

ALIENATING ACADEMIC WORK

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INTRODUCTION

Not surprisingly, there have been a number of recent editorials, including in this journal, in response to the student protests of 2015 and 2016 (see, for example, Jansen 2017; Keet 2017; Postma 2016a; Zembylas and Bozalek 2017), as well as a burgeoning literature in the form of journal articles, books, and masters and doctoral theses (see, for example, Cordeiro-Rodrigues's comment in this issue of *Education as Change*, in response to the article by Vorster and Quin earlier this year). Whilst analyses of the protests differ, generally the editorials see the protests as marking a potential moment to reflect on higher education in South Africa, including the role of academics (Keet 2017; Postma 2016a). Keet (2017, 7), for example, argues that this is a moment for self-reflexivity "on both our 'complicity' and historical production as academics."

I would argue that one of the key historical processes we urgently need to reflect on is the way in which our labour, as academics, has been alienated.

MARX'S CONCEPT OF THE ALIENATION OF LABOUR

Marx argues that under capitalism there are fundamentally two forms of work. There is the work we do simply because we are human; this is work to help us to survive and to reproduce ourselves, but it goes far beyond that. It is work that is creative, meaningful and joyous. It is concrete labour. Marx (1848, XXIV) argued that "[f]ree, conscious activity is man's [sic] species-character ... man produces even when he is free from physical need and only truly produces freedom therefrom ... Man also forms objects in accordance with the laws of beauty." In Hannah Arendt's terms, this kind of work is "activity," and "[t]o act is to begin something new" (Postma 2016a, 2); in John Holloway's (2010, 84) terms, it is "doing" "an activity that is potentially self-determining." This kind of work is useful work, it produces useful things, things that are necessary for our existence and well-being. It has use-value.

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Under capitalism, use-value is replaced by exchange-value, and in this process, labour becomes abstracted. Alienated labour produces things for exchange; its use-value is not material, it is only its exchange-value that counts. “From the point of view of the exchange, that is, from the point of view of value, the only thing that matters about labour is its quantity, not its quality or particular characteristics” (Holloway 2010, 91). Thus, the love and care and attention someone puts into the thing they create is not important—what is important is that the thing can be sold for more than the cost of the time put into its creation (Holloway 2010). What matters now is socially necessary labour time—the time needed to produce a commodity in relation to how much it can be exchanged for. As Holloway puts it (2010, 93),

The imposition through the market of the socially necessary time required to produce a commodity is at the same time the abstraction of labour, the separating of the worker from her process of production ... The object I produce is ... so completely alienated from me that I do not care whether it is a cake or a rat poison, as long as it sells.

For the capitalist, profit (surplus value) can be increased through, for example, extending the working day, or through decreasing the socially necessary labour time required to produce an article (Hall and Bowles 2016). In either case, the worker is producing more (in terms of exchange value) than s/he is being paid for.

Because “free conscious activity” is part of our being, the alienation of our labour from ourselves is inherent in the process, and not just the product. Marx (1848, XXIII) asks “How could the worker come to face the product of his activity as a stranger, were it not that in the very act of production he was estranging himself from himself? ... If then the product of labour is alienation, production itself must be active alienation, the alienation of activity, the activity of alienation.”

The alienation of our labour under a capitalist system is an open, ongoing project: “The abstraction of doing into labour, then, is not just a past process: it is present, everyday struggle, the struggle on which the existence of capital depends” (Holloway 2010, 168). Because there is a constant drive by capital to reduce the socially necessary labour time to produce something (and hence increase its exchange value), there is a constant turning of the screw (Holloway 2010, 168). This is not simply about exploitation; the process has a profound ontological impact on us. Because creative “doing” (activity) is part of our species-being, “[l]abour, as alienated labour, is a separating of ourselves from ourselves, a tearing asunder of ourselves and our activity” (Holloway 2010, 88). In addition, exchange-value creates a relationship between things/commodities and not people; thus our social relations become shaped by exchange value, money, capital. “An immediate consequence of the fact that man is estranged from the product of his labour, from his life activity, from his species-being, is the *estrangement of man from man*” (Marx 1848, XXIV).

