

Contextually responsive and knowledge-focused teaching: Disrupting the notion of 'best practices'

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Abstract

The notion that universal '*best practices*' underpin higher education teaching is problematic. Although there is general agreement in the literature that good teaching is *not* decontextualised but rather that it is responsive to the context in which it occurs, generic views of teaching and learning continue to inform practices at universities in South Africa. This conceptual paper considers why a decontextualised approach to higher education teaching prevails and interrogates factors influencing this view, such as: the knowledge bases informing this approach to teaching, the factors from within the higher education sector that shape this approach to teaching, as well as the practices and Discourses prevalent in the field of academic development. The paper argues that teaching needs to be *both* contextually responsive *and* knowledge-focused. Disrupting 'best practices' approaches require new ways of undertaking academic staff development, which are incumbent on the understandings that academic developers bring to the enterprise.

Keywords: academic development, academic staff development, best practices, genericism, higher education teaching and learning,

Introduction

This special issue has called on researchers and practitioners to consider the notion of '*pedagogies in context*'. In this paper I challenge the view of teaching as a set of best practices and argue for contextualising and theorising teaching in ways that include not only an understanding of students, teaching academics and institutions, but also the nature of knowledge.

The concepts of *good* teaching; *best practices* in teaching; and *excellence* in teaching are being contested nationally, internationally, and locally. Behari-Leak and McKenna (2017) trouble the notion of a 'generic gold standard' by which teaching excellence can be measured, and offer in its place a more nuanced view which sees teaching as a contextualised response to the needs of students. They analysed data from 13 South African university applications for the national



Teaching Excellence Awards and found that excellence in teaching is understood in very generic ways which fail to take into account differences across institutional contexts and validates teaching as performativity. They argue that the extent to which someone is considered an excellent teacher, must be linked to what it means to create conditions for excellent learning.

Skelton (2009) argues for a contextualised way of understanding teaching excellence and offers the notion of 'good enough teaching'. He reminds us that no matter 'how excellent an individual teacher appears to be, their work is always located in a broader institutional (and social) context' (Skelton, 2005: 73). Cattell-Holden (2019) points out that teaching excellence awards prioritise the decontextualised, individual (private) good, rather than the social (public) good. Clegg (2007) offers alternative concepts such as the *goodness* of teaching, which links teaching to the support of learning. She posits that '[t]he idea of excellence in teaching and learning implies that there are standards against which these things could be judged' (2007: 96) and argues that teaching is different and that excellence is something that is 'aspired to'. She states that 'pedagogic love or pleasure' are at the heart of 'good teaching', and that 'good teaching' attempts to 'challenge the conditions of learning' through 'critical, and collective inquiry' (2007: 101). Rather than adopting a position which suggests that there are standards by which teaching excellence can be measured, Clegg's preference is to 'pose the question of what might be good values' for good teaching in higher education (2007: 102).

There seems to be some agreement in the literature that *good teaching* is not a decontextualised notion, but rather that it is responsive to the context in which it occurs. However, despite the prevalence of contextualised views of good teaching in the literature, generic decontextualised views of teaching and learning continue to inform teaching practices at universities in South Africa (Boughey and McKenna, 2015). In this paper I argue that teaching needs to be *both* contextually responsive *and* knowledge-focused.

Genericism - a critique

The notion that there is a set of universal '*best practices*' underpinning higher education teaching is informed by genericism, which reinforces decontextualised or autonomous approaches to teaching. Fataar (2019: 3) states that genericism, or what he calls 'hyper-genericism' (or 'genericism on steroids') is a dominant knowledge perspective in higher education in South Africa and it is accelerating rapidly. He argues that 'hyper-genericism must be understood, researched, responded to and challenged.' While this applies to the higher education sector generally, I would argue that countering genericism is of particular significance to the field of academic development and to debates about approaches based on best practices and pedagogies in context. Academic developers are key players in disrupting notions such as *best practices* and decontextualised approaches to teaching, and the genericism that inform them.

