

Higher Education for Good

Teaching and Learning Futures



Edited by
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8. A meditation on global further education, in haiku form

Jess Auerbach Jahajeeah

Note to Readers

Universities take for granted and are taken for granted. The forms and structures they use to present, contest, and create knowledge are rarely interrogated. Their specificity to the places in which they operate is often lost in the uniformity of ranking, global branding, and translatable structure. Political imperatives such as inequality, changing governments, and the growing awareness of a planet in peril do sometimes lead to structures-of-knowledge scrutiny. Most academics have little time for this, however, as they race in the hamster-wheels of neoliberal knowledge production and consumption.

Yet knowledge practices — its imbibing, its fermentation, its reproduction — have radically altered since the emergence of the internet as a tool of individual and collective thinking. The structures of learning, teaching and hierarchies that shape lives from kindergarten through to retirement are struggling to make sense of the sudden change.

In this piece I write in haiku form with the arguments elaborated in footnotes. I have never been to Japan, do not speak Japanese, and do not have the deep cultural knowledge that might enable me to engage the medium with the reverence that it deserves. I use it here with the greatest respect and a full acknowledgment of my limitations. Like millions of other children around the world, I learned it in school poetry.

As a school student, I saw intuitively the value of distilling arguments, and turned haikus into a study tool for my exams. These were my rafts on

which my memory attached linkages, and in moments of high pressure I found I could use them as boats with the details unfolding in my mind from the poetry's wake.

I have used this method since my teens, and they have carried me from high school through study and teaching engagements in learning spaces in South Africa, the UK, the USA, Angola, Brazil, Mauritius and beyond. I use them here with great gratitude for the connections between worlds they have enabled.

Heuristically, I think it is helpful to demonstrate how an arbitrary structure of argument with a very particular history quickly becomes so expected as to flow invisibly. The structure also makes visible the reality that statements are the proverbial tips of (rapidly melting) icebergs, and when excavated and explored open into knowledge histories.

Furthermore, it points to our increasing skill at reading on multiple levels at once, brought to the fore largely through engagements with hyperlinkages and digital texts and video — often all simultaneously. This chapter is limited in scope by the requirement of publication in the format of a page: if one were to assume readership online, the structure could be very different.

Teaching today — whether with tiny children or adults in one of the many folds of contemporary careers — is more complex than ever before. The expertise of the educator is constantly held up against the light of all information online, emotional and cognitive personal realities, as well as the vastly divergent norms that exist across intersectional knowledge traditions.

Some learning spaces incorporate new tools and offer students opportunities to weave their own knowledge tapestries, with the instructor as guide or facilitator. Others still treat the professor as a priest with the unique ability of translating the Latin in the bible to the illiterate masses thereby saving their souls. The origins of the contemporary global university structure lie in the Christian priesthood — knowledge, empire and capitalism all entangled.

Some students need a priest for their learning; others find guidance via different paths.

An average class of students anywhere in the world includes a mix of students needing both — sometimes the same person thrives with one or the other depending on the particularities of a moment.

One of the challenges facing today's universities is that most of us working in further education (which we usually call "higher" education in the university sector as a matter of privilege and status) are also in jobs that depend on the status quo.

How do we think outside of that, with our students and an unpredictable future at the forefronts of our minds? How do we imagine the "good" of further education, or keep conscious the vocational pull that brings many into its orbit? This chapter is a meditation in flow and aims to open into a deeper discussion about what we know, what is internalised, and how we (those of us working in further education) evaluate our own realities.¹

Part I: Entry

My rule for reading
is: distil the argument
into a haiku²

if i can't, i missed
the real intervention is
the essential point³

the point of this piece:
curating information
is our task, our work⁴

-
- 1 Here I thank the editors of this collection for providing this space. I also thank Robin DeRosa, Sandhya Gunness and Rubina Rampersad for their thought-provoking engagement as peer-reviewers. With their support the chapter has been strengthened considerably.
 - 2 We all have rules for reading that we acquire in our basic education. Before beginning a new task of understanding, it is valuable to interrogate our earliest memories of reading. Where did we learn? How did we learn? How did symbols on a page or screen transform into meaning? How are characters linked to and in our imagination? If our first written language is the Chinese script, we might think in pictures, for example (Mcbride-Chang et al., 2000). But for those of us bereft of such a powerful imaginative guide, how do we make pictures in our minds from the Roman script, for example? How do such pictures become meaning?
 - 3 What is the takeaway from anything we read? As we increasingly also think in and with pictures (on social media, TV, film, and meme), how do we distil meaning and build that into our knowledge of the world? Writing is only one system, and context matters: the same information on Twitter (or X?) as in an academic essay will often be internalised in radically different ways (Olagbaju & Popoola, 2020).
 - 4 I suggest in this chapter that universities are increasingly spaces of knowledge distillation, curation, and guidance. The unique skill of academic practitioners is to

