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# Editorial - The investigation of pedagogy

Wayne Hugo

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Wally Morrow is still with us, remembered this time through Ursula Hoadley's excellent article "Learning to fly". Hoadley uses his thinking to guide us into a deeper understanding of why the current reform process in South African education is struggling to make headway. Here is one of Morrow's favourite analogies, as described by Shalem and Slonimsky:

Let's take an example of a teacher of someone who wants to become a pilot. A good teacher of piloting has in the back of his mind an understanding of what is involved in flying an aeroplane. In the practice of teaching [the teacher] says, 'Ok, the first thing we need is to teach how to do this and how to do that' . . . or something like that. You can contrast such a teacher of piloting from a teacher of piloting who in a sense does not understand what the bigger thing is, but is following a book which says in lesson one you need to do this and in lesson two you need to do that and it is never properly tied together (Shalem and Slonimsky, 2010b, p.21).

If you are going to learn to fly, be taught by someone who both knows what flying is and how to teach it, someone who can structure the lessons over time to get you to that point; rather than by someone who can teach you each part without actually knowing what the whole is. Simple and wise.<sup>1</sup>

Hoadley uses this nugget as her key insight into why our current curriculum reform process (CAPS) is not making the hoped for gains. Her article has all the makings of a detective story, and tells a tale of missed leads, broken hypotheses, and lost hope, until, with the help of other intrepid investigators, she stumbles on a key issue that illuminates the failure. As with all good detective stories, she sets the scene with a gritty account of research that seems to go nowhere, and it all revolves around the interrogation of Pedagogy.

It starts with the SPADE investigation into 14 schools in poor communities that are somehow doing a little better than their peers. Ursula Hoadley and her

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<sup>1</sup> Joe Muller makes a telling observation on the flying a plane analogy to learning specialised school subjects – why is it that philosophers always pick a manual skill, even if it is a pretty complex one? At least it makes a change from the old 'riding a bike' trope, but I don't know how appropriate this is as an analogy for schoolwork (personal communication).

intrepid assistant, Jaamia Galant, suspect that the reason for the difference could be the way Pedagogy happens in the classroom. It's a reasonable hunch – after all – that's the inner sanctum where learning goes down. To confirm their hunch they spend time in the classrooms collecting evidence and interview the teachers, working out which lessons are good and bad. Its gritty work – 46 teachers, over 120 lessons – and what do they find? Not much. The lessons are mostly in-between, not brilliant, not awful. In the heart of the school where the actual teaching and learning takes place, a link between Pedagogy and performance cannot be found. The problem is that Pedagogy is a slippery and complex suspect. Earlier investigations of pedagogy had also failed to find a link (Taylor, Muller & Vinjevold, 2003; Carnoy, Chisholm & Chilisa, 2012) but Hoadley and Galant refused to give up. They checked with older experts who knew Pedagogy well (like Spillane, Alexander and Muller) and found out that previous investigations had not really been able to interview Pedagogy properly. Further discussions with key expert witnesses on how pedagogy works from the Wits Branch (Hamsa Venkat, Yael Shalem, and Lynne Slonimsky AKA Slo) revealed that Pedagogy only discloses itself in the longer term – the secret lies in how the lessons link together, not in the lessons themselves. And with that insight the case broke open. Going back to the best lessons from the 14 schools, it became clear that, even though some of the lessons were reasonably good, there was no bigger linking of the lessons to the overriding subject, there was no stitching of the lessons over a longer period, no building upwards to a greater plan – there was no understanding of flying whilst teaching the learners to fly. And that is why learners remained on the ground, flapping their arms in flying sorts of ways. Writing up the case afterwards, Hoadley tried to ensure other detectives don't make the same mistake, so she, along with her long time mentor, Muller, formulated a succinct rule for other experts to follow – evaluative criteria need to be regulated by evaluative rules – understand that and you can separate a pedagogy of form from a pedagogy of substance. But to get what that expert advice means you will need to read the case notes.

Bongani Bantwini, from the North West branch, also investigated Pedagogy in the Eastern Cape, specifically how Science was taught in the intermediate phase. He gathered single lesson observations from 22 classrooms in Grades 4, 5 and 6. He found that Pedagogy was up to similar tricks, with the lessons mostly boring, confusing, unchallenging, and isolated from the learner lives, resulting in learners being disinterested and unmotivated. The UCT and North West branches should share their case notes on pedagogy, as I think North West could learn much from how the SPADE project selected their schools,

gathered data on Pedagogy, analysed the data, theorised Pedagogy, and collaborated with other branches on the characteristics of Pedagogy.

