Discomfort with the inappropriateness of university curricula has met with increasing calls for disruptive actions to revitalise higher education. This book, conceived to envision an alternative emancipatory curriculum, explores the historical, ideological, philosophical and theoretical domains of higher education curricula. The authors acknowledge that universities have been and continue to be complicit in perpetuating cognitive damage through symbolic violence associated with indifference to the pernicious effects of race categorisation, gender inequalities, poverty, rising unemployment and cultural hegemony, as they continue to frame curricula, cultures and practices. The book contemplates the project of undoing cognitive damage, offering glimpses to redesign curriculum in the 21st century. The contributors, international scholars, emergent and expert researchers, include different nationalities, orientations and positionalities, constituting an interdisciplinary ensemble which collectively provides a rich commentary on higher education curriculum as we know it and where we think it could be in the future. The edited volume is a catalytic tool for disrupting canonised rituals of practice in higher education.

"It has been a while since a scholarly book, so authoritative in its claims and innovative in its concepts, threatens to shake up the curriculum field at its foundations. Rich in metaphor and meaning, the superbly written chapters challenge a field that once more became moribund as we settled (sic) far too comfortably into accepting handed-down frames and fictions about knowledge, authority, power and agency that imprint ‘cognitive damage’ on those forced to the margins of schools and universities. Disrupting Higher Education Curriculum demonstrates, however, that it is in fact from those margins of the education enterprise that academics, teachers and learners can see more clearly how patterns of thought and action hold us back from placing and experiencing our African humanity at the centre of the curriculum.”

– Jonathan Jansen, Rector and Vice Chancellor of the University of the Free State, South Africa
Disrupting Higher Education Curriculum
“Curriculum” is an expansive term; it encompasses vast aspects of teaching and learning. Curriculum can be defined as broadly as, “The content of schooling in all its forms” (English, p. 4), and as narrowly as a lesson plan. Complicating matters is the fact that curricula are often organized to fit particular time frames. The incompatible and overlapping notions that curriculum involves everything that is taught and learned in a particular setting and that this learning occurs in a limited time frame reveal the nuanced complexities of curriculum studies.

“Constructing Knowledge” provides a forum for systematic reflection on the substance (subject matter, courses, programs of study), purposes, and practices used for bringing about learning in educational settings. Of concern are such fundamental issues as: What should be studied? Why? By whom? In what ways? And in what settings? Reflection upon such issues involves an inter-play among the major components of education: subject matter, learning, teaching, and the larger social, political, and economic contexts, as well as the immediate instructional situation. Historical and autobiographical analyses are central in understanding the contemporary realities of schooling and envisioning how to (re)shape schools to meet the intellectual and social needs of all societal members. Curriculum is a social construction that results from a set of decisions; it is written and enacted and both facets undergo constant change as contexts evolve.

This series aims to extend the professional conversation about curriculum in contemporary educational settings. Curriculum is a designed experience intended to promote learning. Because it is socially constructed, curriculum is subject to all the pressures and complications of the diverse communities that comprise schools and other social contexts in which citizens gain self-understanding.
Disrupting Higher Education Curriculum

Undoing Cognitive Damage

Edited by

Michael Anthony Samuel, Rubby Dhunpath and Nyna Amin

University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

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In a recent book entitled, *I Love Learning; I Hate School: An Anthropology of College* (2016), Susan Blum declares that higher education as we know it, is destined for obsolescence, because the very foundations on which the system is pillared, are fatally flawed. She adds that because higher education is a system, it cannot be fixed piecemeal and only radical transformation will rescue it from extinction. While this somewhat pessimistic pronouncement is not new, there is a growing impatience amongst beneficiaries of this outmoded system we know as higher education, which fails to meet the promise of liberation through education. Although the prospect of radical reform seems laden with misguided optimism, we should remind ourselves that change we thought impossible did occur (but not as we expected). For example, in South Africa there was a time when white men in dark suits met in the Orange Free State (now Free State) to make decisions about the curriculum for whites and non-whites (then referred to pejoratively as coloureds, coolies and natives/bantu). The undesired non-whites were split into two groups: tolerable lighter skinned persons (coloureds and coolies) and intolerable dark skinned persons (natives/bantu). Race-based physical separation was instituted. Phenotype was linked to intelligence, ability, knowledge and beauty and whiteness was set up as the marker of the best of these qualities. Curriculum became the tool to entrench apartheid idealism, conceptions and practices. Superior resources and structures and sophisticated curricula were offered to Whites (with immoral untruths about the darker races based on the dubious ideas of eugenics) while a restricted curriculum and variable basics (more for the tolerables and less to none for natives) were provided for non-whites. Some changes have taken place with the installation of a democracy-for-all government. Much still remains the same. While some discourses have changed, some beliefs have remained stubbornly resilient. For example, race categorisation, gender inequalities, poverty, rising unemployment, cultural hegemony and so on continue to frame identities, cultures and practices. Perhaps there is truth in Fernand Braudel’s avowal that “history may be divided into three movements: what moves rapidly, what moves slowly and what appears not to move at all”.

We could argue, perhaps, that what appears to move rapidly or slowly has not moved at all. For instance, from 1994 (freedom from apartheid) a number of rapid curriculum reforms were undertaken in South African general education, namely, Outcomes-based education, and the National Curriculum Statement, the Revised National Curriculum Statement and Curriculum and the Assessment Policy Statement aimed at improving educational standards and outcomes. Many argue that none of these reforms has succeeded in extricating education from the shackles of Bantu education because the policy reforms were politically rather than pedagogically driven, while the politics of epistemology were rarely contemplated by the new regime.
In higher education and training, one of the first of post-apartheid policy moves was the establishment of the national commission into higher education in 1994, which arose out of the noble project to transform the unequal and divided higher education sector. This was followed by the Higher Education Act of 1997; the Further Education and Training Act (1998); Education White Paper 4 on Further Education and Training (1998) and the National Strategy for Further Education and Training (1999-2001). The initial policy impetus for a re-envisioned system that would redress inequities gave way to managerial discourses in the early 2000s and beyond. The furious and sometimes frivolous policy process was accompanied by a range of regulatory institutions, systems and frameworks including the National Qualifications Framework, the South African Qualifications Authority, the three Quality Councils and the National Skills Authority, and the National Student Financial Aid Scheme.

Despite these grandiose installations, it is becoming abundantly clear that the higher education sector lacks a primary ingredient: systemic coherence. As we slowly confront the damaging effects of racism, we appear to be constructing new forms of apartheid. Similarly, curriculum tinkering has not provided the foundation to escape our past or to refashion a viable future devoid of violence, hatred and intolerance. Perhaps we underestimated the length of time required for a society to be transformed. The recent dominant narrative in higher education transformation, encapsulated in the violent resistance to western and colonial symbols in institutions, appears to detract from the more fundamental crisis of indolence and our failure to confront the real challenge of curriculum transformation. It is this reality that has propelled our work as academics and researchers over the years and, a turn to our own histories of involvement in higher education illuminates the point.

Michael Samuel spent his early years in Stanger (north of Durban). He had aspirations to become an architect, studied it for a while, dropped out and became a schoolteacher instead. He began his employment in a state school, moving thereafter to an élite private school before joining the former University of Durban-Westville (UDW) in 1989.

Rubby Dhunpath entered higher education in the tumultuous year of 1976 and despite participating in the endemic student protests against the discriminatory curriculum, he qualified as a schoolteacher and taught at various schools in Durban, before resigning as a deputy principal to enter higher education. In 1996 he enrolled for the MEd degree, followed by the PhD in education, both studies supervised by Michael Samuel. Rubby moved on to become head of the unit for language and literacies at the Human Sciences Research Council in Pretoria.

By contrast, Nyna Amin grew up in Pretoria and always wanted to be a medical doctor, but teaching was one of the few options available for a black female at the time. She started her professional life as a teacher in Pretoria before moving to her marital home in Durban. In 1999, she enrolled for the MEd degree at UDW, followed by a doctoral qualification which she obtained through a Fulbright Fellowship.
which provided exposure to a global curriculum experience at the Michigan State University. Michael Samuel was a co-supervisor of her doctoral thesis.

Ironically, UDW, a *bush college* set-up for those of Indian origin, was the intellectual space of our initial meetings and subsequent friendship and research collaborations. Over the next few years, all our careers converged at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). Michael became Dean of Education, Rubby, returned to UKZN as the Director of Teaching and Learning and Nyna, was promoted to Associate Professor in Education Studies. Each of us was involved in curriculum work (amongst a host of other roles and functions). Michael, after international explorations of alternative post-independence teacher education curriculum policy choices in developing world contexts, was a member of the Ministerial Task Team which provided the foundations for the construction of a post-apartheid national teacher education policy framework. Rubby contributed to activating an environmental ethos for researching the scholarship of teaching and learning, an endeavour embraced by academics across the disciplinary sectors of the university. The Teaching and Learning office and the annual teaching and learning conference evolved to become the catalyst for generative, multi-disciplinary scholarship. Nyna was tasked with setting up the framework for reconceptualising teaching practice for first year undergraduate students and the new BEd curriculum. All three editors’ involvement in designing and supporting innovative Masters and Doctoral education programmes is also noted. We participated in various teaching and research activities and associated programmes attached to the annual teaching and learning conference. Curriculum was at the heart of our work and aspects thereof, troubled us sufficiently to publish in journals and write books. But it was the keynote address delivered by Gayatri Spivak at the Eighth Teaching and Learning in Higher Education Conference in 2014 that provided the language and made explicit the reasons for the futility of our attempts to bring about real transformation through curriculum intervention, and served as impetus for this book.