“our” being those of us
whose livelihoods manifest
as knowledge makers⁵

whether full time with
benefits, or part of the
vast precarity⁶

of post-docs, contract
academics, of content
moderators, of⁷

all those who train the
tools: algorithms of mass
consent: discontent.⁸

Part II: Proposition

Universities
no longer hold the keys to
knowledge. Google has⁹

changed information
hierarchies: where we experts
now grow on platforms¹⁰

be able to make sense of vast fields of information and to place these within relevant societal contexts that students can then navigate without becoming overwhelmed.

- 5 The imagined audience of this specific text are those who work in the formal academy in any way. Here I do not just include academic faculty, but the individuals who administer and guide students through complex systems, as well as those who bolster critical skills such as writing, digital capability, computer literacy, social awareness, and/or political inclusion (Breakstone et al., 2021).

6 (Brankovitch, 2021).

7 (Kerr, 2022).

8 (Altenried, 2020).

9 I name Google here, though of course, I am aware of the multiple alternatives to google as a noun and as a verb. It is important to interrogate what infrastructures of knowledge become invisible by virtue of sheer market force, however, and the terms of the exchange we enter when we provide data traces for supposedly free services. A growing literature speaks to the danger of offering up our data for free (Barassi, 2020; Benjamin, 2019) whilst at the same time Google and the other “big five” tech companies — Apple, Meta, Microsoft, and Twitter — become ever more ubiquitous and ever capable of suppressing opposition (Orlowski, 2020; Ziegenbalg & Thalheim, 2021; see also Amiel & do Rozário Diniz, Chapter 18, this volume).

10 The COVID-19 pandemic, amongst many other events, highlighted the extent to which decentralised systems of knowledge have the capacity to create and maintain

like money on trees
 what of the livelihoods we
 whose bread depends on¹¹

knowing much more than
 anyone else can think of
 flows and boundaries¹²

here is one vision
 for the changes we must make

multiple alternative realities. Philosophically, this can be a good thing, and much of this chapter argues for a multitude of knowledges to be recognised as important (Trisos et al., 2021). Cultural relativism, however, is not a refined enough tool for the information environment that we now live in, where the costs of certain knowledge claims may well be the death of millions (Posetti et al., 2018). The South African government's early response to the HIV pandemic was highlighted in a pre-social media era, however, this is not unique to the current moment. As Ian Goldin has argued (Goldin & Kutarna, 2016) we are simply at a moment in history where the speed of knowledge cycles is gathering momentum such that we urgently need new tools at the level of global politics to address the crises these information contestations provoke.

- 11 One of the many challenges of online content is that it is devoid of context. In a video about Google in Africa, current minister of small businesses, Ms. Stella Ndabeni-Abrahams, informed the viewer that "we [South Africans] must Google our way out of poverty" (Google, 2021). Yet what does Google understand about the lived experience of hunger? The smell of inadequate sanitation in South African townships? The cost of data and the difficulty of determining fact from product-placement on an internet that is very far away from neutral?
- 12 Academia provides occupations like any other. In South African universities, the majority within the system are privileged to receive good salaries that remunerate us for our time, though many experience deep exclusion from the South African further education space due to what Andre Keet calls "epistemic othering" and the deep violence of apartheid that continues (Habib 2019; Jansen 2017; Keet, 2014; Monatshana, 2020). South African professional academic salaries remain far less than in the corporate sector, shaping the profession as vocational. Just like those who market products, we must convince people that our work holds value. At a 2022 research awards ceremony of the South African National Research Foundation, the director, Dr. Fulufhelo Nelwamondo, urged award recipients to be mindful that in the national fiscus, research monies were in direct tension with the R350 (approximately US\$20) monthly grant given by government to prevent starvation of the majority of the country's citizens. South Africa, as a microcosm of global capitalism, makes visible dynamics that are present around the globe, and in wealthy countries such as the USA, these dynamics have become even more pressing and precarious. Academic labour is increasingly outsourced into the gig economy.