ALIENATED ACADEMIC WORK AND ITS EFFECTS

Over the last 30 years or so, higher education has been profoundly affected by neoliberal capitalism (Harvie 2000; Lustig 2006; McCarthy et al. 2017; Paewai et al. 2007). There is now a vast literature on this—how and why it has happened and its effects, including on academics and their work. However, as McCarthy et al. (2017, 1020) argue, “there is an under-theorisation of academic work from a political economy perspective.” Thus, whilst there is some work that specifically applies the concept of alienated or abstracted labour (see, for example, Hall and Bowles 2016; Harvie 2000; Lustig 2006; McCarthy et al. 2017), there is relatively little on this subject. However, I would argue that the concept of alienation in particular is pivotal in understanding what has happened to universities over the last three or more decades. As Holloway (2010, 184) makes clear, “There must be no escape from labour ... The same in the universities: they must not be allowed to become places for relaxing or (worse) thinking: it is essential to tighten the education system, speed up the process of learning and above all to measure the productivity of both teachers and students all the time, so that their activity is contained within abstract labour.”

Alienating our labour, as I see it, involves a three-step process, although these are tangled up with each other.¹ The first step is the process of “unbundling,” of disconnecting, for example, teaching from research (McCarthy et al. 2017), or modularising teaching (McCulloch cited in Harvie 2000). Work is then divided up, and categorised. Teaching, for example, is divided into curriculum development, materials development, contact time versus preparation time, student consultation time, assessment time, administration time. In this process, work that was outside of capitalist relations is brought into direct relation to it (Hall and Bowles 2016); the use-value of work is substituted by its exchange-value. This is the second step.

The “outputs,” the “product,” of teaching and research are treated differently in this process, (i.e. it’s not about an overall contribution of/to knowledge or thought or understanding), and the exchange-value is different; for example, a “student” who is equipped for the market (the product of “teaching”) obviously does not have the same exchange-value as a journal article. But the process of substituting use-value with exchange-value is the same.

So a research product is therefore not valued in terms of how useful the knowledge it contains is (whether it is “really useful knowledge” in radical adult education terms), or whether it helps us understand a phenomenon better, but rather in terms of its exchange-

1 Unfortunately, space does not allow a discussion on who the primary drivers of this process are—i.e. the exact relationship between university management, the hegemonic state, and the ruling class. Clearly, this is an important discussion; and clearly, government funding mechanisms and formulae (and budget cuts) play a key role (e.g. what to subsidise, by how much). I have chosen to focus on the process, and its implications, here.

value.² This value is constantly being refined as the market shifts, and is different in different countries (Harvie 2000). Certain “products” count more (a journal article counts more than a newspaper article; an article in a high-impact journal counts more,³ and so on). In terms of teaching, the exchange-value of the “product” is also shaped by the market. Postgraduate students count more; students in particular disciplines count more. Last year we needed to produce more PhDs; this year we are oversubscribed. To be counted as product, a student must graduate—the knowledge or skills s/he may have acquired or contributed, even if s/he did not complete, is not the issue (and if recognised, might undermine the commodity of the university degree); the time expended on an ungraduated student is thus wasted time.

Once exchange-value begins to replace use-value, the third step becomes pivotal—that of determining the socially necessary labour time necessary to produce the “product” (because, as we have seen, profit relies on exchange-value in excess of the time taken to produce the product). As discussed above, socially necessary labour time is, as Hall (2013, 77) puts it:

the amount of labour time required by a worker (or academic/student) of average productivity (and therefore skill), working with tools (like educational technologies) of the average productive potential, required to produce a given commodity (such as feedback on assessment or journal article).

Again, it is possible to differentiate between research and teaching in terms of how this plays itself out. Because research output is now “no longer simply a use-value” (Harvie 2000, 110), and has exchange-value in the wider economy, its value is no longer determined by the actual/concrete research labour time taken to produce it, but rather in terms of how long it would take the “average” academic to produce. Who is counted as the “average” academic might vary—for example, the “average” professor is generally considered to require less socially necessary time to produce, say, a journal article than a lecturer. The “average” academic, in South African universities at least, probably also writes in English as a first language. Based on the socially necessary time calculated, the quantity of product to be produced by each class of academic can be calculated. An academic who has to write in English as a second or third language is expected to produce the same “product” in the same time as the “average” academic at the same level. In the process, research labour becomes alienated from our creative “doing”—“such research work becomes a chore imposed by others and is undertaken merely to satisfy needs external to the activity itself” (Harvie 2000, 114).

