

Editorial

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It would appear that in South Africa we are increasingly obsessed with measuring learner performance and thus we run the very real risk of valuing what we can measure, rather than thinking more cogently about what we really value. Dutch philosopher Gert Biesta (2009) has urged us to think carefully about what we mean by good education and not be seduced by effective education which is what the culture of measurement tends to validate. We need to keep engaging with the question, “What is the purpose of education?” Perhaps a more specific question might be “What are the purposes of education?” since a complex and multi-faceted practice like education cannot have only one purpose. These purposes of education cannot be logically derived from empirical data since they are based on educational judgements of what we find desirable. Biesta (2009) argued that there are at least three purposes of education, namely qualification, socialisation, and subjectification. Qualification refers to the work of schools in developing learners’ knowledge and understanding of the subjects in the official curriculum, as well as the skills, dispositions, and judgements that enable them to “do something” (p. 39). The function of socialisation encompasses the ways in which learners learn how to participate meaningfully in society and come to understand and practise the norms and values embraced by the society in which they live. This socialisation can happen explicitly through the official curriculum as well as through the hidden one. Education also enables learners to become more “autonomous and independent in their thinking and acting” (p. 40) through a process of subjectification. Obviously, these purposes overlap in different ways and should not be understood as separate from one another. As I reflect on the articles in this issue, I see that they touch on this question of the underlying purposes of education in different ways.

This issue deals as usual with a range of levels in the education system, from micro issues in the classroom (such as learners’ emotional intelligence regarding mathematics tasks, and teachers’ practices in the regime of strong pacing) to macro systemic issues (such as how schools can be places that build democratic citizenship and how the national adult education system can be strengthened).

We start at the classroom level as Devika Naidoo discusses the classroom practices of selected geography teachers in Gauteng schools, as well as their perceptions of the current curriculum regime that demands very strong pacing. Naidoo traces the history of such pacing, noting that classroom research in South Africa has found that the average pace of teaching and learning was slow before the pacing policy of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy

Statements (CAPS) came into effect and that teaching was often paced at the slowest learners in the class. CAPS aims to provide much stronger pacing coupled with external monitoring to maintain the accelerated pace of curriculum coverage in classrooms. Naidoo argues that her data analysis shows that the “strong pacing of knowledge has unintended consequences: the pedagogic code is lexicalised, and hence impoverished and pedagogic discourse contains far too little elaboration for slower learners to facilitate acquisition.” While her data indeed indicates that the pedagogic code in these geography classrooms is not conceptually elaborate, it is not possible to make a causal link to the strong pacing of the CAPS curriculum, since we cannot know if the teachers were teaching in the same way before the dictates of CAPS. Nevertheless, this study provides important insight into the qualification function of schooling, and of what kind of knowledge and skills these learners are developing. The story is not a happy one. Naidoo uses Bernstein’s (2002, 2004) theories to argue that poorer learners are disadvantaged by strong pacing because they do not have sufficient time to engage with concepts, and that, in using strong pacing, teachers present concepts in shallow and truncated ways that do not support the development of deep conceptual understanding.

Angela Stott and Paul Hobden also address the topic of learning, this time in the subject of physical science. There is continuing strong support for the constructivist notion of learners working in groups, which seems to be underpinned by a naïve faith in the positive value of group work. Their study aims to drill deeper into the value of group work by engaging specifically with the question of the strengths and weakness of using inductive or deductive reasoning to teach high school physical science topics. They use collaborative cognitive load theory to engage with the difference between the cognitive load required by inductive and deductive tasks. This study is part of Stott’s more extensive action research study which involved the promotion of critical thinking through the design of classroom materials and the use of different instructional strategies. She provides detailed data on how learners grappled with learning inductively and shows that there was much confusion during the group discussions. To teach the topic of mechanics to a Grade 10 class using inductive strategies took 30 hours, while to teach this topic using deductive strategies took 24. Interestingly, both strategies took longer than the 16 hours allocated by CAPS. While inductive strategies certainly did lead to engaged learning, it required a greater cognitive load which sometimes led to confusion and decreased learner motivation. The cognitive load was less for deductive reasoning tasks, and these tasks also generated problem-solving thinking and the application of concepts. This study provides detailed insights into these two reasoning strategies which takes us much further towards thinking about pedagogic strategies in nuanced, rather than dogmatic ways.

While there is a vast and growing literature on mathematics education in South Africa, Jeanne-Mari Frenzel, Christine Erna Lampen, and Karin Brodie argue that not much of this research focuses on learners’ emotions. They report on a study that gathered data about the learners’ awareness of their emotions and their related engagement and perseverance with mathematics tasks. The context of their study is a mathematics club at a school that aimed to develop learners’ self-confidence in doing mathematics. The grade 8 learners attended the

club on Saturdays. The activities were problem-solving tasks that aimed to develop learners' mathematical thinking. Initially they found that many learners became disruptive half way through the sessions, and often said they were hungry and /or tired. Hannula's (2002, 2006, 2012) work on how cognition and engagement can be supported by an understanding of emotions gave rise to discussions about how learners' emotions were reflected in their behaviours, so they set out to help learners to name their emotions explicitly while they were doing these problem-solving tasks. The researchers found that "helping learners to name and identify the source of their negative emotions helped them to acknowledge those emotions and process them so that they were able to engage with cognitive activities." This adds to our understanding about how the qualification purpose of schooling cannot focus simply on the cognitive, but must also take into account the motivation, enjoyment, and emotion of the learner. The purpose of subjectification dovetails here with that of qualification.