for education¹³

to work, hold and lift
in universities that
open up futures:¹⁴

(too long didn't read:
the answer is don't look North
for validation)¹⁵

validation is
complex, and often
politically¹⁶

informed. Where there are
resource constraints people fight
much more over crumbs.¹⁷

-
- 13 This suggestion draws on my unusual journey from non-traditional schooling in South Africa through the relatively privileged undergraduate institution of UCT (University of Cape Town). After working in a refugee camp in Mozambique, I was trained at Oxford and Stanford where I lived in constant awareness of the many contradictions of global further education. During my PhD years, I lived, worked, and taught in Angolan and Brazilian higher education, and when I finished, I spent three years doing the same in Mauritius. Then I moved between three very different South African universities: Stellenbosch, North-West, and recently back to UCT in the “adult” role of associate professor and program director for the MPhil in inclusive innovation.
- 14 There's a lot of good that we can maintain across these spaces, but I also think some changes would take us a very long way. I draw on many thinkers and writers in this space, and appreciate the mentorship of, amongst others, Jonathan Jansen (Jansen, 2002; Jansen et al., 2020), Saleem Badat (Badat & Sayed, 2014; Badat, 2020), Laura Czerniewicz (Czerniewicz et al., 2019, 2020; Gourlay et al., 2021), Pamela Maseko (Kaschula & Maseko, 2014; Maseko, 2017) and others.
- 15 “TLDR” meaning ‘too long didn't read’ flies often across the screens of undergraduates, much to the exasperation of many of those who teach them (Lahiri, 2017). Yet as I have argued elsewhere in an article on the pedagogy of hyperlinkages (Auerbach, 2022a), students now read *differently*, not necessarily less. Here I also nod to popular culture, and the 2021 film *Don't Look Up!* (McKay, 2021).
- 16 Let me add here that “looking North” can be a tremendous source of inspiration and insight for many scholars and that is not a bad thing — the challenge is that the sightline (and cite line) rarely goes in both directions. This is what Steve Biko's *Black consciousness* aimed to address, but even his significant insights are rarely engaged outside narrow — in this case South African — circles (Biko, 2002).
- 17 As a result, scholars in poor countries *feel* they are inferior, and scholars in rich countries generally believe they are “the top of the field” without either being able to perceive and reflect on the system holistically and looking consciously in all directions.

Part III: Starting Point

I know so little
should be our starting point to
think with our students¹⁸

#TogetherWeCan
trace histories of ideas
who taught whom and why¹⁹

and where and with what
consequences. This is how
the world has been made.²⁰

Part IV: Argument

I have argued for
a pedagogy of hyper
linkages designed²¹

to use lateral
reading and the insights of
passion, exploring²²

-
- 18 The internet gives us an illusion of knowing a lot, but it is helpful to undertake exercises that highlight knowledge limits. Who can navigate across their city? Who can divide 1498 by three in their heads? How have our memories changed and how do we excavate the contours of what we know, what is available to know, and what it is that Google and ChatGPT cannot answer?
- 19 Understanding the technologies of hashtags, for example, is a helpful tool of contemporary knowledge management (Nyabola, 2018), but one we cannot take for granted in our students (Lembani et al., 2020). What more power might student research have when it is explicitly political, grounded in contemporary debates and documenting fleeting realities?
- 20 Understanding the flows of knowledge through what we might consider the kinship charts of academia is a helpful first step (Overing et al., 2015; Peletz, 1995). Who taught whom (and is married to whom) matters because ideas principally flow and are carried through people (Levine, 2013; Philips, 2019). As Bruno Latour reminds us, “science” is not devoid of politics (Latour, 2004), and the creation of canons has been the amplifying of certain intellectual ancestors, and the silencing of others (Nyamnjoh, 2005, 2016, 2020). The silenced ancestors increasingly grow tired of being ignored, and wish to speak (Estes, 2019).
- 21 A pedagogy of hyperlinks is a pedagogy that acknowledges the multiple levels of linked reading with which students engage (Auerbach, 2022a). It encourages them to move from one source to another, drawing connections and consciously exploring a multitude of diverse sources that move from the broad to the very particular.
- 22 Lateral reading is a technique whereby one reads *around* a source online, rather than through it. For example, if students google the University of Cape Town, they