2 Of course, the whole idea is really preposterous—as Postma (2016b, 3) points out, “an article [in a journal] cannot simply be substituted for another.” Academics can, and do, continue to judge research output in terms of use-value, despite this process.

3 The recent *Third World Quarterly* debacle is an interesting case study in this process. In a response to this, Roelofs and Gallien (2017) consider how measures used to rank articles (like citation indices) encourage polemical articles which may have no academic merit and are produced only to be cited (since citation rankings count positive and negative citations equally).

Teaching, meanwhile, because of its ability to be divided up into such small chunks (preparation; delivering a lecture, a tutorial, a practical; consulting with a student; assessing an assignment), has been subjected to an intense process of scrutiny in terms of socially necessary labour time, with each “component” being allocated a different time, as discussed below.

Determining the socially necessary labour time needed to do our work is perhaps the stage in the process that is now most obvious to us, and explains the enormous amount of time and energy (and research and publication) that has been devoted over the last few decades to the issue of “workload”. Workload allocation models (WAMs) have proliferated in universities across the world, to a greater or lesser extent, and show how the processes I have described above are integrated. Hull (2006, 42) explains

Typically, a WAM categorises academic work into discrete activities, together with some basis for comparison. The basis is usually numerical: the model proposes a unit of work—for instance presenting a one-hour lecture [or supervising one student]—and other activities are graded on that basis.

So WAMs categorise work, and then measure it in terms of what should be done—i.e. how much should have been produced in terms of calculations about the socially necessary labour time required;⁴ and “all activities are measured and verified in terms of exchange value” (McCarthy et al. 2017, 1018). There are a wide variety of such models (Botha and Swanepoel 2015; Hull 2006), but those that use time as the basis for workload allocation (especially of teaching) now predominate (Kenny and Fluck 2017).

Pivotal to all this is the issue of “clock time”: “Abstract labour produces abstract time, abstract time produces the clock” (Holloway 2010, 135). Clock time homogenises time, so one minute is just the same as the next, and gives us a false sense that things have always been this way, and always will be. Clock time separates our labour/work time from our living/doing time; it “is the time not of living, but of survival, of plodding on from day to day, the time of dullness” (Holloway 2010, 139). Holloway (2010, 137) argues that capital did not easily impose clock time, “it required a long struggle”—the struggle we are engaged in right now in our universities. But, as Holloway notes, whilst workers initially fought against clock time, gradually, as clock time took hold, they began to fight about it—as we are witnessing right now. Too often, the struggle about workload is about how much socially necessary time is *actually* required to accomplish a particular task, rather than the whole process of “unbundling,” substituting exchange-value for use-value, and then determining socially necessary labour time.

Once socially necessary labour time for each piece of work has been determined, then squeezing out more surplus can begin. This is generally seen to happen in two ways: firstly by lengthening the working day to extract ever-higher levels of surplus value; and

4 Of course, WAMs are not explained in this way. WAMs are generally justified on two grounds: that they allow for greater equity in the distribution of workload across academic staff; and that they enable better and more efficient resource planning (Hull 2006).

secondly by reducing the socially necessary labour time needed by, for example, using new technologies (Hall and Bowles 2016). However, as I will argue below, some of the impacts of the process, such as anxiety and stress, in fact operate as a third mechanism.

Lengthening the workday, and increasing the amount of work to be done, has been perhaps the most obvious shift in academic work over the last 30 years. Growing workload, and the “intensification” of work (Kenny and Fluck 2017; Lustig 2002; Paewai et al. 2007; Riddle, Harmes, and Danaher 2017) or increasing pace of work (McCarthy 2017), is now a subject of considerable research and publication. Again, this has been a trend across the globe.⁵ Tight (cited in Botha and Swanepoel 2015) argues that globally, academics are overworked, and their workloads keep increasing. In 2002, Lustig reported that some academics in US universities were working 50-hour weeks; this is now the norm in Australian universities (Kenny and Fluck 2017); and studies in the UK suggest very similar figures (Botha and Swanepoel 2015). Bentley and Kyvik (cited in Botha and Swanepoel 2015), in their 2011 study across 13 countries, found that academics worked an average 48.4 hours a week. This trend is evident in South Africa, too, with Portnoi (2015) reporting “unmanageable workloads” as one “push” factor identified in her study with academics in one university in South Africa.