Academic Literacies literature (Street, 1984; Boughey, 2013), which has been influential in the field of academic development, has offered us two sets of ideas - autonomous (also referred to as 'individual') and ideological (also referred to as 'social') for understanding student learning. I am arguing that these two sets of ideas also underpin the broader enterprise of teaching and

learning. Boughey (2013) has argued that individualised views of learning and students are dominant in South Africa, and I would argue that such views drive genericism. These views construct students as independent or autonomous of the social contexts in which they were raised, in which they live and in which they learn. Such understandings have implications for teaching, leading to generic practices (such as 'best practices' approaches) which are decontextualised from the social contexts surrounding learning. In contrast to this, in a social view of learning and teaching, academic teachers see students as being shaped by the very contexts in which they were raised, in which they live and in which they learn. This alternative view sees teaching and learning as socially embedded, and knowledge construction as being dependent on the social structures and academic communities to which some students have access, and others not. Teaching and learning is understood to be context-dependent, socially constructed and power ridden. This view calls on us to interrogate the university context as a social space and examine how it serves to include or exclude students from access to learning and powerful knowledge.

I argue that it is not helpful to see these as dichotomous positions, or as a continuum, with a decontextualised view of teaching and learning at one end, and a social view of teaching and learning at the other end. My position is that teaching and learning have a social *and* an individual dimension and that they are relational, but that the social context is more complex and nuanced and has a far more profound effect on teaching and learning than any individual characteristics of students or academic teachers. As a counter argument to genericism, I offer a holistic understanding of teaching and learning, which sees individual understandings of teaching and learning as nested within social understandings of teaching and learning. In our teaching we need to take account of the social *and* the individual but not at the expense of each other. A holistic approach to teaching and learning would focus on our students, within an understanding of the social context of universities and the nature of the knowledge produced there.

Vygotsky (cited in Hua Liu and Mathews, 2005) takes these notions of the social and the individual further. He argues that the social is primary in terms of 'time', and that in the development of 'consciousness', the sequence is from the social to the individual and that the individual is derived from the social. I, therefore, argue that teaching needs to be responsive to more than just the learning needs of all students and their social, cultural, and economic contexts. Teaching needs to be responsive to students, teaching academics, and the contexts within which teaching and learning take place, as well as the nature of knowledge. I will return to this point at the end of the paper.

Why a 'best practices' approach prevails

In considering why a 'best practices' approach prevails in South Africa, it is necessary to look at a number of influences. I focus on three areas which I think are influential in shaping this problematic approach. The first area relates to the knowledge bases informing a 'best practices' approach to teaching. For a number of years, the field of academic development in South Africa has drawn on knowledge bases from the global North to theorise its approaches to teaching.

Vorster and Quinn (2017: 44) argue that 'in our bid to be "scholarly" and draw from (so-called) "strong" theories, we have ourselves predominantly drawn on theories and ideas about teaching and learning from the UK, USA and Australasia'. Many of the knowledge bases that continue to inform teaching and learning in HE, such as Cognitivism and Constructivism, draw on the discipline of Psychology and tend to explore how individuals learn, with a focus on the cognitive processes of individual students. These bodies of knowledge reinforce 'best practices' approaches to teaching. From my own experience in higher education teaching and learning over the past thirty years, I continue to encounter teaching and learning research that focuses on individual factors such as personality, ability, and motivation; and teaching practices that continue to misappropriate concepts such as *learning styles* and *approaches to learning*. Most of these knowledge bases emanate from the global North and their appropriation into a context such as South Africa might be quite limiting.