across platforms and
 citational politics
 towards useful truths²³

useful truths will more
 and more become what defines
 us — we must curate²⁴

the stories with which
 our students work, guide their dreams
 reading, viewing, thoughts²⁵

through miasmas of
 possible material.
 what is relevant?²⁶

don't read its home page, but rather read *about* the institution on other sources. This allows students to develop discernment regarding the quality and positionality of sources — an online encyclopaedia versus a product page or marketing. Lateral reading has been argued to be essential as a skill towards democracy (Brodsky et al., 2021; McGrew & Byrne, 2022).

- 23 Truths most often have objectives and help student's parse data and information to understand *why* a given truth holds salience and when is helpful. That Mauritius is on a cyclonic belt is much more relevant if you live on the island in February than if you read about it in a geography textbook, for example! In an interview I did with a Mauritian doctor many years ago, he said: "but imagine now if everyone hears a cyclone is coming and instead of preparing, they shout "fake news!" Imagine the consequences!" (Auerbach, 2020).
- 24 It is impossible to keep up with all information. Every day, terabytes are added to the internet in English alone (<https://ourworldindata.org/internet>). No human mind can keep up, so we rely on other human minds, and on algorithms. But it is us who program the algorithms, and what they see depends on how we train them (O'Neil, 2016).
- 25 What are the stories the internet knows? How do we ensure our students can write into being the Wikipedia that does not exist? How do we ensure they are confident to make, not just consume, emerging materials? When teaching undergraduates today, I feel an essential writing exercise is the assignment of a Wikipedia post created on a topic that is not there. For students in less wealthy countries, much of their knowledge is not reflected online — from their hometowns to the local soccer club. For students who occupy places of power, much that needs to be said has already been written, but always from specific points of view. This is a valuable point of departure.
- 26 To discern what is relevant, university knowledge curators must gaze into the future and find ways to teach students how they, themselves, can access emerging materials and make use of them to build systems that are currently invisible, nascent, or inaccessible. In a primary school where I taught in Angola, children learned to recycle, although there were no recycling facilities in the country (Auerbach, 2020b). Further education must constantly engage in similar processes of knowledge guidance if our students are to be at home in the coming worlds.

it is not to leave
 thinking for the sake of thought
 behind us. Thinking²⁷

is critical, yes
 but in a world on fire, floods
 wash screens, pulp ink, sear²⁸

into futures that
 need new tools of learning. Now.
 How do we respond?²⁹

Part V: People

Here are three people
 from three African countries
 three learning systems³⁰

we meet them now to
 explore the “skills” they need to
 survive in this time.³¹

-
- 27 Far from being anti-intellectual, this work is a serious intellectual, political, and social endeavour. It highlights the complexity of preparing for a changing world, and in this way South Africa has much to teach. With great imperfection, with the arrival of democracy, a generation of South African academics embraced teaching students of wildly different backgrounds to themselves for a future that none of them could envision. Though South African democracy limps and often stumbles, it is also an example of a miraculous transition. Critique must be made, but it is also valuable to keep sight of what has been achieved, and for others to learn from it (Keet & Swartz, 2015).
- 28 The climate catastrophe increasingly shapes every single person’s lived reality (IPCC, 2022).
- 29 Writing in early 2023, as the world faces a global food crisis arguably created by outdated international institutions incapable of inclusive problem-solving, it is obvious that the longer we wait, the more people die. The four horsemen of the apocalypse already exist in many homes, but their fate has not yet been sealed (Roy, 2020).
- 30 One of the challenges of South African education is the tendency of its handservants to think themselves exceptional. Indeed, apartheid was a particular kind of aberration, but the systems it represented exist unfettered in the world, and many of our northern neighbours in the rest of Africa have dealt with similar challenges to ours for many years (Nyamnjoh, 2011, 2012, 2013). Whilst the world can learn from South Africa, South Africa too has a great deal to learn from the world — the rest of continental “Africa” included (Mamdani, 2016). Multiple perspectives are possible at once.
- 31 As Yuval Harari (2018) has argued, where you live does shape what your future will hold, unless you are part of a miniscule few with geographic mobility (Heiman