Drawing on her experiences of repaying ancestral debt to the lowest of the low and poorest of the poor in India, Spivak explained the mammoth task of rewiring their damaged cognitive structures which was caused by her ancestors. Spivak’s allusion to *cognitive damage* found resonance with the audience. She argued that many are complicit in their capitulation through learned obedience and servitude to not question the organs of power. In exploring the role of the curriculum she challenged the audience to consider the limits of economic and social empowerment. She offered her comments about approaching indigenous knowledge systems and the relationship between quality in education and the democratic imperative. ‘Undoing cognitive damage’ became the mantra of the conference and a by-line for this book.

Spivak’s address was suitably complemented by William Pinar, another keynote speaker at the conference. Pinar posed the question, “what knowledge is most worthwhile?” with reference to recent attempts to reform the curriculum in South Africa and the implications for substantive change. He argued that cognisance of multivariate contexts is crucial for curriculum reform. Indeed, one element – such
as *structure* – cannot be cast as the key contributor to educational accomplishment. In the workshop that followed, Pinar turned his attention to repositioning students as central to curriculum reform as they defined the context, conviction and incorporation of diversified worldviews. His comments suggested that higher education curriculum designers need to be attuned to the *pedagogy of listening*: in effect, being sensitive to forces which include recognising state technologies as agents of the marketplace. Simply responding to students’ demands is also to be challenged as students too may be similarly seduced by simplistic econometric and individualistic rationalities. A recurrent theme that emerged through the conference debates was the concern that curriculum reform should not be confined to just the formal, taught components of higher education. A key ingredient of curriculum reform was the acceptance of unarticulated theoretical and implicit philosophical orientations of the course designers who infused their brand of intellectual, ideological, political, social and cultural worldviews in the curriculum. Curriculum, we believe, should transcend the narrow prescripts of content and pedagogy, and we should sustain enquiry of the institutional conditions that support intellectual labour. It is our responsibility to ensure that higher education curriculum shapers (academic staff, managers, leaders, co-workers and students) produce curricula that will inspire the next generation of thinkers who will contribute to the quality of the society which we will co-habit in the future.

We must remember that readings of the context are not limited to the textual products engaged during lecture interactions or in the course materials; they are equally accessed through the multiple texts that characterise the higher education environment: its architectural environment; its marketing and imaging material; its artistic and creative works; its utilisation of spaces; and they are limited by the absence and omissions of alternative texts. Textual materials are harbingers of legacies, ideologies and values of preferred authorities and hierarchies. As a complex space, the curriculum of higher education is accessible and speaks directly to those who share its ideologies and values whilst alienating those who contest its worldviews.

These keynote addresses have inspired and complemented the multitude of curriculum questions that punctuated the parallel sessions, the TV interviews and corridor conversations. For example, chapters include debates about whether the new delivery media of information communication technology embraced almost unquestioningly into the university pedagogical terrain are driving distorted conceptions of advancing teaching and learning. Other debates include the acknowledgement of human diversity beyond race, gender and class, to include the absent human rights of queers within formal curriculum spaces. These are just some of the ways of undoing cognitive damage.

Our aim in this book is to offer to readers philosophical, practical and future directions of writings on shifting the curriculum that foster *undoing cognitive damage*. We hope that it will stimulate debates about the importance of curriculum
redesign as we enter a critical, even dangerous, period (in South Africa) of ideological warfare being waged on university campuses. Through our damaged lenses, clouded with the muck of old thinking so out of sync with the aspirations of the contemporary youth, we have not been able to respond appropriately, or to understand (nay, a refusal to understand) the attacks on higher education. The younger generation is suspicious of our motives, our ideals and values. We need to look again at our curricula, to be aware that there is a range of alternative perspectives to be engaged with. We anticipate that this book will inspire critical possibilities for curriculum change in higher education. Change, of course, as Mahatma Gandhi reminds us, begins with us.

This anthology is about disruptive shifts to vitalise the higher education curriculum. It critically questions whether already enacted alternative curriculum interventions have indeed assisted to undo cognitive damage in higher education. Have the curriculum disruptions enabled re-defining who we are and who we want to become as knowledge activators? We leave it to readers to judge our musings, interventions and (mis)directions.

Finally, this anthology represents over two years of reworking and re-designing as the key themes emerged across and between chapters. The book took shape in the first instance by identifying possible authors. Delegates who presented papers at the conference were invited to write chapters. Later, the invitation was expanded to include authors who were making significant strides in adapting their pedagogies to embrace more critical conceptions of curriculum.

A NOTE ON THE PEER REVIEW PROCESS

The book is a product of deliberations at the 2013 Teaching and Learning in Higher Education Conference hosted by UKZN, and chaired by one of the editors. As a post-conference activity, delegates and other curriculum specialists in higher education were requested to critically analyse and reflect on their philosophical and theoretical perspectives and practical experiences of curriculum innovation and change in their diverse disciplinary contexts.

Authors submitted their draft chapters to the editorial committee, which made final selections based on relevance to the theme and potential to advance thinking in the domain of higher education curriculum. Each of the chapters was subject to a double, and in some instances, triple-blind peer review process. An attempt was made to include at least one national and one international reviewer.

As a consequence of the review, four chapters were excluded from the collection. Following consultations between the editors and authors, authors were given an opportunity to revise their chapters. Each author submitted a final draft manuscript incorporating reviewers’ comments which was circulated to the editors for further critique. The final manuscript was then sent to the publisher which subjected it to their own publisher peer-review process.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to record our appreciation to those who have administratively steered this project, as managers of the editorial processes, convenors of the book project meetings, sponsors of the research endeavour and peer critical reviewers of draft chapters.

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To all of these shapers of the final product, we are indeed grateful.
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>AA</td>
<td>Architectural Association</td>
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<td>AAU</td>
<td>Association of African Universities</td>
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<td>AIDS</td>
<td>Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome</td>
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<tr>
<td>BRICS</td>
<td>Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>CALL</td>
<td>Computer Assisted Language Learning</td>
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<td>CAPS</td>
<td>Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement</td>
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<td>CBDs</td>
<td>Central Business Districts</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCE</td>
<td>Curricular Community Engagement</td>
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<td>CE</td>
<td>Community Engagement</td>
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<td>CHE</td>
<td>Council on Higher Education</td>
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<td>CIAM</td>
<td>Congres Internationaux d’Architecture Moderne</td>
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<td>CNN</td>
<td>Cable News Network</td>
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<td>CoS</td>
<td>Church of Sweden</td>
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<td>DHET</td>
<td>Department of Higher Education and Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>DOI</td>
<td>Diffusion of Innovations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ed.D</td>
<td>Professional Doctorate in Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>EGST</td>
<td>Ethiopian Graduate School of Theology</td>
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<tr>
<td>FGC</td>
<td>Female Genital Cutting</td>
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<td>FGM</td>
<td>Female Genital Mutilation</td>
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<tr>
<td>GRH</td>
<td>Gender, Religion and Health</td>
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<tr>
<td>HEIs</td>
<td>Higher Education Institutions</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIV</td>
<td>Human immunodeficiency virus</td>
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<tr>
<td>HLTs</td>
<td>Human Language Technologies</td>
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<td>HSRC</td>
<td>Human Sciences Research Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>IASTE</td>
<td>International Association for the Study of Traditional Environments</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICS</td>
<td>Information &amp; Communications Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information Communication Technology</td>
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<td>INC</td>
<td>IsiZulu National Corpus</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISIL</td>
<td>Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant</td>
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<td>ISIS</td>
<td>Islamic State of Iraq and Syria</td>
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<tr>
<td>IQ</td>
<td>Intelligence Quotient</td>
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<td>MDGs</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
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<td>MIE</td>
<td>Mauritius Institute of Education</td>
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<td>MUCT</td>
<td>Makumira University College in Tanzania</td>
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<td>NCHE</td>
<td>National Commission into Higher Education</td>
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<td>NCS</td>
<td>National Curriculum Statement</td>
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<td>NGOs</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisations</td>
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<td>NLG</td>
<td>Natural Language Generation</td>
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

NSA – National Skills Authority
NSFAS – National Student Financial Aid Scheme
OBE – Outcomes-Based Education
OGPU – Obyedinyonnoye Gosudarstvennoye Politicheskoye Upravleniye (Joint State Political Directorate)
PACSA – Pietermaritzburg Agency for Community Social Action
PanSALB – Pan South African Language Board
PGCE – Postgraduate Certificate in Education
PhD – Doctor of Philosophy
QEP – Quality Enhancement Project
R&D – Research and Development
RDA – Resources Development Administration
RoLA – Relationship of Labouring Affinities
RNCS – Revised National Curriculum Statement
SAMR – Substitution Augmentation Modification Redefinition
SAQA – South African Qualifications Authority
SL – Service Learning
SOGI – Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity
SRHR – Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights
STEM – Science Technology and Mathematics
SUN – Stellenbosch University
TAM – Technology Acceptance Model
TEC – Tertiary Education Commission
TPACK – Technological, Pedagogical And Content Knowledge
UDW – University of Durban-Westville
UKZN – University of KwaZulu-Natal
UN – University of Natal
UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UoB – University of Brighton
UTAUT – Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology model
WBE – Whole Brain Emulation
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PART ONE

PHILOSOPHICAL MUSINGS
1. UNDOING COGNITIVE DAMAGE

INTRODUCTION: THE ENCHANTED LOOM

(Re)presenting the Human Brain

In the book, *Man on his Nature*, Charles Sherington (1942) compared the complex structures, networks and functions of the human brain to a jacquard loom thus,

The great topmost sheet of the mass, where hardly a light had twinkled or moved, becomes now a sparkling field of rhythmic flashing points with trains of traveling sparks hurrying hither and thither. The brain is waking and with it the mind is returning. It is as if the Milky Way entered upon some cosmic dance. Swiftly the head mass becomes an enchanted loom where millions of flashing shuttles weave a dissolving pattern, always a meaningful pattern though never an abiding one, a shifting harmony of subpatterns.