The time has come for us to be more deliberate about drawing on knowledge emanating from the global South and explore what *it* has to offer about contextualised views of good teaching. In pursuing this challenge, I have turned to the seminal work of Freire (1974: 33) who some 46 years ago stated that our 'traditional curricula' are 'disconnected from life', 'emptied of the reality they are meant to represent' and unable to 'develop a critical consciousness'. Freire (1970) refers to 'critical consciousness' as 'intervention in the world as transformers of that world'. So, for him, teaching and learning is primarily about developing a political consciousness which questions the nature of society, uncovers the causes of injustices and oppression, and then intervenes in order to change the world into a more democratic society. I argue that Freire's notion of 'critical consciousness' could inform understandings of contextually-responsive teaching, as it attempts to reconnect teaching to the lives of people.

Donald Macedo, in the preface to Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, states that 'the denunciation of oppressive societal forces cannot be done through mere instructional methodologies that anesthetize and domesticate the mind, through banal information transmission that Freire termed 'banking education' (Freire, 1970: 14). Bartolome (1994: 3) takes this critique of instructional methodologies further. She is sharply critical of the 'focus on methods as solutions in the current literature' and 'calls for a shift in perspective -- from a narrow and mechanistic view of instruction, to one that is broader in scope and takes into consideration the sociohistorical and political dimensions of education.' She claims that 'a myopic focus on methodology often serves to obfuscate the real question -- which is why, in our society, subordinated students do not generally succeed academically'. She goes on to point out that it is not a particular teaching method that prepares the student; but rather, 'the teacher's politically clear educational philosophy, that underlies' the teaching method that she uses, that makes the difference (1994: 4). So, a contextualised view of good teaching needs to be informed not only by the sociocultural contexts from which our students come, but also by our own *politically clear educational philosophies*.

Donaldo Macedo (1994) takes this argument even further by proposing an 'anti-methods pedagogy that refuses to be enslaved by the rigidity of models and methodological paradigms'.

However, Bartolome (1994: 4) argues that 'it is important that educators not blindly reject teaching methods across the board, but that they reject the present methods fetish' and free themselves 'from the blind adoption of so-called effective (and sometimes "teacher-proof") strategies'. This is how some of the literature from the global South problematises the notion that there is a set of universal 'best practices' underpinning higher education pedagogy, and we don't even have to look as far as South America. Right here in South Africa we have the work of scholars such as Walker and Wilson-Strydom (2017), Soudien (2012), Luckett (2016), Bozalek and Boughey (2014), and Leibowitz (2012) to name just a few, who explore the notion of a global South perspective. The challenge to the academic development movement in South Africa is to draw on perspectives and conceptual frameworks *from* the South, *for* the South, particularly when it comes to higher education teaching. Those in the field of academic development need to think about what happens when conceptual frameworks *from* the North *for* the North are invoked. While I am not suggesting that theoretical frameworks that come from the global North should be abandoned, rather, it is using them uncritically and unquestioningly that is a problem. It is important to understand where a notion like 'best practices' comes from and what kinds of research inform it. Just adopting frameworks from very different contexts and super-imposing them on the South African context is problematic. Exploring the work of thinkers from the global South might require more time and effort because of the ideology and the politics around publishing when you come from the South. A lot of the research is not as accessible as the work from the North. However, exploring thinkers around the area of higher education teaching, from a Southern perspective, and from research undertaken *in* the South, that takes account of the contextual issues *of* the South, is vitally important for researchers and practitioners. The challenge for the field of academic development is to interrogate the knowledge emanating from the global North, draw on the knowledge emanating from the global South about contextualised views of good teaching, and then bring these two knowledge bases into dialogue in a way that opens up debates about teaching in the field of academic development.