Reducing socially necessary labour time is also a growing factor. There is very little literature on this issue, but it is probably happening in a variety of different ways in different universities across the globe, and my analysis is almost certainly incomplete. I suspect that one mechanism being used is the assumption that the “average” academic produces more research output the more senior s/he becomes (this might be the reason for increasing attention being paid to promotions), but not matching this increase with a commensurate increase in salary. For example, a professor is generally expected to produce far more research output (double? more?) than a lecturer, but is unlikely to be paid double. Another mechanism is a somewhat more obvious and ultimately more brutal one—to simply *say* that the socially necessary labour time required for something is less. For example, workload calculations in my own university have, as a general trend, increasingly used lower values. So, for example, it “required” an average 23 hours to help an Honours-level student produce a research report in 2013; now (2017), it “requires” only 15.⁶ It is thus now apparently possible to supervise more Honours-level

5 There is a dearth of literature on workloads in African universities, although some recent South African literature is available (e.g. Bezuidenhout 2015; Botha and Swanepoel 2015; Portnoi 2015). Botha and Swanepoel found relatively lower workloads in their study of the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences at one South African university; Bezuidenhout suggests much higher workloads at the university she focused on.

6 This was the allocation allowed within the School of Education. At this point, a fairly high level of discretion was allowed to schools and colleges in terms of the overall university WAM; the 2014 School of Education workload norms also allowed a reduced workload allocation for staff undertaking a PhD, and allocated time for PhD cohorts. In that same year, however, university policy was revised precisely because schools and colleges were using the higher end of the range of values allowed in the initial policy. The new policy now sets values—all of them lower than those set by the school/college; no reduced workload is allowed for staff undertaking a PhD; and until this year, no time was

students in the same amount of time. It is also apparently possible to teach ever growing numbers of students (now cast as “customers”), a feature of the neoliberal university (Harvie 2000; McCarthy et al. 2017), with little increased socially necessary labour time, and with no decrease in the “quality” of the product. When socially necessary labour time is potentially increased (for example, most workload calculations related to assessment or student consultation use student numbers as part of the calculation; contact time and preparation time calculations do not), then ways are found to reduce this. This is why we have more emphasis on alternative assessment regimes for large classes, such as MCQs, and proposals for group consultation or the increasingly popular cohort systems for postgraduate supervision.

Another obvious mechanism is that of making labour cost less, hence the phenomenon of the growing casualisation of the academic labour force over the last few decades (Hall and Bowles 2016; Harvie 2000; McCarthy et al. 2017). A number of other mechanisms can easily be identified: the ways in which administrative work, for example, is consistently undercounted (despite the increasing number of dedicated administrators, there is a growing administrative burden on academics [Harvie 2000]); the ways in which some work is not counted at all (i.e. it apparently requires no socially necessary labour time in addition to that already provided for), such as peer-reviewing articles or NRF (National Research Foundation) grant applications, undertaking editorial responsibilities, or participating in, for example, student defenses of their research proposals. This undercounting/not counting is in some cases probably because the “product” to be exchanged cannot easily be determined, or has little or exchange-value (administration); but in other cases (such as reviewing) this is clearly not the case—and is probably why there are such heated arguments about it.

Educational technology is also being argued as a means to reduce socially necessary labour time (and dramatically increase student numbers), and there has been a surge in interest in online or blended learning. However, more and more recent studies show that online teaching in fact requires *more* time, not less (Kenny and Fluck 2017), and has a number of other consequences for academic staff. For example, academics involved in e-learning are expected (by their students and managers) to be available 24 hours a day (Bezuidenhout 2015). Bezuidenhout (2015) reports increasing levels of anxiety, stress, and depression among academic staff at distance universities, because of the pressure to be constantly available, the eroding boundaries between home and work, and the burden of working seven days a week.

The profound effects on academics and their work beg the question of why academics have allowed this to happen. The process is being enforced through a variety of mechanisms, such as research incentives, promotion criteria, increasing surveillance through things like top-down performance management systems, and a variety of

allowed for cohorts although these were being strongly encouraged. Kenny and Fluck (2017) asked academic staff in Australia what time they actually spent on various tasks. They found that academics were working way over the 37.5 hours per week, working an average of 50.4 hours.