The brain, Sherington (1942) implied, was more beguiling, more sophisticated and more exquisite than the most complex loom known to humans at that time, and his description conveyed the idea that it was some kind of magical, mystical machine toiling away, powering the mind with its neural electrical impulses. For Sherington, the quote settled the debate begun by Descartes (1984/1641) of the separation of mind (non-physical/immaterial) and brain (physical/material) by making explicit the connection of the one with the other. Sherington, it must be noted, was referring to the physiology of the brain, that organ that humans are born with, which he surmised, functioned in the same way in all persons. He assumed that the brains of all individuals are enchanted looms that continuously weave meaningful patterns. We know now that each brain is unique to each individual (Caine & Caine, 1991, p. 95), weaving meanings via neural concatenations and making interpretations in relation to external contexts.

As a response to likening the brain to a loom, the following questions which the various chapters in the book engage with are pertinent: Meaningful to whom? Meaningful in response to what? Does harmony of subpatterns translate into harmonious co-existence? Perhaps, a very brief tour of the brain is necessary at this juncture.
The Brain

The brain, it transpires is twice the size of the heart, weighing approximately 1.3kg and comprises about 100 billion neurons (Ornstein & Thompson, 1984). Tightly coiled to fit into the restricted space of the skull, it is divided into two by a thick band, the corpus callosum, giving rise to the flawed idea of a left and a right brain rather than an interactive one (Gazzaniga, 1985). Damasio’s (1994) work also shattered the myth of two functionally differentiated brains, a left (rational/language processor) and a right (emotional/creative) brain, showing instead that it does not work in isolated cortices; interconnections form neural highways that are linked for functional efficiency.

What is known, too, is that the enchanted loom is fragile and can be physiologically damaged which can result in, for example, paralysis (inability to move), aphasia (word comprehension impairment) and apraxia (speech impairment). Equally true is brain plasticity (see e.g. Diamond, 1988). The brain can recover from trauma, regenerate and compensate for lost neurons. How and why this happens is not always clear. Some aspects of the brain are still mysterious. For example, it is not obvious why some people develop Alzheimer’s disease (a total breakdown of the mind, dissociation with reality and fragmentation of memory) or manifest psychological conditions like neuraxis (considered a mild psychological disorder like the compulsion to wash hands excessively) or psychosis (a severe psychological disorder like schizophrenia) or why some individuals breakdown emotionally and become depressed while others manifest an optimistic and resilient attitude. What we do know, however, is that the brain can be impaired physiologically, psychologically, emotionally or cognitively through internal malfunctioning, trauma or degeneration, which, we want to emphasise, are not the foci of this book; instead we are concerned about cognitive damage in the absence of physiological malfunctioning, trauma or degeneration.

Cognitive Damage in the Absence of Physiological Damage

In this section we explore the ways in which the brain, as an organ of learning, is complicit in acquiring and actioning life to its detriment. For example, recalibration of the brain is possible because teaching is done verbally and, as argued by Korzybski (1948), language is used to create non-existent realities that can lead to confusion, alienation and delusion:

These ‘philosophers’, etc., seem unaware, to give a single example, that by teaching and preaching ‘identity’, which is empirically non-existent in this actual world, they are neurologically training future generations in the pathological identifications found in the ‘mentally’ ill or maladjusted. As explained on page 409, and also Chapter XXVI, whatever we may say an object ‘is’, it is not, because the statement is verbal, and the facts are not. (p. xxix)

It seems then, that ‘neurological training’ occurs when teaching is inefficient and lacks sophistication such that what is cannot be differentiated from what it is not. Thus we
are concerned that the function of learning can rewire intraneural connections, revise the weave patterns and rescript meaning making in numerous ways that are often not beneficial for all communities. For instance, formal, informal, intrinsic and extrinsic learning and external forces like culture, society, and institutions of education, influence sense of self in ways that are hazardous for some yet advantageous for other individuals. A case in point is the manifesto for a new world order, passionately argued by Monbiot (2004) in The Age of Consent:

Throughout history, human beings have been the loyalists of an exclusive community. They have always known, as if by instinct, who lies within and who lies without. Those who exist beyond the border are less human than those who exist within. (p. 8)

The art of dismembering and fragmenting communities and to isolate and separate one from another appears to be some kind of intuitive knowing inherent in human beings. But is it? Could it be the result of retroactive memory transmitted through the genes? Or, to appropriate Žižek’s (2008) description, could intuition be an ‘apparition of the Real’ (p. 59), an illusion of capturing verbally that which is elusive?

We are concerned too, that the history of human development is also a history of the failure of the enchanted loom to withstand the debilitating effects of distorted constructions of reality, and of its failure to resist historical repetition and, in so doing, it has mediated the reproduction of damaged rationalities for centuries, reminiscent of Nietzsche’s (1974) idea of “eternal recurrence” (section 341). Finally, we are concerned that the enchanted loom, which has enthralled and mystified human beings for millennia as the seat of intellect, is so vulnerable to cognitive damage.

COGNITIVE DAMAGE: AN ETERNAL DOOM?

Cognitive Damage Explained

By cognitive damage we mean the following: to accept and inhabit impositions that are antithetical to sense of self; the inability to recognise the ways and means in which the individual/self is marginalised, erased, rendered invisible, treated unjustly, oppressed, silenced, suppressed, censored, disregarded, ignored, mistreated, rendered powerless or enslaved; giving in to practices and structures of hegemony; obedience and acquiescence to imposition of these various forms of subjugation, the inability to overcome/resist these impositions when aware; and, the absence of agency, revolt or retributive action.

Cognitive damage, we argue, is not only a pathology of the downtrodden, the powerless or the subjugated individual, it is also manifested by those who hold and abuse positions of authority; promote hegemonic worldviews; suppress resistance and revolt against tyranny; mask the ways in which systems and structures privilege a few at the expense of the majority; and by those who maintain the status quo. Furthermore, between the oppressed and the privileged, lies a third category of
cognitive damaged: the so-called neutrals, that is, those who are not oppressed but are witnesses to oppression, yet indifferent or silent.

In effect, we want to know the reasons for the uninterrupted continuation of cognitive damage and, more importantly, how to undo it. The itemised listing of manifestations of cognitive damage would be regarded by Althusser and Balibar (1997) as symptomatic readings thereof. Peering beneath the symptoms, which are superficial in nature, is the first step, perhaps, to undoing cognitive damage. We begin the discussion with 'discourse' and 'representation' because words and visuals are powerful tools used to construct reality and they are also used in human learning. This will be followed by a discussion of the roles of ideology and hegemony to create and sustain cognitive damage.

**Discourse, Representation, Reality and Cognitive Damage**

Depending on one’s theory affiliation, discourse could be, for example, narrowed to text and context (Fairclough, 1992) or widened to include the totality of the field of discursivity (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). There are other articulations of discourse and discourse analysis (see e.g. Foucault, 1986, 1991; Koselleck, 1985, 1989; Luhmann, 1993, 1995) which we will not visit here as the first two mentioned are sufficient for the point we are making. What is common to the approaches is the attention to power relations that underpin the way we talk, describe and make meaning of the world we inhabit. Talking and meaning making are not neutral because they are implicated in the construction, reconstruction, revisioning and rearrangement of the world. Words, uttered by the powerful are potent, whilst the disempowered may be ignored or silenced. Critical analysis of discourses can reveal the ways in which power circulates, coagulates or bleeds out. We are inclined towards the discourse analytics of Laclau and Mouffe (1995).

We begin with an analysis of the 1955 Bandung Conference of Afro-Asian countries to exemplify how discourse constructs the world in unanticipated ways. The conference gave rise to the notion of Third World to mean an alliance emancipated from Eastern and Western bloc influences (Spivak, 1994). Brought together to promote political self-determination, cooperation and to resist colonialism, the 29 new decolonised states assumed that the third way would symbolise its power as a unified group (the Non-Aligned Movement). Instead, Third World became a one-sided, pathological synonym for countries depicted as poverty- and disease-stricken, economically needy, under-developed and backward. Hierarchically, it was construed as subordinate to the First and Second Worlds. The designation, Third World, constructed to represent an agentic, autonomous unity, resistant to the dominance of the First and Second Worlds, delivered instead, a pre-packaged concept to the powerful which was then deployed to subvert one of the intentions of the Bandung Conference. The Third World thus became associated with notions of weakness, subservience and pessimism. That all three worlds contained elements of development and under-development was conveniently ignored and the construction
reduced to essentialised pathology. Instead the reality that was being resisted was installed as the only meaning that could be attached thereto. More than sixty years later, the substituted reality persists; it will take many more years before it is revised. The example demonstrates that once labelling or categorisation or classification occurs, new realities which differ from those originally intended can result. The formation of BRICS (the alliance made up of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) is one such attempt. But here again, one can recognise the desire by BRICS countries to escape the pejorative realities associated with and, simultaneously, to distance themselves from the *Third World*.

We could shift the debate from geopolitical spaces to more familiar, local grounds (institutions of learning) and encounter the same game of domination by some and oppression of others. The production of inequalities within the structures of education is related to social class, economic and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1973, 1977, 2006), succinctly captured here by Reimer (1973):

The school system has thus amazingly become, in less than a century, the major mechanism for distributing values of all kinds among all the peoples of the world, largely replacing the family, the church, and the institution of private property in this capacity. In capitalist countries it might be more accurate to say that schools confirm rather than replace the value-distribution functions of these older institutions. Family, religion and property have such an important influence on access to and success in school that schooling alters only slowly and marginally the value distributions of an earlier day. Jefferson put it well when he said, in arguing for public schools, that by this means we shall each year rake a score of geniuses from the ashes of the masses. The result of such a process, as the English aristocracy learned long before Jefferson, is to keep the élite alive while depriving the masses of their potential leaders. (pp. 26–27)

Based on the aforementioned, discourse, we can agree, are all types of interactions that are non-innocent, political constructions of understanding the world, emanating from unequal relations of power. It is a constitutive force; representation is a similar force as articulated by Escobar (2012, p. 10):

[R]egimes of discourses and representation … can be analyzed as places of encounters where identities are constructed where violence is originated, symbolized and managed.