In a town not far away from the UCT branch, another group of detectives were also investigating Pedagogy. Famed for controversial and powerful personalities and positions, they pursued Pedagogy in various ways – using African and Islamic philosophies, post modernism, and a whole smorgasbord of other theorists. One favourite path of pursuit was to enter into dialogue with Pedagogy and see what would emerge from a more cooperative and community oriented approach. One of their Phd students suggested that a nourishing of Pedagogy was needed by getting teachers together into professional learning communities (PLCs) so that they could talk and learn from each other, as well as engage with student needs. This would enrich pedagogy; allow it to flourish once more in a socially just way that would meaningfully engage all students in productive learning. Jennifer wrote up an account of her two-year engagement with a small group of teachers in PLCs, and showed how difficult and complex the process was, especially for teachers already habituated in mind, body, and soul to traditional, teacher centred pedagogic practices. Turns out that Pedagogy, when absorbed in hard and strong forms, is very difficult to shake. The Alcoholics Anonymous rules apply – engage with Pedagogy honestly and cooperatively in a learning community and it will release you from its old grip and open you out to new possibilities. Key to this process, as democratic and engaging as it can be, is to have experts able to feed into the process, otherwise all that happens is mediocrity mixed with old and new ideologies wasting everyone's time.

Overcoming memories hardened into habit is one thing – not having the memories another. What can we do with our young, post Apartheid student teachers who do not have memories of Apartheid, whose founding memory is Mandela, not Verwoerd? Deepening our student teachers' understanding of Apartheid could help ensure our future generations do not make the same mistakes we did, but the problem is that the pedagogy of history in most of our schools is shallow, rote, and boring. One way to strengthen pedagogy is through museum visits that get from telling learners black people were mistreated to actual rich and engaging evidence of how it happened. Well-constructed visits to museums like Liliesleaf Farm, Constitution Hill, Apartheid Museum, Mandela House and Hector Pieterse Museum can result in intensive change to how student teachers view History, Apartheid, and citizenship. Students engage with fascinating but complex life histories and artifacts that bring home both the horror of Apartheid, the compromised way

people survived through it, and the mixed triumph of those who fought it. Rather than a simple victory of good over bad overseen by God, students come out with a more complex and nuanced understanding. They come to realise that ‘not all white people were cruel... , some were really against the law of apartheid’; that Hector Pieterse was not the only person to die in the Soweto uprising; that ‘blacks were against each other’. Students visiting Liliesleaf Farm initially thought they were going on a farming trip, but came back with a deeper insight into where and how our political struggle heroes were conducting the fight and what happened to them. Sarita Ramsaroop shows us how, correctly constructed and prepared for, Museums can be a real ally for Pedagogy in the social justice fight, so long as students are prepared for the exploration and not simply expected to somehow stare and learn.

Across the Indian Ocean, in Sydney, the investigation of Pedagogy had reached an advanced stage, so much so that an institute had been formed, dedicated to its investigation. Called the Legitimation Code Theory Centre for Knowledge Building, it was putting Pedagogy under the microscope, determined to find out the secrets of how it worked and why it was enriching some and impoverishing many. Under the guidance of a ball throwing investigator – Karl Maton – Pedagogy was broken down, analysed, and put together again in wave after wave of analysis. The tools used and findings made on Pedagogy were replicated across the world, even at the UCT branch (where some disapproved of his methods). One researcher – Elizabeth Walton – used LCT to investigate how pre-service teachers were being taught to teach inclusively. Just like Hoadley and Feldman, there was a deep concern to ensure pedagogy was working in a socially just way – but with Walton the focus was on Inclusive Education. Lets test your detective skills and see if you can find anything problematic with these two assessment tasks on Inclusive Education:

- A. Go to two of your home schools . . . , collect information about OVCs [orphans and vulnerable children] and learners experiencing barriers to learning and development. Discuss the types of barriers experienced and show how the schools tackle these challenges.
- B. Identify a real learner in a real classroom who experiences a barrier to learning. Observe the learner in class and decide on the accommodations necessary for the learner. Discuss with the class teacher how you would implement the accommodations as prescribed in the Screening,

Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) process. Then write a report . . .