technologies. If you produce your required number of journal articles/postgraduate students, you may be rewarded with promotion or funding (or budget, when norms are applied to units or disciplines or departments); if you do not (as is established through your performance management), you may be disciplined, not have your contract renewed, be made redundant, or have your budget cut. Much of this rests on the ability to monitor the academic. As Harvie (2000, 103) comments, “Assessment of both teaching and research has been introduced with a vengeance.” Surveillance is now integral to the academic’s work life (Hall and Bowles 2016; McCarthy et al. 2017),⁷ and is often driven by a discourse of “accountability” (McCarthy et al. 2017). Technologies (online workload templates, now often linked to performance management software or resource allocation programmes, and student evaluations) are being “used to control, enclose and commodify academic labour” (Hall 2013, 52). Frequently, measuring instruments and the measurements they come up with are “reified, trusted and unchallenged—it must be true because the system/ database/ spreadsheet/ statistics says it is true” (Hull 2006, 49). University ranking systems are an ideal mechanism of enforcement; these “crude but highly effective instruments require the performance of both employees and students to be monitored and disciplined to raise overall output” (Hall and Bowles 2016, 31). Increasingly, academics feel a sense of powerlessness (McCarthy et al. 2017).

Although all this is clearly appalling, the truly dark side is the ways in which our selves become structured by these processes. Integral to making the system work is the self-surveillance and monitoring that it encourages, based on the very high levels of stress and anxiety it causes. Some 10 years ago, Hull (2006, 39) was arguing that “UK academic staff are increasingly unable to cope with the new pressures of work.”⁸ As Hall and Bowles (2016) argue, increasing anxiety and stress become an additional mechanism to extract more surplus value (I must produce my allocated productivity units, even if that means I need to work all weekend). Overwork is a defensive strategy used by academics against deskilling and under- and unemployment (Newfield 2010 cited in Hall and Bowles 2016). It is also a fairly natural response to the ways in which our sense of self is undermined by pejorative labelling as “unproductive,” “underperforming,” and so on (Hall and Bowles 2016).

Academic stress (and its health impact) is thus, not surprisingly, a growing, global phenomenon (Hall and Bowles 2016; McCarthy et al. 2017), and is an integral part of the process I have described above, although most literature does not place it within the material and structural dimensions which are its ultimate cause (McCarthy et al. 2017). As Hall and Bowles (2016, 33) observe

7 For many academics, as witnessed by a growing body of literature on this topic, so is bullying, a management style which accompanies corporatisation (Thornton 2004).

8 Bezuidenhout (2015) usefully looks at different kinds of work-related overload—quantitative (too much to do in too little time), and qualitative (work is ambiguous or very difficult to complete).

The anxiety currently manifest in higher education is not an unintended consequence or malfunction, but is inherent in the design of a system driven by improving productivity and the potential for the accumulation of capital.

As I discussed above, this is one of the three relatively predictable effects of the alienation of labour according to Marx—all of which we are currently seeing. The first is that our labour becomes someone else's (private) property. Marx (1848, XXV) says “although private property appears to be the reason, the cause of alienated labour, it is rather its consequence ... *Private property* is thus the product, the result, the necessary consequence, of *alienated labour*.” Postma (2016b, 3) makes clear that it has happened in the case of our research labour: “Accumulation of capital [by publishers] is based on the free labour of authors, editors and reviewers.” Sadly, this is happening *within* universities, too; the research labour of our students (and the product of this) becomes our private property. Harvie (2000) argues that there is now a research capitalist class, versus a research proletariat class, within universities.⁹

The second effect is that we become alienated from ourselves, as discussed above. The process I have outlined above drives us in particular ways that separate us from that creative, joyous “doing” which is an intrinsic part of ourselves. To paraphrase Holloway, I no longer care whether it is a journal article or a rat poison; I do not care whether it contributes new knowledge, or recycles old—as long as it sells. Instead of writing one article, I will divide up the data; I will apply one lens instead of many; I will rework the same basic material—so that I can publish three articles instead of one. I will publish in a predatory journal or in a high-impact journal published in the global North, rather than a newly emerging journal in the global South attempting to privilege alternative epistemologies. I cannot learn the names of the ever increasing number of students in my class or spend time finding out anything at all about them. The psychological fallout of not caring, of not spending time, of not doing good work, is clear.