The quotation is a stark revelation of the outcomes of contested spaces marked not only by face-to-face socialisation but by a more insidious figuration, namely, representation. Representation takes many guises (word texts, photographs, paintings, drawings and collages) to describe reality, portray a thing/event/action in a particular way or to act on behalf of others. Acting on behalf of others, we want to make clear, should not be confused with the notion of political representation – speaking for those who cannot be present (Pitkin, 1967). In fact, acting on behalf of others often misrepresents individuals, rendering them invisible or insignificant or
creating vulnerabilities that disadvantage them even more. For example, Monbiot (2004) presented a convincing case to show the ways in which big organisations, created to cushion the financial weakness of poor countries, exacerbated their financial woes:

The two international bodies which are supposed to help struggling economies both to avoid and emerge from debt are the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. That they have failed is not difficult to see; even after receiving debt relief, several poor nations are spending more on interest payments than on primary education. Indeed the majority of their clients have fallen much further into debt than they were before these bodies intervened. … Indeed, it is demonstrable that the nations which have most obediently followed their prescriptions are among those which have suffered the most violent economic disruptions. (pp. 141–142)

We must remember that the ‘donor’ institutions and the ‘helped’ nations are governed by people who exemplify cognitive damage. How else can we explain the madness of organised and legitimised compliance on such a large scale? Cognitive damage operates not only at an individual level, it is systemic too, and it is the empty promise conveyed by an empty signifier like ‘debt relief’. In fact ‘debt’ is incurred by poor nations while international bodies get ‘relief’. In this instance, the reality created by words is an illusion because the sutured terms, ‘debt relief’, mask their split affinities in favour of one and detriment to the other, echoing Korzybski’s assertion that,

\[\text{[t]he present analysis shows that, under the all-pervading aristotelianism in daily life, asymmetrical relations, and thus structure and order, have been impossible, and so we have been linguistically prevented from supplying the potentially ‘rational’ being with the means for rationality. This has resulted in a semi-human, so-called ‘civilization’, based on our copying animals in our nervous process, which by necessity, involves us in arrested development or regression, and in general, disturbances of some sort. (p. 62, italics in original)}\]

It seems our capacity to be rational is compromised by power relations and cognitive damage. Structures like patriarchy (which authorise male authority over women and children), schools (which privilege some knowledge and not others) and political arrangements (which determine legality/illegality), are implicated in classifying and sorting human from non-human, good from bad, male from female and so on, promoting the notion of a binary world comprising us and them. Since both sides of the binary are cognitively damaged, it matters not that one could cross over from them to us or us to them. The damage remains, but disadvantage is displaced by privilege or vice versa.

The exposure of inequality, disadvantage and impotence described through its various mechanisms will lead invariably to the idea that human life is predicated on the principle of inequality, privileges for a few and disadvantage for the majority. We agree. Despite the installation of democracy in South Africa, discriminations of
various sorts continue to haunt us regarding access to technology, age, ability, career choice, class, culture, economic status, education, ethnicity, family structure, food choices, gender, health, heritage, land ownership, language spoken, marital status, nationality, occupation, political affiliation, race, religious belief, residential area, sex, sexuality, skin colour, shopping habits, social networks, and so on. Multiple categories could either enhance or jeopardise access to privilege. For example, a poor, black female could experience a life of suffering or escape suffering by marrying a rich, educated male or marriage creates the condition for suffering to be displaced by patriarchal dominance and physical violence. Most of those who are dispossessed, disadvantaged and deprived endure discrimination, rejection and marginalisation in many more than three categories. To complicate matters, some individuals may be privileged in some and disadvantaged in other settings. Spivak (2006) warns us too that the marginal (of any category or combination) are not a homogeneous group. So long as we are not disabused of our flawed thinking about what counts as important, that is, that all humans count, there will always be those who suffer and those who prosper. A paradigmatic shift (towards post-humanism) will require a revision of what counts: all living and non-living things count. Based on history, we are rather sceptical, though seriously concerned, about human capacity or desire to embrace more than self-interest. Our education, formal and informal, has failed us thus far. It has failed thus far to undo cognitive damage.

Ideaology, Hegemony and Cognitive Damage

Ideology (Marxian notion of a coherent system of political ideas) and hegemony (Gramscian notion of manufacturing consent), we argue, are the principle causes of cognitive damage and are the most pervasive invisible forces that structure the possibilities and limitations of being human. Being human should not necessarily be interpreted as positive as the unfolding argument will demonstrate. A ‘being’ could be constructed as subhuman, inhuman, superior human, inferior human, barely human or half-human depending on who is the articulator. Ideology and hegemony are serviced through language. Language not only constructs and structures the world; it is also important for conveying ideological and hegemonic articulations, not by those whose articulations hold sway but through the co-option and complicity of those at the receiving end. Co-option and complicity are possible because of distorted perceptions of our place in the world.

One of the clearest descriptions of ideology (though he did not name it so), anonymous authority was offered by Erich Fromm (1941) in Escape from Freedom. The excerpt below captures his explanation of how anonymous authority differs from external authority:

In external authority it is clear that there is an order and who gives it; one can fight against the authority, and in this fight personal independence and moral courage develop. But … in anonymous authority both command and
commander have become invisible. It is like being fired at by an invisible enemy. There is nobody and nothing to fight back against. (p. 190)

Anonymous authority, however, is not sufficient in itself to grasp the nature of ideology for there is implied a consciousness of being ‘commanded’. Ideology (and hegemony) operates on a horizon beyond consciousness. For clarity, we turn to Žižek (2008), who, by contrast, makes apparent the insidious nature of ideology by expanding on Marx’s thesis thereof,

‘they do not know it, but they are doing it’. The very concept of ideology implies a kind of basic, constitutive naiveté, the misrecognition of its own presuppositions, of its own effective conditions, a distance, a divergence between the so-called social reality, and our distorted representation, our false consciousness of it. (p. 24, italics in original)

Misrecognition of social reality is crucial for domination and exercise of power because it appears that the reality experienced is natural. Since the sources that power ideology and hegemony are invisible, those being manipulated give in to subjectivations that others them at worst or disadvantages them at best. Misrecognition is supported by fictions (master narratives) that are received as truths. These fictions are expressed in multiple ways, e.g.: abnormalisation (homosexuality); normalisation (gender roles); standardisation (IQ tests); naturalisation (patriarchy); doxa (religion); marginalisation (the homeless, the poor) subalternisation (the dispossessed and disempowered); surveillance mechanisms (schools and prisons); technologies of the self (self-surveillance); and governmentality (population control). Through these various means it becomes possible to capture the imagination of the masses, to colonise their minds and to hold them hostage to beliefs and practices that undermine and subjugate them in ways that appear to be legitimate. Through these means, decisions are imposed, policies are legitimised, beliefs are inculcated, and practices are established whilst the imbibers of these beliefs and practices, no matter how abhorrent, are blind to their manipulation, co-option and complicity in their own domination and subjugation. Blindness, false consciousness, misrecognitions and compliance are learnt in homes, schools, churches and organisations (amongst many more structures) over time, setting up the conditions for cognitive damage.

The education we offer rarely reveals the hidden forces and mechanisms that construct our world and our place in it. The fields of psychology, anthropology, history, geography, biology and economics often present knowledge not as contested but as true. Where and when contestations are offered, they are often memorised for examination purposes (and forgotten soon thereafter) while thinking tools to reveal practices of hegemony, or to uncover ideological beliefs are largely absent in our curricula. We should not be surprised by the null and hidden curricula in our education systems as curriculum planners are also cognitively damaged. So are we doomed to being cognitively damaged? We think not.
The most important question we pose in this chapter in particular, and in the book in general, is this: Can cognitive damage be undone? Postman (1996) gives us an idea of what it might mean to bring about change:

of course there are many learnings that are little else but a mechanical skill, and in such cases, there may be a best way. But to become a different person because of something you have learned- appropriate an insight, a concept, a vision, so that your world is altered- that is a different matter. (p. 3)

The answer he posits is ‘learning’ acquired through education. Education need not be formal; it can and should occur through multiple fora in multiple spaces. Unfortunately, those most affected by the present world order are those most likely to be deprived of the following: access to radical ideas and education; access to portals of power; access to structures of support; access to health and medical care; access to basic amenities; access to courts of law, and access to psychological well-being (respect and dignity). Re-envisioning education and reconceptualising curriculum may be some alternatives at hand. But could we make a radical shift, a shift that alters our world? We turn again to Postman (1996) for direction. He provides a provocative example of what should be asked “in each subject of the curriculum” (p. 128) to make education relevant and authentic, and more importantly, to rescript the master narratives that construct knowledge as truth:

Describe five of the most significant errors scholars have made in (biology, physics, history, etc.). Indicate why they are errors, who made them, and what persons are mainly responsible for correcting them. You may receive an extra credit if you can describe an error that was made by the error corrector. You will receive extra extra credit if you can suggest a possible error in our current thinking about (biology, physics, history, etc.). And you will receive extra extra extra credit if you can indicate a possible error in some strongly held belief that currently resides in your mind. (Postman, 1996, p. 28)

We know too that the world, as we have argued before, is constituted by language. To radically transform the current order will require the capturing of concepts, to attach new meanings thereto and to refuse that which is given. Negation, however, is easier said than done. To dislodge internalised oppression will require the Freirian notion of enlightened empowerment termed conscientizado (Freire, 2000) and interpreted as,

learning to perceive social, political and economic contradictions, and to take action against the aggressive elements of reality. (p. 35)

It will also require reflexive practice by those who can bring about change. The chapters in this compendium make various arguments and recommendations, and suggest implications for curriculum redesign, revision and reconceptualisation that
can be seen to be in alignment with Freire’s conscientisation agenda: to read the word, to read the world, to transform the world. We know that we face enormous challenges on many fronts but we cannot give in to pessimism. It is heartening to note that most of the chapters in this book provide empirical evidence that there are possibilities through curriculum intervention to undo cognitive damage and to bloom.