one reviewer of
these poems asked about cliché
a valuable³²

intervention. Yes
there's risk: to tell stories
is to simplify³³

and to perhaps hit
up against the limits of
the readers' world view³⁴

these are real students
whom I have taught and thought with.
each of our lives has³⁵

elements of the
everyday, and of cliché:
this is of value³⁶

please read further in
deep micro-realities
to make sense of them:³⁷

et al., 2012). Even then, the bonds of love often hold one fixed in powerful ways (Sichone, 2008) or are broken at tremendous personal cost (Patel, 2010). A "global education" usually means one in which those from wealthy countries feel comfortable (Ferguson-Patrick et al., 2018; Fuller & Stevenson, 2019). This term should be changed to "elite education" and the realities of a truly *global* population in terms of struggle and exclusion should be centred. How do you thrive in a system designed to exclude you? When we reflect on "global education" in resource poor environments, this question should arguably be the focus (Glass et al., 2021).

32 (Canagarajah, 2011).

33 "Our concern with history... is a concern with preformed images already imprinted on our brains, images at which we keep staring while the truth lies elsewhere, away from it all, somewhere as yet undiscovered." (Sebald, 2014, p. v), *Austerlitz* in Zia Haider Rahman (2014) *In the Light of What We Know*.

34 (Jain, 2019).

35 How to write about one another with respect and care is a question that has long challenged fiction and anthropology (Clifford & Marcus, 1989). The same questions are now pushing themselves into digital spaces, where not just words but visual or three-dimensional imagery can be used with varying degrees of what scholars' call "informed consent".

36 Grimm & Grimm (1800/2011) *Grimm's Complete Fairy Tales*

37 My personal preference is to read the great novelists of each country to gain a sense of the emotional and structural palette with which lives are painted and experienced in each place. For Angola, I recommend Ondjaki, Pepetela, and Jose Eduardo Agualuso. For Mauritius, Nathacha Appanah, Lindsay Collen, and Sabah Carrim. South Africa's canon is vast but perhaps Zakes Mda, Johann Coetzee, and

of Angola, South
Africa and of Brazil
Much to learn from each.

*

Buhle's twenty-three
he grew up poor in North-West
South Africa. He³⁸

walked to school, took a
taxi down to study more
had never switched on³⁹

a computer when
he got to my class to start
his degree. Sent half⁴⁰

of his scholarship
money home every month to
feed the family⁴¹

Imraan Coovadia are starting points. Alternatively go onto a streaming service near you and play the country's music — this guides insight just as well, IMO.

- 38 The names I use here are not real, and in each case represent what in anthropology we call "composite characters" (Berry, 2021). Though certain details have been changed or disguised, each person represents students I have taught, and the realities and constraints that they bring to the classroom. Post 1994, South Africa has seen a phenomenal rise in the number of what in the US are called "first generation" students — the first in their family to attend tertiary education. As for "poor" versus "wealthy", I do not mince my words here. I did once, using the term "economically marginalised" in the draft of a book that I shared with undergraduates for critical comment (it was a teaching and learning book, and that seemed only fair). The students told me they experienced the phrase as patronising, they commented: be honest and don't hide it in fancy academese just to make yourself feel less uncomfortable. Their input and good sense is acknowledged in the publication (Auerbach, 2020b, p. 197).
- 39 South Africa's rural villages are often largely cut off from global knowledge infrastructure. Buhle's village had one road going through the middle, and a small shop, with scattered rural homesteads on either side. There was nowhere with wi-fi, no recreational facilities, and his school was six kilometres away and served several villages, not just one. He had never been to the city that the university was in before he arrived and was helped to settle in through a network of connections made via a national church.
- 40 Over the years I have met many students who have arrived at university without digital skills. In this case, I asked him if his high school had not had a computer lab, and he said yes it had, but to use it you had to pay R20 (at the time of writing, US\$1.28, CNY 85.6) a month and his family could not afford that cost.
- 41 His parents had been impacted deeply by the many structural violences of South African society, and social grants (Dawson & Fouksman, 2020; Ferguson, 2015)

university
left him hungry and angry
overqualified⁴²

for manual labour
under-supported to risk
another degree⁴³

he learned referencing
and academic writing
but you can't eat words⁴⁴

and he is at home
where he began, just older
with much wider dreams⁴⁵

were their only source of income. Realising the importance of skills like computing, Buhle sent as much money as he could from his government student grant to his siblings in the hope that they would find themselves facing different realities (Pillay et al., 2021; Yende, 2021).