This leads me to the second area which I think is influential in shaping this problematic 'best practices' approach: factors from within the higher education sector. The higher education sector itself needs to be placed under scrutiny. In his book *The Toxic University* John Smyth (2017) alludes to the notion of *Zombie Leadership*, and cites Richard Niesche, who states that the 'selling of best practice models' is located in a discourse of leadership that refuses to die. What is it then, that makes the Discourse around 'best practices' so immutable? I would argue that the current Council on Higher Education (CHE)¹ cycle of quality assurance work (CHE, 2014), with its focus on the sharing of 'good practice', contributes to the dominant autonomous views of teaching and learning. The CHE calls on universities to share practices, however, is it possible to share 'best practices' across a higher education sector which is so deeply unequal? Academic developers have a role to play in exposing the inequalities in the higher education sector. A social view of

¹The Council on Higher Education (CHE) is an independent statutory body serving Higher Education in South Africa which through its permanent committee, the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC), is responsible for quality assurance and promotion in higher education.

teaching and learning sees knowledge construction as largely dependent on the social structures and academic communities to which some students have access, and others not. Social accounts of teaching and learning allow academic developers to make sense of the patterns of success and failure across the higher education system, since such accounts relate poor performance to the social contexts into which students are born. In South Africa this is a social justice issue, as we know that some of our students have been socialised into practices and Discourses which are much closer to those of academia than other students.

Some students come from homes where their parents have had a university education while others do not. Some come from homes that can afford books, good schools, extra-mural and enrichment activities and nutritious food, while others do not. Some come from homes where they have to carry the responsibility of parenting siblings while their parents work long hours, while others have a stay-at-home mom. Some have to work after school to contribute to the household income while others are being ferried to ballet and piano lessons. So, while you might have the brightest, most motivated and hardworking individual students, if they are poor and working class, their chances of succeeding in Higher Education are much slimmer than for middle class students. A social view of teaching and learning is not about group work or learning in social ways, it is not about learning styles or interactive pedagogies, it is about understanding that the social contexts from which our students come have a far more profound effect on their chances of succeeding in Higher Education than anything they carry within their individual selves. It is incumbent on academic developers to convey this view and challenge the *Zombie Leadership* that continues to *sell best practices models*.

Finally, the practices and Discourses in the field of academic development need to be interrogated, and this leads me to the third area which I think is influential in shaping this problematic 'best practices' approach. It appears that the current practices and Discourses in the field of academic development normalise genericism and a decontextualised approach to teaching. It is incumbent on the field of academic development to disrupt such thinking and advocate for 'politically clear educational philosophies', as Bartolome (1994) challenges us to do. Some of the ways that academic development practitioners might do this are to engage with the literature and understand the scholarliness behind what they are doing, become researchers and get a sense of the field of academic development. The field of academic development is quite fragmented, and there is quite a lot of contention, so it is important, particularly for new academic developers, to get a sense of the debates in the field. Academic developers need to position themselves within these debates rather than furthering the agendas of *Zombie Leadership*. I would caution against looking to one conceptual framework or one analytical toolkit for all the answers. While academic developers, need to be informed by their own *educational philosophies*, it is important for them to guard against becoming sectarian in their thinking. Ashwin (in Leibowitz, et al., 2017) advocates a cross-over perspective, which means not aligning dogmatically to any one way of understanding teaching and learning. He argues that there is no point criticising theories arising from previous research and suggests looking rather at what these theories were trying to do. He speaks about the power of relating different ways of understanding

learning to teach in HE, which provide us with 'more choices', in our academic development work. Boughey (2014) states that as scholars we need to enrich the theoretical stockpot on which we draw to conceptualise teaching and learning. Academic developers who are still placing pedagogy at the centre of approaches to academic Staff Development need to conceptualise their work differently and disrupt generic notions such as 'best practices' and decontextualised approaches to teaching. This requires new ways of undertaking academic Staff Development work and it is to this issue that I would now like to turn.

A contextualised approach to teaching

In considering what a 'contextualised' approach to teaching might mean, we need to interrogate the sets of ideas informing institutional understandings of teaching. This raises a number of questions, such as, whether higher education institutions interrogate how the broader university context serves to include or exclude students from access to knowledge; and whether the prevailing understandings of teaching at universities take into account the learning needs of all their students. I argue that in the past there has been too much of a focus on the teacher as disciplinary expert and the pedagogy was very teacher centred. In countering this focus, thinking might have shifted to the opposite extreme, a student-centred pedagogy where the role of the teacher is seen as merely a facilitator of learning. Although this approach appears to be widely adopted in higher education, in some cases it has been superseded by a more learning-centred, design-based pedagogy, where the role of the teacher has become more of a designer of learning opportunities. Even in this approach, where the focus is less on the student and more on the process of learning, there appears to be a lack of pedagogical focus on 'what' students are learning – the different knowledges, with their specific structures and organising principles.

