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Title 'Who leaves the most behind'? Developing 'curricular justice' in doctoral education in South Africa and the UK
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Background and Conceptual Framing

There is relatively little research that has been conducted around access and equity in doctoral study in the UK and South Africa. In the UK there is evidence that women, those from ethnic minorities and lower socio-economic groups are significantly under-represented (Wakeling & Kyriacou, 2010). In South Africa the number of PhDs at the national level is small but there is a plan to grow these by 2030, though the challenge of gaining equity in participation for Black South Africans is much greater.

Thinking about curriculum is complex but in framing this study, we argue that it can be understood as a tangle of 'taught content and the pedagogy supporting it' (Osberg & Biesta, 2010, p. 594). In relation to this, we take the question 'Who leaves the most behind?' from Todd (2001) who, drawing on Levinas, sees curriculum as a relational process – as encounters with the Other in both content and pedagogy. Furthermore, we locate the question in the postcolonial imperative, in the ongoing relationship between coloniser and colonised, which leaves both elements implicated. Connell (2017) argues that the 21st century university system is 'highly unequal' (p.6), embedding a 'narrow knowledge system that reflects and reproduces social inequalities on a global scale' (p.10), 'a Eurocentric curriculum prevails everywhere' (p.6). In her seminal work 'Southern Theory' and beyond, Connell draws attention to how conceptual, methodological and theoretical thinking that emanates from the colonised world is largely ignored in the 'mainstream economy of knowledge' (2017, p.9). Using Connell's (2007) notion of 'curricular justice', we argue for the centrality of the curriculum in any discussion of access and equity. We are not, however, advocating 'the insertion of new content into a metropole-dominated curriculum' (ibid, p.11), nor are we advocating that curricula be 'decolonised' only in the Global South (see, for example, Mbembe, 2016). Comaroff and Comaroff for instance reverse the narrative to argue that in crucial ways, 'contemporary world-historical processes are disrupting received geographies of core and periphery, relocating southward – and of course eastward as well' (2012, p. 7). Rather, the study is framed around the idea that a commitment to internationalism and social justice in higher education necessitates 're-making curricula in Northern as well as Southern universities' (ibid, p.13) and that in order to develop just curricula, the voices of those who are most usually exemplified in access and equity agendas, must be heard and attended to.

The concept of curricular justice may be perceived as similar to other attempts to reform a higher education curriculum so that it is ethnorelative rather than ethnocentric. Terms such as internationalisation of the curriculum, global learning, decolonisation of the curriculum, for example, all foreground the importance, if in different ways, of developing curricula that are inclusive and

that do not privilege particular ways of knowing and being. We use curricular justice to frame our comparative analysis of data from the WUN project because, rather than reflecting the '*culture* of the least advantaged' (Connell, 2017, p.11, original emphasis), it proposes a critique of culture and a 'reflective selection from a vast range of possible knowledge' (ibid). In addition, it creates space for dialogue, for reframing learning as a conversation - what the doctoral researchers who participated in our research called for - and for a 'living curriculum' (Keesing-Styles et al., 2014).

Methodology

At the UK university, two focus groups involving eleven doctoral researchers in the social sciences were held in order to explore their experiences and perceptions of access and equity through their participation in the 'doctoral curriculum'. At the South African university, there were four participants from the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship (MMUF), which is designed to increase the number of 'minority' PhDs. In-depth interviews were conducted with these recently graduated PhDs about their journey to completion.

Initial Findings

From the UK data, it was clear that there were struggles to identify a 'curriculum' and there was little expressed by the doctoral researchers about the ways in which issues of access and equity were addressed. However, some of the participants felt that as experienced professionals they have "a lot of knowledge and background that is not necessarily being recognised" and that they have rich knowledge and experience that could enhance the formal and informal curricula. More participation of doctoral researchers in determining the curriculum and recognition of their potential contribution was being suggested. This seems to resonate with the idea of a 'living curriculum' (Keesing-Styles et al, 2014), which seeks to reframe learning more explicitly as a conversation and develop programmes that are genuinely dynamic. In South Africa, an important central argument is that, when confronted with curricula that do not value or even recognise their own knowledges and that are predicated on particular ways of seeing the world that continue to be Eurocentric, it is equity students who leave the most behind in being required to adapt to the dominant agenda. The data shows how despite the overt commitment to justice and transformation at the policy level, the discourse of efficiency has hollowed out the notion of transformation reducing it to counts of equity bodies. The students on the equity programme who were given scholarships based in part on their commitment to social justice and to 'give back' to their communities, had to work very hard to reconcile competing demands of home and the PhD project with its journey of becoming in a predominantly white, post-apartheid institution. While to some extent all education requires an encounter with difference, it is equity subjects who have to leave the most behind. A focus on the lived experience of equity subjects shows a complex struggle involving race, class and gender interacting with disciplinary identity (Nomdo 2017). 'Who leaves the most behind' is an important question in any discussion of social justice in higher education. We argue that a just curriculum would have to make sure that it is not blind to those

who have been historically marginalised. Only then can it not leave anyone behind and hope to enhance global pedagogical practices.

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