The third effect is that we become alienated from each other—our relations become shaped by clock-time, exchange-value, and money. “Faculty members regard each other as competitors rather than colleagues” (Lustig 2006, 153). We do not spend time with each other; we will not spend more time with our students than is “counted”. We use our “precariat” colleagues; we use our students.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

The literature on the neoliberal university contains a variety of suggestions on what should be done, from more training for academics, accompanied by cognitive therapy, to help them deal with their new workplaces (Bezuidenhout 2015), through using WAMs

9 Harvie (2000) suggests that inputs for some disciplines are more costly—for example, in the hard sciences—which puts pressure on exchange-value. As a result, those in the sciences are more likely to face pressure to decrease socially necessary labour time, and thus the two-tier system in these disciplines is more obvious.

to help protect us from overwork and argue for more resources (Hull 2006), to increased collective action through unions (Hall 2013; Harvie 2000; Lustig 2006).

My problem with these proposals is that they see what is happening as something that is being done to us, as something somehow externalised. However, as Holloway (2010, 194) argues, “The labour that we perform in the factory, in the office, in the university, is not just drudgery: it is a web-weaving activity, a process of self-entrapment.” It is also, at the same time, as we have seen, a “living antagonism,” because it is a tearing asunder of our selves and ourselves from others. This means that we can *only* deal with it as part of our everyday living and activity and relationships to each other. As Keet (2017, 5) suggests, we need “an everyday resistance to being re-interpellated into techno-capitalist ontologies as a form of self-imprisonment with benefits.” Fortunately, precisely because we weave this web each day, we can break it, every day. I’m not entirely sure how best we do this, but I think we need to begin it by *thinking* it, together.

Holloway (2010, 84) provides a possible starting point for this thinking in his understanding of “cracks,” “the perfectly ordinary creation of a space or moment in which we assert a different kind of doing ... We shall not do what capitalism requires, we shall do what we consider necessary or desirable.” This means holding onto our “doing,” our concrete labour, that which has use-value: “part of what we perform as labour is *concrete* labour, as an experience which makes sense for us, as a *meaningful activity*” (Holloway 2013, 30). Holloway (2010, 173) notes

The drive of concrete labour is towards doing the activity well, whether this be teaching, or making a car, or designing a web page. This implies a drive towards self-determination: doing something well means trying to exercise our own judgement as to what is well or ill done.

Doing things well, endowing what we do with our intelligence, creating in a joyous, thoughtful, caring way could help us move against-and-beyond capital, and help us heal the harm that has been done to our selves. A recent edited book (Riddle et al. 2017) specifically looks at how we can, and need to, refind pleasure in academic work that is meaningful to us. However, I think we need to go beyond that, because the effects of alienation tear us apart from each other as well. Postma (2016a, 3), drawing on Hannah Arendt, comments, “the political is the space of action where beginnings could appear in the company of equals.” It seems to me that this is another logical starting point—the company of equals, academics together, but also students. And if we are to do that which capitalism does not want us to do, this means starting from an assumption that everyone matters, and everyone thinks.

THIS ISSUE

This issue contains one comment, eight articles and one book review. The articles consider a range of educational and learning contexts—universities, public schools, satellite schools, a social movement. They also cover a range of geographical contexts, many on the African continent (South Africa, Ghana and Zimbabwe), but also in Europe

(Belgium and Portugal). However, throughout is a thread related to the fundamental ways in which learning and our lives are being shaped by neoliberal capital, and in particular how those at the bottom—those who are not counted, or count least—are excluded.

One article and a comment specifically consider the issue of decolonisation, as discussed above, a current key focus of work in South Africa in the wake of the student protests of 2015 and 2016. In his commentary piece, Cordeiro-Rodrigues reflects on the advice that academic development staff should give to lecturers on decolonising the curriculum in universities proposed by Vorster and Quinn in an earlier issue of this journal. He argues that whilst this advice is useful, it is too general, and proposes specific advice for academics in the discipline of philosophy, in order to help deal with the problem identified by Vorster and Quinn—that of the proportionally lower success rates of black students in South African universities. His advice focuses on teaching and assessment methods (using various African ways of knowing), content covered (considering African perceptions of knowledge, and the usefulness of knowledge to lived experience), and the importance of including postcolonial theory to encourage self-reflection by lecturers concerning their curricula choices.

Drawing in particular on the work of Walter Dignolo, Christie and McKinney consider how decoloniality, as opposed to postcolonialism, can help us understand recent events at “Model C” schools in South Africa. They show how the social relations constructed by colonialism (and hence modernity), and the accompanying “entangled hierarchies,” including those of language and culture, persist long after the structures of colonialism are dismantled. In their language policies, “Model C” schools operate firmly in the logic of coloniality, thereby continuing to operate as exclusionary spaces. The authors end by considering the implications of this for schooling in South Africa.