THE ARCHITECTURE OF THIS ANTHOLOGY

The chapters of this anthology are organised into three overlapping sections:

Part One (Philosophical musings) draws on a range of and introduces key constructs for the analysis of the higher education curriculum. The debates include an analysis of the ways the present education curricula (its disciplines and bounded categorisations), our social structures and operations, and the distribution of knowledge and power are implicated in producing, entrenching and supporting “cognitive damage”. Rather than fatalistically capitulating to these forces of oppression, the option for strengthening our capacity is offered via acknowledging the conscious critical activation needed in curriculum actions (Nyna Amin, Michael Anthony Samuel and Rubby Dhunpath). Furthermore, the analysis explores how those on the peripheries may be complicit in their own oppressions (Gayatri Spivak). Agency, we know, can be self-realised and expressed in a range of ways, including destructive acts of resistance or, ideally, for productive transformation through curriculum intervention.

This section also probes whether universities can still be regarded as concerned sources of practical, reliable and relevant scholarship. Has the purpose of higher education to generate discerning judgement and innovative epistemologies been relegated to the periphery in the era of global capitalism (Chatradari Devroop)? The curriculum of higher education could also be characterised as subtly promoting the delusion that even the aesthetics can be programmed and deployed through technologies (Dennis Schaufer). Which codified knowledges are being celebrated and cultivated via higher education curricula? Does the study of disciplines, for example, architecture, subtly promote outdated notions of modernist fetishes (Franco Frescura)?

These philosophical musings challenge architects of the higher education sector to generate mature curricula that speak against a world made up of isolated entities. Such discrete boundaries are exploited to service rampant competition between one individual and another and, furthermore, to alienate individuals from their environment. How does the curriculum of higher education shift from protecting securities of bounded selves to one that troubles knowledges, and that is cognisant of interconnected selves and relationships? Troubling knowledge has relevance not just for academic interdisciplinary pursuit, but is also relevant for all domains of life (Kriben Pillay). New modes for exploring how we produce relationships within higher education curriculum are explored as a form of “de-pathologising and
UNDOING COGNITIVE DAMAGE

decolonising mentalities”, creating a “relationship of labouring of affinities”, and generating “complicated conversations” (Mershen Pillay).

Further philosophical insights are offered about the limitations of a humanist anthropocentric way of thinking (Bert Olivier). The loss of focus on the “reign of the human” is reinterpreted as a gain, prompting a shift towards a posthumanist, post-anthropocentric approach in a variety of disciplines, not just in the humanities, but across the landscape of higher education curriculum. Using film studies as metaphors for curriculum analysis, and drawing on Deleuze and Gattari’s work, this section evokes an interpretation of “becoming other” and “becoming animal”.

The juxtaposition of these multi-disciplinary inputs provides a rich collage of theoretical insights, establishing lenses through which to critique our research engagement in curriculum development and analysis.

Part Two (Curriculum shifts) explores the enactment into practice of alternative curriculum approaches when designing or analysing the higher education curriculum. What shifts are already under way through the curriculum choices course designers and policy-makers are engaging? What is the influence of curriculum shifts? Can the shifts extend beyond the confines of policy implementation studies, or the investigation of the pedagogical readiness of the actors within the higher education system to chart new directions? How can curriculum shifts redefine the expanding field of curriculum studies?

The examples are drawn from troubling the instrumentalistic and managerialistic interpretations of national policy implementation analysis studies (William Pinar). It shifts conceptions of community service pedagogies beyond patriarchal, parochial and patronising preoccupations, instead, offering the need for dialogical spaces in pedagogies of dialogue and listening (Julia Preece).

This section also expands the notion of the curriculum beyond classroom-based course designs and pedagogies. Instead, it argues that the institution is continually communicating a quiet curriculum via the ways in which it chooses to profess historical interpretations of itself, its shifting identities and its (dis)connectedness to the social, temporal and cultural-political spatiality. Textual representations of historicity and spatiality, by varied individuals of an institution across time, constitute another dimension of the higher education curriculum studies landscape (Michael Anthony Samuel). These multiple readings problematise the quality of relationships that the university higher education system sets up within the institution itself, and between the institution and its surrounding communities. It invokes alternative vocabularies to consider higher education pedagogy as recursively dialogical, mediating adaptive leaderships in re-negotiating its power relations across different spaces and social actors: the general public, the targeted working environments of graduates, other higher education institutions, the nation state and international collaboration partners (Hyleen Mariaye).

The section also deals with curriculum innovations in interdisciplinary studies such as gender, health sciences and religious studies. Exposure to alternative
multidimensional readings across bounded categorisations influences how students of different religious positionalities and perspectives choose to activate new directions for research (Sarojini Nadar & Sarasvathie Reddy). The section addresses marginalised groups such as gays, lesbians, bi-sexual, transgerndered and inter-sexed individuals as exemplars of re-defining an extended notion of what constitutes the discipline of curriculum studies. How individuals of different generations interpret these reformulations in a master curriculum studies programme is explored (Thabo Msibi). This section also provides an intellectual response to developing marginalised languages as a corpus for university teaching and learning. Developing marginalised languages provides counterpoints to the argument that African languages are not able to sustain higher education curriculum restructuring endeavours. A strengthened, co-ordinated effort at multiple levels of the higher education system is required to activate an alternative that is operationally and philosophically coherent (Langa Khumalo). The section concludes with a critical examination of the potentialities and limitations of technological innovation in enhancing the quality of university pedagogies and curriculum design. We can easily become seduced into believing that technology would resolve many of our current challenges in higher education, but caution is advised about how it is appropriated to service particular agendas (Craig Blewett).

Part Three (Mis) directions?) charts a prospective agenda drawing on explicit strategies at an institutional level to engage with the project of systemic curriculum reform. The strength of advocating a systems-wide institutionally-led curriculum development process is counteracted in the closing chapter which privileges the value of a “curriculum without borders”, and “working with uncertainty” as valued orientations for quality curriculum change. The presentation of a theoretical framework drawn from curriculum explorations in teacher education and medical education for activating a more socially-just, socially-responsive (and seemingly “incoherent knowledge space”) in a/an (de)intellectualised, complexified higher education curriculum, is offered as new directions for curriculum theorising and design (Nyna Amin).

Finally, this book makes a case for a new language to engage alterative reconstructions of higher education curriculum. Part One develops the vocabulary for critiquing cognitive damage; Part Two explores how these changes are being enabled and constrained in higher education in curriculum spaces; and Part Three marks the shift to a confidence in a borderless curriculum.

Multiple levels of reformatting and strengthening will be necessary to address the reconstruction of higher education curriculum (See Figure 1.1. below). The diverse competing forces impacting on the design, delivery and transformation of the higher education curriculum at personal, institutional, programmatic and national/international levels are invoked here illustrating the multiple levels of responsiveness required, and the intersected-ness and blurring of boundaries across these considerations theoretically, politically, epistemologically, contextually and methodologically.
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2. HUMANITIES, DEMOCRACY AND THE POLITICS OF KNOWLEDGE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is divided into three somewhat disjointed parts. I have not tried to create artificial transitions. The first section is an edited transcript of only part of what actually happened at the podium. The second part is something like a prepared paper. The third part is answers to a series of questions generated by the abstract I had sent. I have not deleted all repetitions. I wanted to keep the aura of the classroom.

AT THE PODIUM: SPEAKING THEN AND THERE

Universities are a great weapon for us. The university needs to be used. Yet when a vision is institutionalised, it is the laws of institutionalisation and disciplinarisation that take over rather than the power of the vision itself. The beginning of what seems like success is actually the beginning of problems. That is the theme of this chapter.

Another sub-theme might be the lesson of being folded together with your enemy, being complicit, folded together, not complicit in the sense of conspiratorial or involvement in something underhanded. Often we teach in a knowledge-managed way against our best convictions because we want to keep the job; we are folded together with what we want only to oppose. That is the first rule of forging a strong critique, not us and them, but the fact that we are in it together. No excusing but also no accusing the protocols of whatever it is that we are critiquing so that we can locate the point in the system that can turn it around, for use.

Let us go back to the theme: What seems like success is the beginning of problems. ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ an essay that you mentioned when you introduced me, became for me a problem that led to a beginning (Spivak, 1999). To evaluate the place of French theory in my vision of myself at that time of my life, I turned toward my own class, which is the sort of comfortable middle class although the woman that I was dealing with was certainly less comfortable than we were by then. Broadly speaking, then, I turned toward my own class, I turned to my own caste, and I turned to my family. That was where I turned. But the woman who was my example was a special kind of subaltern that Antonio Gramsci, the Italian activist who defined the concept, could only imagine when he was in prison being looked after by a woman whose sister, his wife, was exiled in her own country as a member of the OGPU, the Soviet security and intelligence agency.
In the classic Gramscian definition, the subaltern is a social group, not single. And secondly, a subaltern is someone who is denied access to the structures of social mobility. In 1986 I began to try Gramsci’s idea of the production of the subaltern intellectual without specifically thinking of Gramsci except as internalised through teaching. His idea had been to make the super-educated traditional intellectual, namely myself, instrumental in learning to learn how to teach cognitively damaged minds. So when you say ‘teaching and learning’, for me, since I am not an institutional philosopher of education, it is the lessons learnt from these fifty years of institutional teaching at Columbia and at reputable universities in the United States but also in the lowest sector of the electorate in India, my country of citizenship, landless illiterates, so-called untouchables, people who do not know the word that is used by the upwardly class mobile movement, a Sanskrit classical language word – Dalit – which is used outside to recognise such groups. Judging from these two ends, my lesson is: learn to learn how to teach this specific group. I should like to think that I am what in theoretical language would be called the dangerous supplement, showing that the toolkits and templates produced by knowledge management are incomplete, that they must be exceeded by learning the specific mind-set of a group, opening up homogenising statistics.

