communities of Practice to Communities of Resistance: Civil society and cognitive justice. *Development* 47, 73-80.

- Visvanathan, S. 2009. The search for cognitive justice. http://www.india-seminar.com/2009/597/597_shiv_visvanathan.htm

- Weiler, H. 2011. Knowledge and Power: The New Politics of Higher Education. Journal of Educational Planning and Administration, Vol. XXV, No. 3: 205-221.

UNIVERSITY
OF
JOHANNESBURG