Maton and Moore (2010: 5) argue that notions of teacher-centredness on the one hand, and learning-centredness on the other, have created a false dichotomy which suggests that at the level of pedagogy the only important factor is 'either transmitting knowledge or valorizing the learner's experiences'. Maton (2014) argues that prevailing views on what constitutes good teaching appear to be somewhat 'knowledge blind' and he advocates an approach that places knowledge at the centre of teaching and acknowledges the role of the teacher as a knowledgeable other. This position does not lead us back to teacher-centredness, as some would have it. Rather, it attempts to shine the research light on knowledge as an object. Maton (2014) claims that educational research has obscured knowledge as an object, so *what* is being learned is obscured, and in the main educational research tends to view knowledge subjectively. The field of Education draws predominantly on the disciplines of Psychology and Sociology for its theorisation. Theories from Psychology (of education) tend to focus on the mental processes and dispositions of knowing, and the study of generic processes of learning, in other words - what goes on in the heads of learners. Theories from Sociology (of education) tend to focus on knowers and offer socially-based perspectives, such as the study of whose knowledge is being learned and the power relations that underpin how knowledge is produced. While both of these foci offer important insights into teaching and learning, what is missing is a focus on the *'what'* of teaching

and learning, or as Muller (2011) calls it, the *'that'* - the knowledge and its specific structures and organising principles. I argue that good teaching is not 'knowledge-blind' and that the centering of knowledge is a crucial element of a 'contextualised' approach to teaching in higher education.

Maton argues that knowledge is not just about the content of the disciplinary knowledge, or about those who are learning it, or those experts who already know it and are teaching it. He further argues that educational researchers and indeed practitioners need to see knowledge as an object, which has its own attributes. Drawing on the literature emanating from a school of thought referred to as 'Social Realism' and the field known as the 'Sociology of Knowledge', I offer some thoughts about placing knowledge at the centre of how we understand *good teaching*. Muller (2011) argues that the principle currency of Higher Education is knowledge and that this knowledge is not readily accessible and is normally attained only through an extensive process of systematic learning. Morrow (2009) provides some insight into why this knowledge is not readily accessible. He states that 'any field of enquiry is constituted by epistemic values' and that these 'epistemic values' differ from one field or discipline to another (2009: 11). He argues that the *epistemic values* of a discipline are not the same as the disciplinary content, but rather that students gain an understanding of the disciplinary content in terms of those *epistemic values*. This has implications for teaching. Morrow (2009: 37-38) states that in teaching, one of our primary tasks is to enable our students to 'achieve a rich operational understanding of, and commitment to, these epistemic values'. He also argues that good teaching provides students with access to knowledge and coined the much-used and often misappropriated term 'epistemological access', which he describes as 'learning how to become a successful participant in academic practice' and 'disciplined enquiry'. He is clear that *epistemological access* is not 'a product to be bought or sold or given to someone' but rather that the achievement of epistemological access requires 'sympathetic assistance' (2009: 78) of those who already understand the practice.