I was looking at your Quality Enhancement Project (CHE, 2014) and it is very good material. The framers really want to help the students; they want to bring students success:

The focus is necessitated by the combination of low participation rate, only 17% of 20–24 year-olds in 2011, low throughput rates, and stark racial bias in student success. (Grayson, 2014, p. 2)

No one can fault this. On the other hand, for speed and convenience the framers went to John Kotter’s work, which was developed within a business context and then expanded into other contexts with no real care for specificity. Although in the published literature, we read: “much of it can be adapted to a higher education context,” I would demur. The way in which one leads and succeeds in business is good with these kinds of knowledge management toolkit-type systems. That sort of success is not the success in preparing the ground with damaged cognitive systems. To insert the disenfranchised into entrepreneurship without subject-formative training is a sure formula for corruption and violence, in spite of the occasional Horatio Alger story aired on television or social media.

When at home, I work with my teachers and supervisors, I tell them,

I have come to repay ancestral debts. I am a good person. My parents were incredibly good people, plain-living, high-thinking, anti-casteists, against religious sectarianism, they were very solid people, but two generations of good people are nothing in the context of thousands of years of cognitive damage. We brought you up by denying you the right to intellectual labour, brought you up for manual labour, punished you for intellectual labour and,
indeed, bred in you obedience. I want you to know that I am your enemy because history is larger than personal goodwill and I want you to be able to work without me.

Now this particular situation, learn to learn how to teach, they know what I am talking about. Everything is shared. My education teacher, the education director, has had seven years of schooling. My ecological agriculture director has had four years of schooling, nothing but elementary schooling and really bad education like everybody else in class apartheid, so that their capacity for unconditional intellectual labour has been destroyed. Some of the illiterate ones are smarter, and they are smart because they have not been ruined by bad education. In such a context, when you take knowledge management, what I am obliged to say is that it actually impoverishes, existential impoverishment for the sake of convenience, it actually destroys the possibility of education in the broader sense. It is a formula for success where the specificity of groups is generalised as in the Kotter expansions and success is measured in soft statistics.

Rubby Dhunpath gave me ‘Democracy and Humanities,’ as the title. And I am indeed talking about the connection between humanities and democracy which is the task that the framers of the Quality Enhancement Project have set out for themselves, not corporate financial success. It is the humanities, with its other-directed methodological focus which can promote in the student the intuition that democracy is not just me, me, me, autonomy and freedom – it is a deep aporia, a deep contradiction – it is also at the same time equality for people who are completely dissimilar to me, rogues and thieves, anybody, they are the same as I am.

Human rights initiatives are concerned with promoting justified self-interest of victims but that does not produce a just society for all. Democracy has at its heart this intolerable contradiction, which is why democracy has to be worked at. I am talking about humanities teaching in that context, I am not talking about how you teach everything. I am just talking about this slow cooking of the soul as it were, without which you cannot use systems. Your students can then use knowledge management systems critically (a hope) because a basis has been built – which can only be slow – upon which the management takes hold within a different epistemological pattern, not on top but on tap (a hope). There is no other way. Speed is essential, yet in order to be able to use speed right rather than just for hacking, or pornography, or all kinds of piracy and theft, or killer drones, or the transformation of space into a business enterprise, you have to prepare the ground first with humanities teaching which does not have to prove itself in a world that can only value digitality. Digitality is like a dangerous horse. You have to know first how to ride.

Quality and development are compromised and existentially impoverished by a complete confidence in so-called toolkits and templates. I was looking at the picture of national and local coordination in the Quality Enhancement Project literature that I was studying and I am certain that it is not going to rearrange desires so that a democratic society is possible. Yet most of the Kotter statements are psychological
and behaviourist in nature. Many would argue that those premises and conclusions resulting from it are based on a rather crude model of the human mind, not including the specificities of the class-racialised other. When the Kotter project says something as broad as ‘incorporating the changes into the culture,’ it should seem like a joke in the South African context. You can only try – repeat, try – to do this if you have earned the right to enter that other space. That is, training in literary reading. Not just reading novels but teaching reading so that you hang out in the space of the other. It is taught negatively today only within groups that practice genocide. And we do not try to create a world that will not want to kill.

THE PREPARED SPEECH: AS THE OCCASION WAS IMAGINED

Terrorism teaches us how political economy, using the ideology of race, caste, or religion, can destroy teaching and learning. And its opposite, the ‘rule of law’ that arises because barriers between national capital and global capital are removed, and the state is run to manage the global economy rather than specifically to look after its citizens, attempts to enhance teaching and learning by producing toolkits that also limit teaching and learning. In the previous section, I discussed the Quality Enhancement Project, because that has come down on your university. In fact, that sort of initiative exists in selected places everywhere, globally, today.

The official descriptions of the project say that there should be a national focus on improving teaching and learning, particularly at the undergraduate level, which accounts for over 80% of student registrations. This focus is necessitated by the combination of low participation rate, only 17% of 20 to 24-year olds in 2011, low throughput rates and stark racial bias in student success “…[T]he next cycle of activities would be formulated as the Quality Enhancement Project (QEP), with a focus on student success across the entire higher education sector…” Although John Kotter’s work was developed within a business context, much of it can be adapted to a higher education context. Kotter identifies eight steps for leading change:

1. Establishing a sense of urgency: Help others see the need for change and they will be convinced of the importance of acting immediately.
2. Creating the guiding coalition: Assemble a group with enough power to lead the change effort, and encourage the group to work as a team.
3. Developing a change vision: Create a vision to help direct the change effort and develop strategies for achieving that vision.
4. Communicating the vision for buy-in: Make sure as many as possible understand and accept the vision and the strategy.
5. Empowering broad-based action: Remove obstacles to change, change systems or structures that seriously undermine the vision and encourage risk-taking and non-traditional ideas, activities and actions.
6. Generating short-term wins: Plan for achievement that can easily be made visible, follow through with those achievements and recognise and reward those who were involved.
7. Never letting up: Use increased credibility to change systems, structures and policies that don’t fit the vision. Hire, promote and develop people who can implement the vision. Reinvigorate the process with new projects, themes and change agents.

8. Incorporating changes into the culture: Articulate the connections between the new behaviours and organisational success, and develop the means to ensure leadership development and succession (Grayson, 2014, p. 3).

After this comes the typical diagram (Grayson, 2014, p. 7):

Process for each phase of the QEP [indicating] institutionally-based…and nationally-coordinated activities.

When I spoke at the education ministry in West Bengal about the problem of teaching English, they were ready to make for me just such a toolkit, explainable by just such diagrams. And our love affair with ‘heritage’ work – following the orders of the World Monuments Fund – uses just such broad generalisations for absurd systemic change.

As I have already pointed out, quality and development are compromised and existentially impoverished by a complete confidence in so-called toolkits and templates. The desire for such speedy solutions must be rearranged with the training of the imagination to understand that the toolkit closes off the contingent and therefore change. One must teach how to make toolkits as halfway houses to be undone by the contingent rather than offer toolkits for a solution to the problem of action. A ‘dangerous supplement’ must persistently (important word) be put on these kinds of successful systems – successful because reductive and easy – in order to bring in the incalculable because toolkits stop the contingent. Indeed, there is no computer that can catch the contingent (Rousseau as cited in Derrida, 1967, p. 229).

One of the problems with toolkits is that they make teaching ‘easier’. Far away from radical solidarity tourism, teachers of language, as well as the teachers of literature from whom they are hierarchically separated, no longer confront the challenge of the unexpected. We might want to remember that the teachability of literature is not only in its categorisability, but in the fact that it can open us to a contingency that escapes all knowledge management. I am not a romantic. I certainly do not suggest that we go back to the primitivism of emoting over global communities that I witness at many international conferences where I am invited because I am seen as a ‘postcolonial’ person. We want to combat orthodox Linguistics and Anthropology, colonial disciplines, in the same way that I am trying to combat from the inside the discipline of literary reading becoming colonial as it allows itself to be quantified, rather than rise to the insistent defense of the humanities as instrument and weapon (Spivak, Resisting trivialization, 2014). The seduction of digital humanities makes us forget that the greatest usefulness of the humanities is to upload the computer in the brain.

In John Kotter’s list, as in the Social Covenant approved by the World Economic Forum (their point in common being a corporate interest in social change), there
are two kinds of items: one talking the talk (basic human values), the other walking the walk (‘good’ jobs for non-graduates; strong technical education opportunities; apprentice schemes, a pro-active tax and incentive system and 21st century industrial strategy). One cannot walk the walk by merely agreeing to do so. It is a collective decision, not merely something enforced from the top. One must learn the habit of thinking about other people as equal though not same, described in the previous section as housing the aporia of democracy. Here I point out that this is also exactly the situation between the reading pupil and the one who produced the literary work. This is the kind of democratic training that the humanities can provide.

In addition to university teaching, largely in the United States, I have also given time and skill (not just money and site-visits) for 30 years, training teachers and children at six small elementary schools established by me among the landless illiterate in western West Bengal. Much of what I say is tested there.