If you were from the Stellies, NMMU, UJ, Pretoria, or Northwest branches, chances are you would not see much wrong and lots right with the questions. They are practical, engaged, and located. But at the Wits, UCT and PMB branches, alarm bells would be ringing. Where is the theory or a context independent body of knowledge? Can the students simply pitch with empathy, care and a form and pass an ‘inclusive education’ assessment? The students do have to learn some concepts to understand and do ‘inclusive education’ in the tasks above. These are *differentiated instruction*, *learner support*, *contextual disadvantage*, and *social problems* – contextual and practice based concepts. For Walton this is not enough. It weakens the claim that teaching is a profession by making inclusive education personal and commonsensical. It allows Pedagogy to become lazy and dispersed. It weakens the essence of professional development by stripping it of the need to engage with the deeper disciplines of psychology and sociology of education; or with the career stages approach that differentiates inclusive teaching on a scale from novice to expert. In her case report, Walton, using the techniques of the Sydney branch, recommends that, in order to improve pedagogy in inclusive education, semantic gravity should remain strong but semantic density should move from weak to strong. If you want to understand what this recommendation to shift from SG+SD- to SG+SD+ means, then go to read Walton’s case notes.

Isolated and far away from everyone else in the sometimes parched hamlet of Grahamstown, pedagogy was also being investigated, using an exotic mixture of tools taken from social realism, critical realism, critical discourse analysis and LCT. This hybrid approach had generated a heady mixture of fear, excitement, incomprehension, and respect amongst novice detectives joining the branch, but with not much else to do in the hamlet, the novices would slowly and dutifully master the investigative techniques. One novice, Amanda Hlengwa, under the protective wing of master detective Sioux McKenna, decided to track Pedagogy down in the Philosophy and Environmental Science departments. Like all the detectives above, Hlengwa and McKenna were determined to find out what socially just impact Pedagogy was enabling. Their focus was on how the Philosophy and Environmental Science departments were teaching service-learning. Service-learning addresses issues of social justice by enabling students to use their disciplinary knowledge to help address deep social needs within an unequal system. It is a general and

generic imperative across all universities in South Africa. Hlengwa set out to find any evidence of a pedagogy of service-learning in the Philosophy Department. It was a brave but futile search. Applied service-learning within the inward looking, singularly focused ivory tower of philosophy, was not to be found. Here is a snippet from an interrogation of ‘Peter’ – one of the philosophers – on reasons for the absence:

*We did a lot of analysis about what practical means because, honestly, I don't know what it means.*

Instead of doing service-learning, philosophers contemplated what service-learning meant and argued between themselves what the best meaning was, ensuring that their logic was impeccable, no matter what the imagined scenario. Mostly they ended their long and imaginary debates with the Socratic conclusion that they knew one thing – that they don't know. It was more important to logically dissect and argue about the issue than to have an impact on the issue. In-service learning in this environment was, surprisingly, not to be found.

Shifting over to Environmental Science, Hlengwa found evidence of service-learning everywhere, suspiciously linked to money. Here are her notes from her interrogation of Mona – one of the Environmental Science lecturers:

*We bring in masses of money. For us, because our fields apply, because the world is worried about what's happening, there is masses of opportunity for money. You have to work hard to get it, but you can. So that brings us recognition. We're a tiny department, there's four of us but we bring millions of Rands into this university that helps fund our students, and helps build linkages with other organizations around the world and so on.*

Concern that the world is currently on its way to a global warming apocalypse, meant that students not only got lots of funding but also lots of opportunities to link with national and international organisations to solve the practical problem of our self inflicted heat death.

Both Peter and Mona were directly asked what they thought of Pedagogy, and they gave very different answers. Peter said that he did not think much about Pedagogy:

*I do not think Philosophers on the whole . . . do not really reflect that much on their teaching. Teaching is something that just happens naturally. It is a thing that happens when you go into a lecture – you impart information. But the focus is on research, not everyone, but for the most part.*

Pedagogy comes and goes, in and out, appearing when lectures happen and then disappearing again without much thought.<sup>2</sup> Mona, on the other hand, found pedagogy everywhere, even in Florida.