- 42 He had wanted to study engineering, but his marks were not high enough to gain admission, so he landed up in the humanities. He liked some of the content, but he also couldn't see the point of a lot of it because it seemed so removed from his lived experience. Much of the time he was hungry — in part because he could only afford to live far away from the main university campus, walked far into the city each day, and could not afford to eat-to-fullness at the student cafeterias (see for example, Mabharwana, 2022).
- 43 His expectations changed dramatically as his exposure widened, but he graduated with huge gaps in terms of how to take his literary knowledge and turn that into a career. He understood the value of postgraduate training and had attained the marks for it, but the level of support he needed, particularly for the fourth year of study which in South Africa is called Honours, was not forthcoming, from either the university or the state.
- 44 How do majority white faculty, largely from South Africa's suburbs, prepare majority black students — at this institution largely from rural areas — for the workforce, particularly when most have always followed an academic path? Most South African universities have radically underfunded and understaffed career offices — this is a pain point and an opportunity because it can so easily be changed.
- 45 This student is one of a significant number of unemployed graduates who, after three years of study, remain in much the same position they were in when they started, but now with the added psychological burden of feeling that they have failed (Botha & Botha, 2022). Deeper connections need to be made between the humanities and the workforces that our graduates enter across the world. A professional degree provides a pathway to a particular future that is usually financially secure, but the "openness" of the humanities is one of its challenges, particularly for those who do not move in privileged circles. This sense of constantly failing our students was a large part of what led me to leave a career in anthropology and join the faculty at a business school. Understanding the dynamics of system failure and where we

students like Buhle
 need our universities
 to open them doors⁴⁶

but often inside
 them, the teaching staff don't know
 which doors to think with⁴⁷

our institutions
 need permeable doors, light
 instead of solid⁴⁸

they must understand
 their responsibility
 to youngsters like him⁴⁹

graduation sans
 work spells a brutal future
 mental health crisis⁵⁰

might be able to intervene to improve student's life trajectories is a large part of my now ongoing research.

- 46 This is, however, a fixable problem. Universities could easily strengthen their work readiness programs, and develop parallel courses that give students internship experience, prepare them for interviews, provide access to networks, career counselling, and support with planning their futures. Many academics shy away from "skills" but this is out of sync with the urgency of contemporary life, and the weight of duty so many students carry. As academics themselves are often disconnected from professional fields, they do not have the necessary capabilities to train students in this way. Both students and staff, therefore, must be supported towards a different reality of learning.
- 47 Academics cannot afford to be so removed from the world as to not articulate the substantive ways they create good (Young, 2020). At the same time, it is worth focusing on the great power that those working in contemporary structures of learning still have over their students' thinking. Those who act with compassion and integrity in thousands of everyday moments can shape futures in powerful ways, and this is work that should be valued and treasured by society even though it is often slow to bear fruit. It may take an undergraduate ten years to understand information presented to them in university.
- 48 Permeable in the sense of being linked to the localised economies in which they are located so that students can gain work experience along the way and apply their insights as they learn them.
- 49 Universities serve society, and though I said earlier that South African universities have done a lot, I don't think it's enough. I do think many, many students fall through the cracks. That is a challenge of institutional structures, however, so to resolve it the structures will have to change.
- 50 As elsewhere, students in South Africa know exactly what they are missing out on as they see through their cellphone's daily updates all that they might never reach — particularly if they are unemployed. This contributes to a mental health

South Africa can't
add more trauma to our long
long list. We must do⁵¹

better. Work matters
regardless of the content:
qualification⁵²

is empty without
a pathway into the next
phase, stage, bright future.⁵³

*

Marianna is
a fourth-year economics
student, Angolan⁵⁴

she studies for free
at a university
built after the war.⁵⁵

crisis that we do not yet have solid data for, but that texts like Whabee Long's that explore the impact of a lack of dignity on a human psyche (Long, 2021) suggest has far reaching consequences.