Normally our desire is to do things ourselves or for ourselves. In good literary teaching, the student is taught carefully to hang out in the space of the other – understand what s/he confronts in terms of the unknown person who wrote what s/he confronts. This is the secret of the ethical and the democratic. One has to stay with it, not follow easy steps so that one can say ‘I have helped you’. The long-term implementation of any plan for building a just society through education calls for the teaching of the humanities at all levels and in all places so that the desire for social justice can inhabit souls long-term, not always susceptible to evaluation by checking statistically how each item on a list is institutionally fulfilled. Huge and detailed country-by-country statistical tables are no doubt useful, but, in terms of sustaining an improved world, we have to look at the fact that nations are not monolithic abstract averages, and that evaluations are remote fact-gathering which often do not reflect everyday reality.

We teachers of the humanities – literature and philosophy – at our best train the imagination into knowing ourselves differently, and knowing the world differently, so that our students and we ourselves want to do the good things contained in the Covenant rather than having to be checked following enforcement.

Today the emphasis in education is acquiring digital speed. In order to be able to use the digital for social justice, the soul has to be trained slowly, and that is where literary training as I have described it comes into play. Recently, at the celebration of the Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe’s life, the positive effect of his literary writings was repeatedly emphasised. With my experience of work in Africa, I was obliged to say that, below a certain class line, Nigerians had no idea who he was and what he wrote. The task therefore was to expand the circle of Nigerians who could not only read, but also learn from the literary.

I am remembering the tremendously bright student Rahul Lohar in Shahabad whom I kept pushing to make his head work to think of what it was that the measurements in feet, used to calculate its area – what indeed it was that these units measured. To engage one’s head for intellectual labour when it has not been millennially allowed to one’s social group is indeed comparable to accessing the
text of the other in oneself. It is the ‘literary’ practice for the ethical, quite distinct from the internalised obligation to serve and from conscientised violence. It does not resemble the ‘literature’ that the dominant assigns as a proper name. I would not push the student of middle-class parents in this way. Intellectual labour is historically available there, and can be joyful. But this is a son of landless illiterates and his entire life is lived on other terms. And indeed I believe from his extraordinarily impulsive responses, interrupting other teaching, that he was fully alive to this. This is the ‘literary’ for the child because it gives the same practice as does literature for trained elite readers like ourselves and our elite students.

Only one of my six rural schools was taught by two caste Hindu men. The junior teacher, hardly capable of teaching Classes Infant, One, and Two, bought a B.Ed degree by scraping together 100,000 rupees. He will go on ‘training’ for two months and hopes to slide into a job of high school teaching through this bribe, although that job actually costs between Rs. 1,500,000 and Rs. 1,600,000, as he innocently told me. The very evening that I got this news, I was dining with Santosh Karmakar, a leftist high school teacher who is also part of the rural landed gentry, and his daughter, who is also getting a B.Ed degree, at Viswa Bharati University (established by the national hero Rabindranath Tagore) who told me that her training required 1400 hours of exams during the one year course, two months of practice teaching at a high school, to be observed by a registered examiner, and so on. Much harder than the B.A., she told me. Now you see how the teachers of the children of the gentry are prepared, for quality (although corruption has entered even here); and how the subalterner children’s ‘teachers’ are prepared – these are the years of schooling that are counted on the Human Development Index to assess a country’s ‘development’. The subalterner must be kept in a situation of only manual labour – bribed with sports and the famous hundred days of employment programme – so that we can keep the largest sector of the electorate as victims of epistemic and physical violence, in order to produce votes. Democratic judgment in the marginal or the subalterner is a fearful thing (Panda, n.d.)

‘Why is there such an upsurge of interest in knowledge?’ asks Prusak (1997, p. vii), editor of Knowledge in Organizations, citing the Pre-Socratics. Such a question ignores the plain fact that the word ‘knowledge’ has changed since the Pre-Socratic era. (There was, of course, no English at that time. And, if we are thinking the world, we must – absolutely – remember the many languages that make meaning for its peoples. As a doctor working in Kenya who refuses to be a top-down health worker remarked: “The people will understand Swahili, but you can’t speak to their heart unless you speak their language: ‘I’m getting what you’re saying, but I’m not taking it in’”. That is a basic human value: talking to the heart. If you think it is inconvenient, as it is, indeed, don’t dream of improving the world.) Real knowledge depends on cooking the soul with slow learning, not the instant soup of a one-size-fits-all toolkit. The world is not populated by humanoid drones. You cannot produce a toolkit for ‘a moral metric,’ or, if you do, you will be disappointed.

In Nigeria and Kenya, some of us facilitate a project for databasing all the unsystematised mother tongues of sub-Saharan Africa. I know the situation in South
Africa is different. But I would like to share with you some of the things we think together.

Intellectual labour begins with the training of children, slowly. This is what creates the pool of secondary and tertiary students, away, one hopes, from the long-established hierarchies. And it has been abundantly demonstrated that, an at least bilingual primary education lays the foundation not only for learning other languages (including mathematics, digitality, English, of course, and the like); but also connects the world of social justice and general social welfare with the earliest stages of a child’s development. The ‘global’ languages are first language to only a part of the world. They have an intrinsic connection to them. Others, and we are talking race, class and gender here, suffer a loss of connection with their infancy language and this is an ethical loss as significant as climate change for the world’s future.

These languages are not dying and in need of preservation. They are flexible – because not separated by 19th and 20th century colonial disciplines of linguistics and anthropology. They are alive and inter-comprehensible, and in use for electoral campaigning, at least in sub-Saharan Africa. We make use of this existing resource, quite distinct from the past-oriented preservation of endangered languages. We give health, education and agricultural workers future-oriented access to these crucial instruments of successful delivery; the living mother tongues of Africa. The goal of our longitudinal research is to create a multi-portal global access platform, which allows researchers to document, explore and provide portals for the community and for the workers in the field. Its broader consequences will embrace innovative legal research in access portals and international research in oral history and language study.

Higher education based on such bilingual primary education is richer and more appropriate to the effort to break the old class solidarities. The impossible goal is not to keep reproducing the old class solidarities through access to higher education but to expand the scope of higher education by integrating it with a holistic and classed vision of the entire education spectrum. When development thinkers such as Mkandawire (2015, p. 19) quite correctly ask for higher education aid, they must take this into account otherwise, the African ‘private sector’ will be described as essentially ‘unlikely to finance more than a quarter of the major investment needs’. We are training an expanding private sector. This is why their desires must be re-arranged and I have tried to outline briefly why emphasis must be put on the study of the humanities.

ANSWERS TO THE PRESENT QUESTIONS

How can the humanities produce the intuitions of democracy in the broadest possible race, class- and gender-diversified sector of the population?

No society ‘develops’ if its inhabitants are not introduced to the practice of freedom, which is rather different from the establishment of rights by intervention on the part of elected representatives, agitation by constitutional activists, or public interest litigation through national or international interest. However poor and oppressed the groups you teach, the contradictory habits of no competition yet class
struggle, absolute equality yet gender preference, no encouragement to leadership yet problem-solving in every detail of classroom practice: all of these must be encouraged. They change as we go up in level, of course. Teaching justified self-interest – as in collective bargaining, human rights interventions or Occupy Wall Street – does not necessarily lead to a just society.

What Is It to Teach the Humanities?

Democracy is now equated with an operating civil structure, the functioning of a hierarchised bureaucracy, and ‘clean’ elections. We have plenty of examples around the world, that unrelenting state violence on the model of revenge and retaliation can co-exist with so-called democracy. Revenge is indeed a kind of wild justice that proves that no retribution is adequate to the outlines of the tribute. It has nothing, however, to do with a vision of social justice, which builds itself on its own indefinite continuation. It nests in all children’s, and therefore everyone’s, capacity to use the right to intellectual and imaginative labour, not just in ease and speed of learning. This is why it is not enough to compartmentalise ‘higher education,’ which also preserves class. And, in order to be supple enough to become ‘real’ rather than merely powerful, statistical evaluation by way of toolkits should not be replaced or opposed, but supplemented, by the humanities style reading skills, not confined to a charmed circle, circulating in its own circuit, quite apart from R&D and policy, also circulating in its charmed circuit, apart from the readers. Humanities, in my sense, are a form of imaginative activism that must permeate qualitative and quantitative welfare and economic disciplinary training as well as human rights training. Currently, it is the last group that shares something with the humanities, at least in select elite universities in the United States. In these programmes, human rights legalisms trump the slow reading skills of the humanities.

What Is the In-Built Aporia of Democracy?

An aporia is a situation where two right solutions cancel each other out. Yet one solution must always be(come) chosen in every contingency. This is the in-built and definitive aporia within democracy: it is autonomy (freedom from), liberty; and others (freedom to), equality: us and them. Irreducibly, democracy is the aporetic site of liberty and equality and the children in democracies must be trained into it. There is nothing but obstacles in its way. I speak of class apartheid; of which I have given a concrete example above. Look now at an example from the top: when I explained to a graduate student from a Latin American country that the so-called ‘terminal M.A.’ (no financial aid, no access to the PhD stream) at U.S. Research 1 universities was a fundraising mechanism, he told me “with globalisation everything has changed, we don’t mind buying the brand name for future advancement”. This is why I chose as title for my Netaji oration in Calcutta, my hometown: ‘Freedom After Independence?’ Freedom to, after Freedom from.
Otherwise, a regenerated Khilafat movement (1919–1924) – ISIS founding a new Caliphate (Khilafat) – legitimises the politics of the Sykes-Picot conversation which wrote the map of the ‘Middle East’ by reversal and the complex history of metropolitan minority identitarianism and heritagism draws thousands of ‘democratic’ Arab Spring Tunisians and Muslim Europeans/Americans, and women into it. (‘Heritagism’ in West Bengal and continental Africa seems so far to be ignorant of its global politics.) No awareness of aporia here. Only liberty as identity. Our task is rather to rearrange the desire for the transcendental, persistently (important word), from belief to imagination, from rational choice to the class-specific diversified literary rather than offer ‘clash of civilisations’ style comments such as ‘they do not share our values’ (Canadian Foreign Minister on CNN) or ‘they have no human values’ as offered by a Silicon Valley executive and a politically correct female staff member at a Council on Values meeting (James, 2008). The New Social Covenant of the World Economic Forum wants to perform some movement of change in an altogether confused way (giving them the benefit of the doubt). It therefore requires the literary – as training for the ethical – as a method. In a world of the denial of intellectual labour – in a recent Education Supplement of The New York Times, a piece advising recent graduates on entering the professional schools begins with the words: ‘We are not talking humanities’ – its fashioners will not accept this (‘Going professional: The ins and outs,’ 2014). Development can be in any direction, it does not bring with it a value system – it is an unconditional thing, but is always constrained by conditions, and in our world by economic considerations. It is what I call ‘sustainable underdevelopment,’ because it is often the level of development that is kept at a minimum so that profit maximisation can be sustained. The word ‘sustainable’ is also open-ended and does not carry any conditions within it. As for democracy, it is the only system of government that is hospitable to all ways of thinking and therefore cannot be driven if the electorate is not educated in a judgment that can be directed toward others. This, again, is the aporia or double bind between liberty, which is supposedly unconditional, and equality, which imposes a condition to be aware that others, even completely unlike you, are supposedly imaginable by you as equal. When I work this through the formula ‘other people’s children’, I am told that that is a liberal bio-political notion. But we should be able to think the child as absolute event without compromising reproductive rights or human beings’ right to choose. The first is unconditional, like justice; the second, an important condition, like Law.