*I've just come back from Florida, and I was invited to present at a conference which was held by what's called the Tropical Conservation and Development Programme. . . and there was a whole session on education on the last day, and it was absolutely fascinating. I got up and I said, "This has been amazing." You know, it really reinforced for me that we're doing the right thing back here.*

Hlengwa brings her investigation on pedagogy and service learning within the Philosophy and Environmental Sciences departments to a close with a plea for universities to step away from simplistic generic policies on service learning. Departments like Philosophy will tend to have very different responses to service learning in comparison to departments like Environmental Sciences. Although true, I think she let Peter off the hook. She should have held his feet to the fire and grilled him some more – after all, in the West, all philosophy and education thinkers are but a footnote to that old white man – Plato – who reflected deeply on Pedagogy, and who produced a student (Aristotle) whose main concern was with practical application.

Maybe we should just concede that this investigation of Pedagogy is overblown. Maybe Pedagogy is not key to the social justice project of improving the conditions and opportunities of our most disadvantaged. SPADE certainly felt there was some merit to the above conclusion – maybe Pedagogy was merely a sideline witness and occasional bit player to the ongoing violent and escalating reproduction of inequality. Maybe Pedagogy was over-rated, maybe a well-intended weakling continually getting sand kicked in its face. Maybe pedagogy is the skinny guy in the Charles Atlas comic strip:

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<sup>2</sup> Notice however, that Peter has a double negative at the beginning (I do not think . . .do not really reflect). Those wily philosophers, turning a positive into a double negative.

# THE INSULT THAT MADE A MAN OUT OF "MAC"

**Panel 1:** "HEY! QUIT KICKING THAT SAND IN OUR FACES! THAT MAN IS THE WORST NUISANCE ON THE BEACH"

**Panel 2:** "LISTEN HERE. I'D SMASH YOUR FACE... ONLY YOU'RE SO SKINNY YOU MIGHT DRY UP AND BLOW AWAY."

**Panel 3:** "THE BIG BULLY! I'LL GET EVEN SOME DAY" / "OH DON'T LET IT BOTHER YOU, LITTLE BOY!"

**Panel 4:** "DARN IT! I'M SICK AND TIRED OF BEING A SCARECROW! CHARLES ATLAS SAYS HE CAN GIVE ME A REAL BODY. ALL RIGHT! I'LL GAMBLE A STAMP AND GET HIS FREE BOOK!"

**Panel 5:** "BOY! IT DIDN'T TAKE ATLAS LONG TO DO THIS FOR ME! WHAT MUSCLES! THAT BULLY WON'T SHOVE ME AROUND AGAIN!"

**Panel 6:** "WHAT! YOU HERE AGAIN? HERE'S SOMETHING I OWE YOU!"

**Panel 7:** "OH, MAC! YOU ARE A REAL MAN AFTER ALL!" / "HERO OF THE BEACH" / "GOSH! WHAT A BUILD" / "HE'S ALREADY FAMOUS FOR IT!"

**Text:** Awarded the title of "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man."

**Text:** Charles Atlas

**Text:** CHARLES ATLAS ON TV

**Text:** WIN THIS VALUABLE TROPHY

**Text:** 5 FREE GIFTS  
If you act now, in addition to my complete course, you will also get these five valuable outline courses.

**Text:** MORE ENERGY AND STAMINA  
MORE MAGNETIC PERSONALITY  
MORE WEIGHT—BUILT-IN THE RIGHT PLACES

**Text:** BROADER CHEST AND SHOULDERS  
IRON-HEARD STOMACH MUSCLES  
TIRELESS LEGS  
SLIMMER WAIST AND LEGS

**Text:** I enclose 50c. Please send me a copy of your famous book showing how "Dynamic-Tension" can make me a new man. 22 Pages, crammed with photographs, answers to vital health questions, and valuable advice. This does not obligate me in any way.

**Text:** Print Name.....Age.....  
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In England: Charles Atlas, 21 Poland St., London, W.1

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Celestin Mayombe decided to investigate this option and went through the evidence on how adult non formal education (NFE) centres were teaching



trainees to become self employed – and he also found that pedagogy, on its own, did not have enough power to address the inequalities in our land. The idea behind NFE centres is to allow private skills training programmes to be run in non-profit centres for adults to learn how to become self employed in micro-enterprises. For an NFE centre to work effectively, it needs to do much more than teach self-employment skills, it needs to set up the conditions and connections and support structures that enable micro-enterprises to flourish. It needs to show and enable access to funding, business premises and enterprise materials, information about the possible markets, access to public and private structures that work in the micro-enterprise field. And even if a NFE centre is able to do all of the things, it still has to operate in an economic environment that could be decimated, stagnant, or thriving. The sad reality is that many NFE centres are not doing all of these things. As one graduate observed:

*I have come to realise that there are a lot of things to know in order to start a business. But in the classroom, our educators [trainers] were just telling us, “start a business, start business”; and then what? We train them and then leave them!*

Mayombe shows that often this perception of lack of support, networks, and assistance is based on poor information about what is actually out there, but the issue remains that most ‘graduates’ of ‘self employment’ do not self employ, they self implode. Pedagogy cannot do the social justice project on its own, it cannot even be a major player, even with all the muscles in the world – the best it can hope for, in the words of Pink Floyd, is to have ‘a walk on part in the war’ rather than ‘a lead role in a cage’.