Linked to the issue of learners' emotions is the question of learners' capacity for self-regulated learning (SRL). This phenomenon is not about the cognitive aspect of learning but is, rather, about how teachers are able to develop self-regulated learning strategies so that learners can take responsibility for and control over their own learning. Bernadette Geduld's study describes how 10 Grade 8 teachers in 2 low quintile high schools in the Eastern Cape understood the concept of SRL and how they develop this, or fail to do so, in their learners. The ability to self-regulate one's learning and behaviour, illustrating the socialisation aspect of schooling, is vital to becoming a useful member of society. Having individuals develop the ability to take the initiative and not simply wait to be told what to do is part of the subjectification process of education. Geduld found that the teachers did not have clear pedagogical strategies to develop SRL, and that they believed that the strong focus on learner achievement means that SRL is not prioritised at school. Ironically the focus on measurement of pass rates is thus undermining the development of a vital skill and disposition in learners, namely their ability to be self-starters and take the initiative for their own learning and development.

Nuraan Davids's article focuses explicitly on the socialization and subjectification functions of schooling. She asks the question, "What is necessary for schools to shift their policies and practices of learner selection, so that they make a foundational contribution to democratic citizenship education, rather than undermining it?" She argues that the work of schools cannot simply deliver the curriculum (the qualification function) but that schools must "be places for the cultivation of self-belief; belonging, recognition; knowing oneself; and knowing how to be with others." However, many black learners in former white, coloured, and Indian schools do not experience their schools in these positive ways. Rather, the ethos of these schools often remains such that black learners have to either assimilate to fit in with the school culture or remain on the periphery. In these schools, exclusion is based on race, culture, religion, language, sexuality, disability, gender, class, and ethnicity. In the face of these structural practices, Davids, drawing on the work of Biesta (2011) and Edwards (2007, 2009) engages with how such schools could make choices to contribute to developing democratic citizenship education.

There are ongoing debates about how best to prepare student teachers for their role as classroom teachers. It goes without saying that teachers are vital to delivering good education, and it is a huge challenge to prepare teachers by imparting to them the propositional and practical knowledge they need, as well as the emotional resilience and reflective capacities. A major challenge is that first year student teachers are already apprenticed by observation from their own 12 years of schooling and come to university with many fixed (and often bad) ideas about what teaching involves. Moeniera Moosa describes a campus-based teaching practice model that aims to prepare and support first-year students and explores their experiences of this model that does not send students immediately into schools, but first has them engage with a three-week campus-based exploration during which they start to see teaching as a complex cognitive and reflexive activity and evaluate and reflect on their own beliefs about teaching. The model allows student teachers to acquire new knowledge and a deeper understanding about the practice of teaching (which relates, of course, to the qualification aspect) as well as to reflect on and develop their own personal capacities like honing their communication skills, dealing with stress and managing emotions as part of the subjectification aspect of learning to teach.

Twenty-five years ago, there was a presentation at the Kenton Education Association conference on Organisation Development (OD). It was mooted as a strategy to turn around schools, one by one. Clive Smith and Marion Mackinnon argue that this strategy is still relevant, and they provide a description of a boys-only private school that undertook this journey. They provide a detailed description of how this OD was introduced to the school and how the teachers engaged with the question of what they wanted to change in the school. Teachers decided, among other things, that they wanted to focus on changing teaching methods. The underpinning principle of OD is that it requires participants, in this case teachers in a school, to engage with participatory democratic practices since it is the participants who decide what they want to change and how these changes should be effected. It is a practice that starts from the bottom-up in contrast to many policies that are imposed on schools by the department of education and/or the principal. This case study provides insight into how this process can work, but of course the setting here is not that of an average South African school. We have to ask what kind of change model could work in poorly resourced schools in which teachers and management staff may not have the same desire (or the capacity) to engage in this kind of reflective endeavour.

John Aitchison and Sandra Jane Land address an area that has been largely neglected by researchers—state provision of adult education in South Africa. Drawing on their experience and expertise in the field, as well as on research and policy documents, they sketch the history of adult education since the 1950s. They draw the saddening conclusion that the provision of Public Adult Learning Centres for adults has not improved much in the past 25 years. Obtaining accurate figures on these centres and on the number of adult learners was difficult in early post-apartheid years. In 2015, a ministerial committee found that there were very few adult learners enrolled in ABET levels 1, 2, and 3, and that most learners enrolled in ABET level 4 were young people trying to improve their matric results. In spite of the rhetoric of policy, which was to seek coherence in education and training, there has been little

growth in the area of providing meaningful skills for adults through learning centres. The avowed purposes of adult education have not been met, not because the nation does not have good policies, as the authors argue, but because we have a mindset that “prevents our imagining and creating an effective adult and community education system.”

Sadi Seyama’s article focuses on the ongoing question of how to decolonise the higher education curriculum. She describes the decision taken by a health sciences faculty to focus on the socio-economic determinants of health as a way of decolonising the curriculum. However, she argues that while it is vital to include this content in the curriculum, it is not “a decolonising project since there is no engagement with what ought to be an alternative African paradigm, in this case African healing as an alternative knowledge frame.” This is a clear example of the contesting understandings of what it means to decolonise a (health sciences) curriculum. Seyama argues for a humanising pedagogy that will engage with students’ indigenous knowledge systems and allow this knowledge into the classroom. Drawing on critical race theory, she argues that the first step in decolonisation is to “reclaim the rightful place of African identities and knowledges” in the classroom. The call is to reclaim the subjectification and socialization purposes of education in a field of study that focuses largely only on the qualification function.

Finally, Wayne Hugo and Robyn McQueen present a review of Christopher Winch’s *Teachers’ Know-How: A Philosophical Investigation*. This is fitting because the various purposes of what is known as good education can be achieved only if teachers in the system have learned to practise self-reflexivity, have deep theoretical and practical knowledge and the skill to use this productively, and the ability to make professional judgements.

References

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