The next four articles consider the variety of ways in which neoliberalism has impacted on different sites of learning. Mampaey and Gray focus on the university, whilst Mpungose and Ngwenya consider the impact of the discourse of New Public Management on school leadership. Antunes considers the adult education context within Portugal. What is clear from this set of articles is the role of particular discourses in this process.

The article by Mampaey uses a case study of a Flemish university to look at the issue of the social exclusion of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Mampaey argues that universities are often publically committed to social inclusion, but remain highly inaccessible, and reproduce social exclusion through their practices. The concept of “decoupling”—the disjuncture between public commitment and core organisational practices—is used to interrogate the case study institution, which is renowned for its commitment to social inclusion whilst singularly failing in this. Considering each of four antecedents of decoupling (each of which increases the likelihood of decoupling), Mampaey shows how universities deploy decoupling to deal with institutional contradictions that arise from neoliberalisation.

The focus of Gray is also related to discourse and universities. This article, however, considers a South African university. The author uses Critical Discourse Analysis to unpack two texts written by university leaders. He argues that the university's leaders use the idea of institutional autonomy to legitimise and operationalise neoliberal ideas. Values of global competition, entrepreneurship and performance are presented as ends in themselves, whilst the social (marginalisation, unemployment, poverty and inequality) is denied.

The next article shifts focus to the school, whilst still considering elements of neoliberal discourse. Mpungose and Ngwenya look at the adoption of New Public Management by South African education policymakers. They argue that principles underlying NPM are ambiguous, and tend to foreground outcomes. One result is an obsession with quantifiable outcomes, which, the authors argue, not only detracts from the idea of the public good, but also significantly undermines the quality of education. The authors implicitly argue for a return to progressive humanistic leadership in schools.

Antunes's article shifts both learning site and geographical space to that of adult education in Portugal. The article presents a fascinating account of adult education as a terrain of political conflict, within shifting contestations about the role of the state. Using trajectory analysis, Antunes shows how a variety of situated social actors, each constituting a source of power and influence, translate globally structured policies and practices into contextually-specific (contradictory) practices. The article reflects on the often considerable gap between state policy (for example, regarding student enrolments, the hiring of staff, etc.), and the reality on the ground in local contexts.

Using a social capital perspective, Tarisayi and Manik interrogate a common argument made in relation to land reform and education in Zimbabwe—that land reform led to economic crisis which had an adverse effect on education. This article uses data from a qualitative case undertaken in the Masvingo district to show how land reform beneficiaries actively used social networks to lobby for, and obtain resources for, a satellite school for their children. Whilst some negative effects of social networking were also uncovered, on the whole the research showed remarkably high levels of positive social networking and volunteerism, with positive educational impacts.

A very different site of learning is the focus of Langdon and Garbary's article—that of a subaltern social movement in Ada, Ghana, the Ada Songor Advocacy Forum (ASAF). ASAF has been engaged in a lengthy struggle to reclaim communal access to a salt pan from corporate control and private ownership. The authors use the concept of restorying (returning to and reworking our stories) to explore how the movement has, over the past six years, used stories both to learn and to share this learning with others. Using three examples of restorying from the movement, they reveal how stories have enabled people in the movement, and in particular women, to collectively think their struggle, forming the basis for deep learning which challenges dominant development and state-driven discourse.

In the last of the articles which make up this edition, dedicated to the praxis of Patrick van Rensburg, Vally and Motala consider the relationship between work and education, arguing that even radical conceptions of education tend to consider “work” in currently dominant ways. “Work” has come to be narrowly defined as formally paid wage labour; those outside of wage-labour in effect become “non-citizens.” Vally and Motala argue that a reconceptualisation of work is necessary. The authors critique the ideas and practices inherent in the currently dominant human capital theory, before considering already existing alternative and socially useful forms of work. The article concludes by considering the implications of the argument made.

Finally, Roger Deacon’s review of Stephen Ball’s *Foucault as Educator* reminds us of the usefulness of Foucault’s method and argument to educators. Deacon considers the ways in which Ball’s contribution not only provides a useful introduction to Foucault’s work, but also extends this, and in some cases problematises it.

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