Those lyrics come from one of their most poignant songs – *wish you were here* – and that brings us full circle back to Wally Morrow teaching us how to fly.

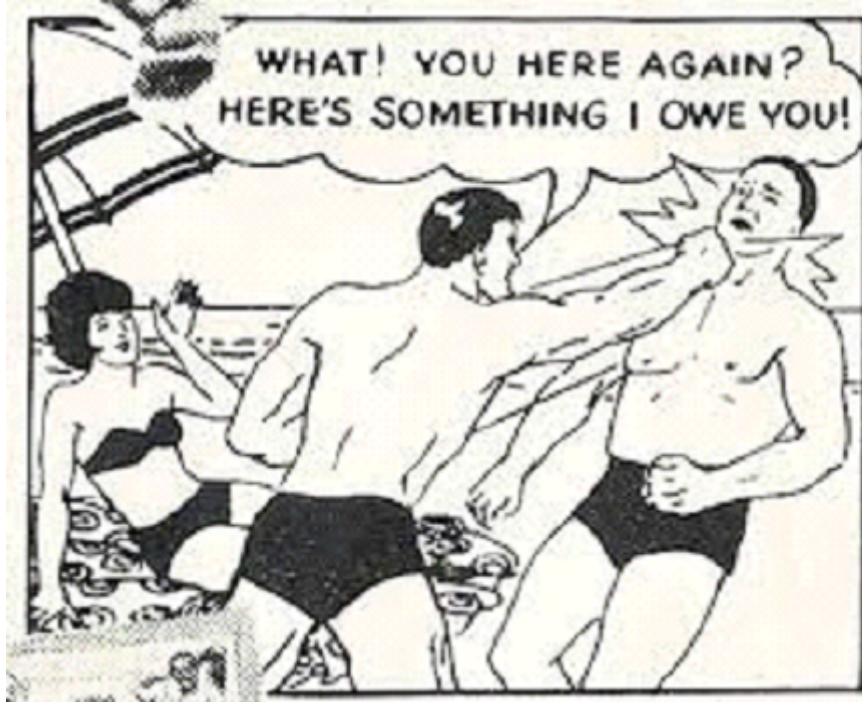
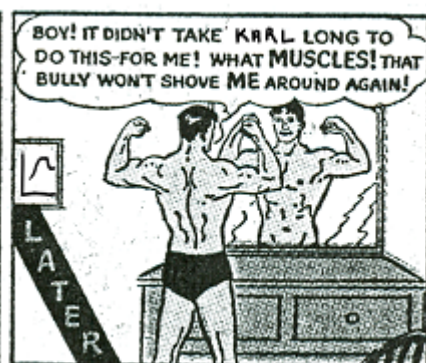
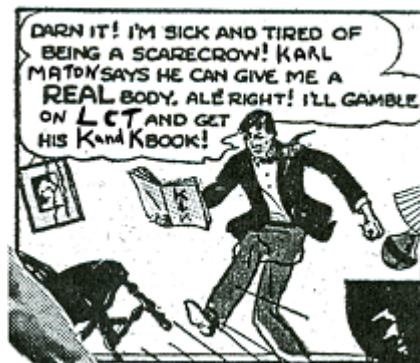
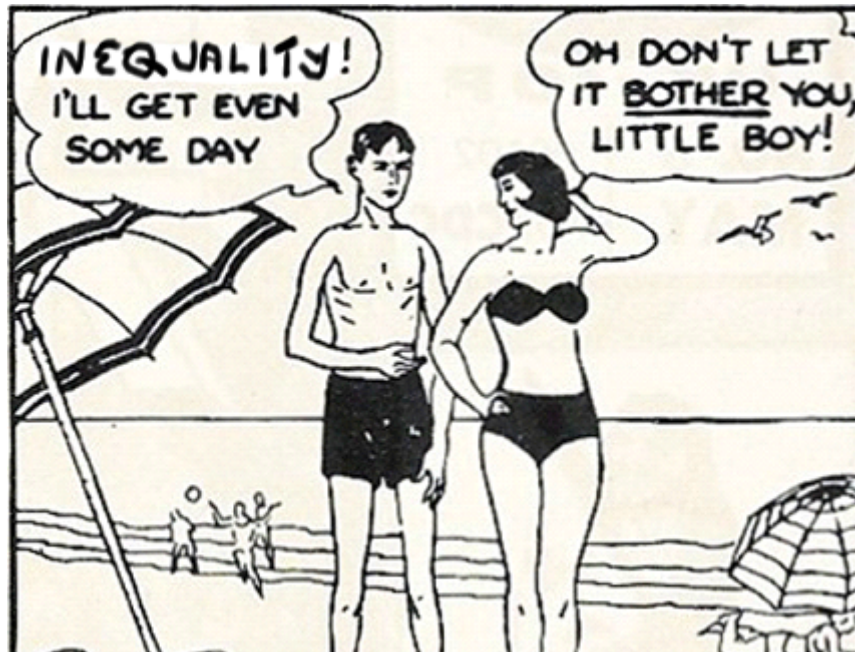
It also brings us back to those who carried our Journal through its earlier histories, who are now passing as the Journal continues. I think of Robert Muir, Former Dean of Education, who died recently. He edited JoE from 1974 to 1985 and did a lot to nudge it in the direction of becoming a respectable academic journal. Most notably, he introduced a system of refereeing which meant that the journal ceased to be a no more than a mouthpiece for the musings of luminaries. At the same time, he was (probably the first) academic to include theorists like Bourdieu, Bernstein and Young in his teaching. I