These views of Muller and Morrow signal a shift from knowledge construction (or how we make meaning), towards a focus on its production (or how it is produced). So, this thinking is a 'pulling back' from Constructivism which has focussed more on the knowing than on the knowledge. Wheelahan (2007) also makes an important distinction between disciplinary knowledge and the disciplinary content of that knowledge. She states that the content of a discipline is the *product* of the discipline, rather than the principles used within the discipline to create new knowledge. So, when I refer to 'knowledge', I do not mean the content knowledge only, it is also about the *epistemic values* which shape the field, as well as the specific structures and organising principles underpinning how knowledge is produced in that field - the disciplinary rules of the academic game, as it were. Maton (2014) argues that these 'rules of the game' are tacit and that teaching academics need to make explicit to their students the values, specific structures and organising principles underpinning how knowledge is produced in their disciplines and how knowledge claims are made. In my own research (Jacobs, 2005), I have found that this is an area of difficulty for teaching academics to articulate and to teach explicitly. Because they are 'insiders' and experts steeped in their fields, their understandings of how their disciplines

build knowledge have become tacit. Although they *know* how knowledge claims are made in their disciplines, what is valued in their disciplines, and what the structures, principles, procedures, and practices underpinning their disciplines are; they cannot always *see* them and make them explicit to their students. To use the fish-in-water analogy – the *epistemic values*, knowledge structures, principles, procedures, and practices which shape disciplinary fields are, to the disciplinary specialists, like water is to a fish.

I have argued elsewhere (Jacobs, 2007a) that while disciplinary specialists much better *know* the values, organising principles and knowledge structures which shape disciplinary fields, albeit tacitly, academic developers can much better *see* these largely invisible values, organising principles and knowledge structures because they treat it as opaque, something to look at (Segal, et al., 1998). This is related to the building of collaborative working relationships among disciplinary specialists and academic developers which focus on 'knowledge' conversations rather than on teaching methodology workshops based on the notion of pedagogical best practices. These are not easy conversations, as those who have tried to engage in these types of conversations will know. They cannot be scripted and the direction that these conversations take are dependent on many factors, such as the actual discipline/field, the disciplinary specialist, and so on. These conversations are not easy for a number of reasons. One of the reasons is that the disciplinary specialists find these questions difficult to answer, because their understandings are so deeply tacit. Another reason is that academic developers need to be careful that what is being talked about doesn't slip into conversations about disciplinary 'content' or about how to teach the content. Academic developers need to prepare for these conversations by getting a sense of the values, principles, procedures, and practices underpinning a particular discipline or subject area. This can be done by carefully examining curriculum documents, assessments, marking rubrics, assessment criteria, how marks are weighted etc., before having the conversation. Curriculum documents often shed light on the knowledge principles underpinning a discipline or subject area, while assessment documents often shed light on the knowledge practices and procedures that are valued.

The success of such 'knowledge conversations' is also incumbent on the understandings that academic developers bring to their own work (Jacobs, 2019). To generate productive knowledge conversations, academic developers need to be able to create and hold critical theorised spaces, and resist genericism and narrower instrumental views of teaching, such as a 'best practices' approach. This is linked to the earlier point I raised, that academic developers who are new to the field need to be mentored into theories informing a 'contextualised' approach to teaching, so that they are able to act as *translators* of such theories. In addition to holding theorised views of teaching and learning, academic developers also need to have the 'conceptual and analytical tools with which to probe the structure of the knowledge in deeper ways' as this will 'enable academic developers working within disciplinary contexts to more ably speak to the nature of coming to know in higher education' (Clarence and McKenna, 2017: 41). Clarence and McKenna (2017: 39) further argue that such *conceptual and analytical tools* provide a bridge between academic developers (often 'outsiders' to the disciplines within which they work) and

teaching academics (who are 'insiders' within their disciplines and fields), and place 'a specific focus on what constitutes knowledge and how it is built and critiqued within' various disciplines. Such new ways of undertaking academic staff development work, as I stated earlier in this paper, are incumbent on the understandings that academic developers bring to the enterprise.

