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Remaining Hopeful: Re-imagining Doctoral Education in a Global Space

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Abstract:

At the *Revitalising doctoral education – beyond global trauma* PaTHES seminar, I argued that the notion of hope provided us with a pedagogical entry point to re-imagining doctoral education in a pandemic/post-pandemic world. I argued at the time that hope enabled us to re-imagine doctoraleducation in ways that are evidence-based, socially just, and that would empower future generations of critical and creative thinkers. At the time of this seminar, we are still contemplating the effects of the global Covid-19 pandemic on our practice as doctoral educators and researchers, and hopefully, remaining hopeful. To take my initial provocation forward, I would argue we need to explore, challenge and re-imagine the often-implicit contestations inherent within doctoral education in a global context, including notions of *(global) citizenship and locality*, *epistemic (in-)justice*, *research supervision as an inherently patriarchal and colonial practice*, *the (de-)colonisation of research collaboration,* and *the threat of innovation to doctoral education.*

Paper:

Citizenship and locality are key to doctoral education, given the mobility of doctoral students and the assumed international recognition of the qualification. Yet citizenship and locality are contested concepts, as they are often built on the assumption that where we live defines what we learn. Doctoral education demand knowledge contributions that are recognized beyond these confines. Citizenship and locality are furthermore closely interlinked with migration and mobility, with doctoral students as knowledge migrants within systems often governed by geopolitical and neoliberal policies. Only when we understand how student, academic and institutional spaciality (enacted through citizenship, locality, migration and mobility) interact, can we understand the landscape of knowledge creation, dissemination and circulation. If we were to re-imagine doctoral education in hopeful ways, the interconnectedness of nations, systems, disciplines, institutions and people (Abdi et al., 2015) need to be foregrounded. We need to reconfigure citizenship and locality as multi-layered, complex, open-ended, and in constant flux as we re-imagine theories, methodologies, policies and practices.

Knowledge creation operates in bound ways – bound by the legacies of colonialism, patriarchy and imperialism (Abdi et al., 2015) – manifesting in which knowledge constructions are legitimised, which universities are seen as seen as the epicentres of doctoral excellence, and where (and in which language(s)) such knowledge gets disseminated. Supervisors, universities and publishers act as the intermediaries who determine doctoral students' access to and valuing of knowledge. Disrupting

such *epistemic hierarchies and privileges* may be confusing and painful for doctoral students, especially at the onset of their studies. We need to be cognisant of the epistemic struggle and risk that this entails for students (Doyle et al., 2018; Qi et al., 2021; Thesen, 2013) by problematising the origins and implications of the epistemic, theoretical, stylistic, linguistic, relational and analytical categories we (sometimes uncritically) employ. Giving voice to marginalised knowledges requires an epistemic position that is relational rather than disruptive (Zembylas, 2017). A relational position helps us to understand how history has shaped epistemologies, and how doctoral students might negotiate epistemological boundaries in a more nuanced way.

Supervision encompasses class distinctions, educational biographies, familiarity with disciplines and ideas, cultural expectations, social experience, gender, linguistic structures and individual characteristics such as confidence, commitment and energy (Grant & McKinley, 2011; Lusted, 1986). Doctoral supervision is thus not a neutral playing field). Empowering doctoral pedagogies demand that supervisors relinquish their assumed power and authority, tolerate ambiguity and contradiction, allow the ontological development and epistemological expertise of their students to emerge, and create spaces and opportunities to address complex research problems (Qi et al., 2021).

Research collaboration across global divides is essential to the development of doctoral students and their careers. De Sousa Santos (2018) and Manathunga (2020) call for counter hegemonic appropriations that reconfigure, subvert and change theories, ideas and approaches (including collaborations) of dominant groups and the development of liberated (collaborative) zones. Such zones need to be built on active and reciprocal collaboration with scholars across the globe, and re-thinking current centre-periphery discourses between regions. This means thinking about collaboration based on a collective ontology, the protection of academic freedom and research integrity, shared intellectual leadership and governance, content that is locally relevant and sensitive, collaborative work that reflects the reciprocity between global regions, and research that is transdisciplinary in nature and informs curriculum transformation (Abdi et al., 2015; Jansen, 2019).

Innovation has claimed a prominent place in defining a key purpose of the doctorate as preparing the candidate for a future or current career in either academe or industry, and developing skills for employability. There is also pressure on universities to trade in knowledge as a commodity and take on an entrepreneurial role in commercialising research findings through partnerships with industry, determining what research gets funded and what kind of knowledge is valued (Molla & Cuthbert, 2016). However, a narrow focus on innovation may infringe on the potential for knowledge transfer, creation and production through both teaching and research, and the eventual contribution doctoral education can make to industry and society.

These contestations problematise the evidence we use to make decisions, what we view as socially just, and how we aim to empower students within the context of doctoral education. Only by problematising doctoral education through making these contestations explicit, can we begin to imagine the possibilities and opportunities that lies ahead.

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