How Do We Confront the Inevitable Corporatisation of the Entire Education System?

By the persistent construction of a critical mass. Antonio Gramsci’s ‘New Intellectual’ is a permanent persuader. We must continue to speak out; that humanities training will never generate income for the university directly. It is rather an epistemological and ethical health care for the society at large. These are the fully prepared global citizens
and leaders that one imagines as all philosophers assume a rational being. Material conditioning of the intending subject cannot otherwise be grasped. The relationship between the imagination and intention hosts the right to abstraction, so long denied to the subaltern and so fast disappearing under rational choice, behaviourist economics and knowledge management among the elite. Resources should be spent to make the humanities a more attractive choice for interested students so that the number of such persons in society increases significantly. If international socialism died of an ethics-shaped hole – in other words, no development of a new approach to the ethical – global capitalism, although it is not as embarrassed to talk the ethical talk, will continue to live with the same terminal disease – an ethics-shaped hole, while millennial history is legitimised by reversal.

Let us get back for a moment to the World Economic Forum, wanting to turn capitalism toward social justice. I have pointed out already that their good goal, in itself revealing more and more ideological roadblocks, has inadequate imaginative resources. But they do acknowledge complicity – we alone have done this. Unfortunately, the strongest tradition of amelioration for them is what any serious examination must call sustainable underdevelopment, which is what quality promotion by knowledge management helps sustain further. Sustainable underdevelopment. Education by statistic and risible do-good projects by the digitised under-thirties.

*What Is the Role of the Curriculum?*

Not much. Because of the stratification of society, a regularised curriculum is only good for mainstreaming. But a customised curriculum is also a waste of time. It is the method of teaching/reaching that is important – an uncoercive re-arrangement of desires – reaching the cognitively damaged epistemic instrument.

Of new textbooks?

How not to use the computer. The West Bengal State Education Commission has produced an excellent set of primary school textbooks. Subaltern teachers find them very hard to teach because they do not resemble the old awful ones. I went to the director of the textbook programme to help him with news from below. He said we are trying to win back the English-medium school children, the children, in other words, of the rich and of the upper middle class. No time for the subaltern.

What are the limits of economic empowerment? The inability to think of income as instrument, and not only for self-enhancement. ‘Development’ is the economic transition into the circuit of capital with insufficient attention to subject-formation. Ethics as such cannot be practiced after business, or the business of medicine-as-triage, has been sustained. Ethics are unconditional.

How are we to approach indigenous knowledge systems? By entering their protocol and earning the right to rearrange from within, learning from mistakes.

How do we gauge ‘authenticity’ in knowledge? By noticing the manner of the production of detail.
What is the relationship between quality in education and the democratic imperative? Content and form.

*What Is the Relationship between Class, Race, and Liberal Education in Our Countries?*

Liberal education is a place of struggle. Within the colonial system liberal education was imitative, class-divisive. With no unmediated control over the national system it produced a useless class. We undo poison with poison here. Poison can become medicine. This is not a ‘critique of Eurocentrism’. In the rural schools I try to make the groups friendly with the wretched map of the world on the back cover of the geography book. I point at the north western corner of the huge Eurasian continent on the terrible map and tell them that that is Europe and that though so small, they won. I discuss with them how they won (since capital-production is not a crime) and even use such mid-Victorian examples as James Watt watching the lid dance on the pot of boiling water. I remind myself not to be an ‘improver’ like the colonialists and discuss with the co-workers (male and female teachers and supervisors) from the community the fact that I am not drawing profits from the work for and with them. Although they are not well acquainted with the world map and know nothing about colonialism, and have not seen any factories of any significant size, they do understand what profit or *munafīs* is. I try to give them the sense of the cultural capital I acquired because I teach them and try moralistically to avoid its extreme results by not having a webpage.

*What Is the Relationship between a Will to Social Justice and Enforcement?*

The first has to be produced long-term, customised, and full of uncertainty. The second is a short-term necessity ultimately productive of a culture of fear and fully compromised when the enforcers on the ground are victims of class apartheid.

*What Is It to Interpret a History of Violence and Use It without Accusation or Excuse within the Broadest Interpretation of the Academy?*

The French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, himself a strong anti-colonialist among the colonisers, read the book Fanon wrote in the last 10 weeks of his life, knowing that he was marked for death by acute leukaemia, even as he was being hounded by the colonising government of France, as an endorsement of violence itself – not reading between the lines, where Fanon insists that the tragedy is that the very poor are reduced to violence, because there is no other response possible to an absolute absence of response and an absolute exercise of legitimised violence from the colonisers. Their lives count as nothing against the death of the colonisers: unacknowledged Hiroshimas over against sentimentalised 9/11s. Here the lesson of Gandhi regarding the power of passive resistance and the contrastive lesson of Israel in the exercise of state legitimised violence drawing forth violence in extremism is
useful today. Fanon’s own warning is contained in *A Dying Colonialism*. Against the grain of his optimism of the will, he writes: “it is no longer the age of little vanguards” (Fanon, 1965, p. 1).

**Why Is National Liberation Not a Revolution?**

Working within the problems created by a postcolonial nation which brings back the pre-colonial problems that the great historian Fernand Braudel called *longue durée* or long term: “structures which lie invisible below the surface of social activities,” many of us think that the real disaster in colonialism lies in destroying the minds of the colonised and forcing them to accept mere violence – allowing no practice of freedom, so that these minds cannot build when apparent decolonisation has been achieved. From the example of mature leaders such as Du Bois and Mandela, we know or can at least have the feeling that Fanon would have gone in that direction.

In the postcolonial world, hero worship and ancestor worship stand in the way of the production of the will to social justice. Those of us interested in building postcolonial democracies think that these heroes should be slowly and carefully transformed into teaching texts. In the case of Nelson Mandela, for example, the strongest teaching element is the unconditional ethical – the risky imaginative activism that dares to say yes to the enemy. If one enters the protocol of the heroic life with critical intimacy, reading its text as the symbolic – telling us about the subject’s relationship to the imaginary – the greatest collective imaginary of colonial oppression being precisely the dream of liberation – it is possible, again with the greatest care, not to exclude the transformation of the *longue durée* into historical symptomaticity of even the most extraordinarily heroic among us, to make the hero a human warning for those of us who are merely human without the heroism. This is a transformation of the *imitatio Christi* idea of role-model, today emphasised in faith-based leadership initiatives. We cannot forget that this is the substance of the greatest genre the world has, not confined to Hellenic culture alone: tragedy, the tragic hero of history. The leaders of liberation are obliged to produce an ‘orientalist’ version of the new nation, today spawning an unscrupulous use of the idea of homeland, heritage and history to justify and legitimise xenophobia, tyranny and the doctrine of ethnic purity for which women are often asked to bear the responsibility.

What I am insisting on, then, is that consciousness is material. Epistemology – the way we know – is historically affected. The vanguard cannot instil class consciousness among the masses as if the masses are a monolithic blob. Quality promotion knowledge management style legitimises this by reversal. To pay attention to this is not an academic luxury. On the contrary, to think of the education of the largest sector of the electorate as if their millenially ravaged epistemologies resembled that of the middle class activist or the elite philanthropist is mistaken and/or a sure road to celebrity. This is a material lesson – routinely dismissed by mechanical leftists as too ‘nuanced’ or ‘individualistic’, and by the knowledge managers as impractical, inefficient.
What is the role of Epistemological Change Clustered Within Education in Notions of Identity and the Broader Public?

I don’t know.

How Do We Combat the Anthropocene?

By assuming that the literary-ethical suspension in the space of the other is to de-humanise, because the ‘natural’ tendency of human activities is to accelerate the rate of species extinction, unless we want to mooch over being-human in the face of the Anthropocene. We can no longer work with the race-class-determined binary opposition of free will and fatalism that runs our world today, with the so-called abstract workings of capital running a deconstruction, which is called ‘development’ by way of alibi.

Over against this, I focused on ‘planetarity’ because it reduced the importance of the human (Apter, Lezra, & Wood, 2014). Now even planetarity has been compromised as space becomes a business enterprise.

I say then to students and teachers of the humanities present in this room: understand that your professional teaching and learning skills offer a supplement – an incalculability that may seem dangerous to those who want to disavow the unexpected that is the harbinger of change. Efficient tests to measure success are useful but they can only reproduce the status quo, dazzlingly dressed as ‘imagination’.

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