Concluding thoughts

I conclude this paper by addressing the link between genericism and 'best practices'. Ashwin (in Leibowitz, et al., 2017: 226) states that, 'teaching is about making particular aspects of knowledge accessible to particular groups of students. ...this makes good teaching particular rather than generic'. Teaching therefore needs to be responsive to *particular* contexts and the nature of *particular* fields of knowledge, and I argue that the idea of universal 'best practices' in teaching across any context or field of knowledge, is (mis)informed by genericism. The particular contexts surrounding the practice of teaching are layered and nuanced. Teaching needs to be responsive to particular students (who they are, the contexts from which they come and what their learning needs are), as well as the contexts within which teaching and learning take place (for example, the socially constructed nature of particular universities and the practices within particular faculties and departments). Teaching is also influenced by the particularities of the teaching academics (who they are, where they come from and their views of the world). The genericism informing 'best practices' approaches fail to take account of these contextual nuances, or indeed differences in the nature of knowledge.

Maton and Moore (2010: 6) state that 'knowledge is often viewed as undifferentiated – 'generic' skills or interchangeable packets of information'. They go on to argue that at the level of pedagogy, this position gives rise to 'teaching that is ... divorced from the form of knowledge being taught' (2010, 7). In my own research (Jacobs, 2005; 2007b; 2010; 2013; 2015; 2019) I have been deeply critical of generic approaches to academic development work. I have argued that the role of academic teachers is about being contextually responsive, while inducting students into their disciplines of study and making explicit for them the values, organising principles, and knowledge structures underpinning the ways in which knowledge is produced in their disciplines of study. These values, organising principles and knowledge structures are not generic, neither are they 'skills', they are deeply contextual, relational, and build knowledge cumulatively. The knowledge bases of different disciplines of study are structured around the mastery of particular sets of values, principles, procedures and practices. This has implications for what constitutes appropriate pedagogy for particular knowledge structures. Genericism ignores the very nature of knowledge, and I argue that not taking the nature of knowledge into consideration can lead to 'best practices' approaches to teaching. But there is another dimension relating to the issue of knowledge that Fataar (2019) brings to our attention, and indeed, which has been brought to the attention of the higher education sector by the 2015 – 2016 student protests at many South African institutions - *what* and *whose* knowledge is being taught. In this regard Fataar recommends an 'epistemic pluralism' when it comes to the knowledge perspectives informing higher education. He calls for *dynamic interaction* between two theories of knowledge: a Social

Realism theory of knowledge (which emphasises the internal relations of knowledge), and a Social Justice theory of knowledge (which emphasises the external relations of knowledge). While Social Realism foregrounds 'epistemological access' to knowledge, Social Justice is 'based on knowledge for social change and transformation' (Fataar, 2019: 2). The challenge for academic developers is to take the lead in the dynamic interaction between these two knowledge perspectives. Research from the field of Health Professions Education (Jacobs et al 2020) shows that the Health Sciences educators, particularly the clinicians, are looking to academic developers for ways of advancing a social justice agenda in Health Professions Education and shaping healthcare professionals who are not only clinically competent but also critically conscious of the contexts in which they serve and the health care systems within which they practice. This is what a 'contextualised' approach to HE teaching might look like.

So, what are the implications for the field of academic development? Boughey (2007) has called for a third-generation model of academic development. She argued that academic development in South Africa had been through a number of 'theoretical and ideological shifts', moving from a model focused on *equity*, to a model focused on *efficiency*. She was calling for a model 'which marries a concern for equity with a concern for efficiency within an overall framework of a regard for quality' (2007: 1). Some 11 years later, Behari-Leak, et al. (2018) called for a possible fourth generation model of academic development, one in which academic development contributes to transformation and a critical social justice worldview, and academic developers position themselves as change agents rather than *bridge builders* and *hand holders*. I suggest that this next decade could consider a fifth-generation model of academic development, one in which academic development foregrounds knowledge, the principle currency of Higher Education (Muller, 2011), but a perspective that brings about, as Fataar (2019) suggests, the dynamic interaction between theories of knowledge that emphasise both 'epistemological access', as well as knowledge for social change and transformation. This has implications for the ways in which academic development units work with ideas about social change and transformation, as well as 'epistemological access', to promote a conception of teaching that works against genericism.

Author Biography

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