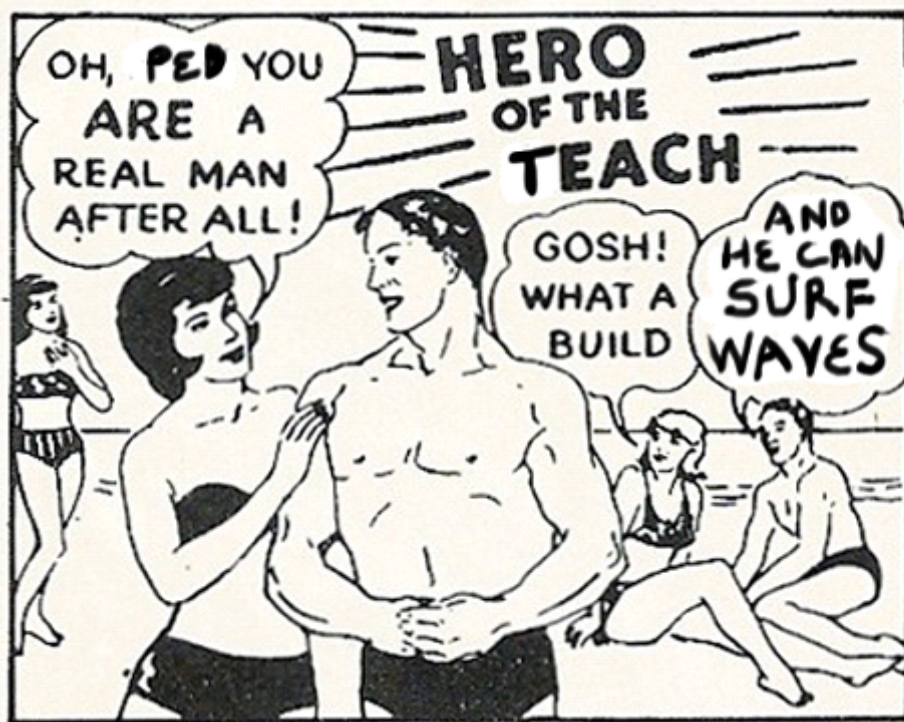
don't need to say anything about Bernstein's influence in relation to JoE. After the journal lapsed in 1986 (because of the 'sharing' arrangement with the Durban campus) he helped with its resuscitation by providing some funds from a small trust fund that had been left to the faculty.<sup>3</sup> It is good academics like Robert Muir who carried the torch so we can carry it now, and for this we give thanks.



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<sup>3</sup> Thank you to Ken Harley for formulating this account of Rob Muir.





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