- 51 Lesley Green has argued that South African history has unfolded as a series of traumas (Green, 2020). The impact has left the country shaken and must be interrupted.
- 52 Learning for learning's sake is valuable and I believe that option should be maintained. But learning on an empty belly is impossible. In non-professional fields, I believe much more attention needs to be given to where our students land in their first years after graduation. How do we link "learning" to "living", particularly in resource-scarce environments where the margins of survival are very thin? Learning that is decontextualised is as empty as search-data on a glowing screen (DeSouza & Leite, 2008).
- 53 The term "bright future" becomes empty political rhetoric if it is not realised. In this story, I have described the many challenges facing one student. That life continues though, and hopefully will be re-told as a story of overcoming as things continue to unfold for him. When he "makes it" and is employed and later installs the first wi-fi router in a public facility, he will be hailed as a hero and no doubt the university will congratulate itself for enabling class mobility. Both stories can be true at the same time.
- 54 Here I draw on two years of ethnographic research in Angola in 2013 and 2014, and an ongoing relationship with the higher education sector (Auerbach, 2022b).
- 55 Angola's public universities are free to attend, though there is rarely additional stipend money for living expenses, such as is routinely covered in South Africa through NSFAS (National Student Financial Aid Scheme). However, demand far exceeds capacity, and a burgeoning private university sector has filled that gap. Some institutions, such as the Catholic University in Luanda, offer programs that are recognised around the world and carry significant status. Others have much less

where she studies is
a collection of pre-fab
classrooms, concrete paths⁵⁶

wi-fi only for
staff, a library with just
three hundred odd books⁵⁷

Marianna's placed
in a class of just thirty
that's how many chairs⁵⁸

fit into the room.
her university is
so competitive⁵⁹

few chairs, they study
for free. An economy
that gapes with space for⁶⁰

rigorous accreditation but meet the pragmatic demands of students working in an economy that is rapidly complexifying (Faria, 2009).

- 56 The Universidade Katyavala Bwila (UKB) in Benguela hosted me for the duration of my initial fieldwork. For years they have been promised permanent facilities but continue to operate out of prefabricated classrooms that limit the institution's reach and expansion. Classroom capacity is approximately 30 students, which has a radical impact on feasible enrolments.
- 57 In 2023 I returned to Angola after a break extended by the pandemic. Much has changed, but the university sector continues to struggle and at the time I visited was in the midst of a prolonged faculty strike. My most recent trip to Benguela province where UKB is located was in 2018. UKB, like others, increasingly caters to a student body who prefer their material in digital form. Angolan universities also benefit from the Brazilian government's commitment to open access scholarly publications, and therefore have access to huge quantities of peer-reviewed scholarship at no cost. All you need is to read Portuguese and know where to look, because like so many learning structures, the Brazilian system is not easily legible to Google Scholar algorithms nor do outsiders easily comprehend the vast available knowledge that the national system *Lattes* makes accessible to readers of Portuguese (de Brito et al., 2016; Gouveia, 2019; Costa & Leite, 2008).
- 58 See Footnote 58.
- 59 To gain placement, students write competitive entrance exams that are typically exponentially over-subscribed in terms of student-potential seat ratios. I have argued elsewhere that by the sheer arithmetic of admissions ratios, these make the institution arguably as competitive as Stanford (Pusumane & Auerbach Jahajeeah, 2024). That thinking in such terms is often challenging (*does more competitive mean "better?"*) and reveals much about the structures of thinking (Williams, 1977) that shape knowledge hierarchies worldwide.
- 60 Angola experienced almost 40 years of conflict. A struggle for independence from Portugal began in the 1960s, morphed into a Cold War proxy conflict and civil war,

skilled, and connected
there are many options for
graduates with her⁶¹

social capital
knowing who you know matters
getting into the⁶²

right political
party. The card you carry
opens up pathways⁶³

Marianna has
a two-year-old daughter who
she hopes will one day⁶⁴

and ended only in 2002. There followed a period of oil-related economic boom (Soares de Oliveira, 2015) that came to a juddering halt when the commodity price crashed in December 2014. Since then, huge strides have been made in diversifying the Angolan economy, but the country faces significant challenges in the areas of health, education, employment, and infrastructure.

- 61 In such an environment, however, qualified individuals are quickly snapped up by potential employers, with the proviso that, sometimes, political party membership is a prerequisite of employment, regardless of technical fit.
- 62 Elsewhere I have referred to this process as the “trafficking of influence” and suggested that it is by no means unique to Angola (Auerbach, 2020b). It is worth remembering that given Angola’s role in the Cold War, then-youth who now run the country were trained on both sides of the “iron curtain” and subject to contradictory ideological influences (Auerbach, 2022b). This means that Angola today is a remarkable space of ideological plurality and possibility, and that the model of cadre deployment in the professional sector — public but to some extent also private — is marked by policies and practices much closer to those experienced in contemporary China (Mok, 2016).
- 63 Many Angolans I worked with described the importance of putting one’s political party membership specifically to the ruling *MPLA* party on the top of any pile of documents one handed to the authorities, to even be considered. It is worth noting, however, that there have already been significant changes in popular and political expression in Angola (Pearce et al., 2018) The national elections of 2022 saw a significant erosion in the *MPLA*’s voter support. Though they won the elections, they did so by a hair’s breadth and are unlikely to govern unquestioned going forward.
- 64 Today’s young Angolans live in a context where for those with education, housing, and transportation, it is not unreasonable to have very different life expectations to those of their parents. That said, everyday life continues to carry a heavy mental load (Emma, 2018), and most young Angolans exposed to the many comforts of the contemporary global consumer economy have very different aspirations for the material circumstances of their own children.

study in English
outside Angola, wider
expanses for her.⁶⁵

Their family is
one of growing means, they build
their business, work⁶⁶

together across
three generations and she
is the golden child⁶⁷

who will visit France
climb the Eiffel tower and
survey the city.⁶⁸

*

Kushal's shirt lies close
to his body from the heat;
he works in transport⁶⁹

65 Many Angolans who go abroad study in either Brazil or Portugal, though the latter is much more expensive and requires success in the complex visa processes of the European bureaucracy (Agência, 2013; Alfredo, 2012; Faria, 2009). Studying in English-speaking countries provides high status and valuable networks but requires the extra expenditure of a year spent learning a language. Increasingly, rather than making this investment in the anglophone sphere, Angolan parents are opting to send their children to China for higher education (though this process was interrupted in significant ways by the COVID-19 pandemic).

66 Marianna's father studied in Cuba as a child and remained there for 17 years — long enough to obtain a university degree. In addition to his work as a governmental administrator, he opened a successful transportation business which Marianna helped to manage.

67 As the first in her family to be the *child* of one who is university-educated, Marianna has benefitted from incredible social mobility within the family that she herself can continue. She dreams of visiting Paris, but unlike her parent's generation, this dream was entirely feasible and was part of her personal savings plan.

68 Before the COVID-19 pandemic, horizons had changed in significant ways for billions of people worldwide. As was quickly documented (Kochhar, 2021), much of this progress was rapidly undone in 2020 and 2021, and the ongoing conflict in Europe seems likely to set back a more equitable world order.

69 The contexts of students' physical environments are an important consideration in developing localised curricula. Often academics assume that the buildings that comprise universities neutralise the uneven effects of environmental conditions, but this is rarely the case, and when it is, only applies to the short periods of time that students learn on campus. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of reflection on and in the physical environment: what kinds of desk do students use, and where? Is the roof insulated to muffle the sound of rain in an online lecture?

middle management
 he likes the sound of it: soon:
 Kushal: PhD⁷⁰

two children study
 in Australia so he
 spends mostly on them⁷¹

but he's got to climb
 the ranks, and just one degree
 from the national⁷²

university
 won't cut it these days so he
 enrolled from his life⁷³

twenty years of long
 experience written up
 in academese⁷⁴

in his class, others
 of similar ambitions:
 career progress and⁷⁵

How might bodily comfort or discomfort shape the emotional association with learning?

- 70 Aspirations and motivations are complex, but we should not disallow our student's vanity as well! It can be a highly motivating resource to draw upon!
- 71 Students such as Kushal are often referred to in academic literature as "non-traditional". As researchers, of course, we must question whose tradition is the invisible norm in this case, and why. If the wealthiest parts of Europe and North America were not positioned as centres of the universe, it's clear that Kushal is much closer to the norm in higher learning than a nineteen-year-old with no financial dependents could ever be.
- 72 Increasingly in the so-called "knowledge economy", an undergraduate degree has become the starting requirement, and further progression requires at least a master's degree.
- 73 Recognition of prior learning structures are critical interventions that allow students to gain acknowledgement for work they have already done. These could be strengthened and supported more across the continent, but a critical component to that work would be lobbying for recognition of such incentives by privileged gatekeepers who assess the "quality" of specific degrees.
- 74 Translating knowledge into academese is a complex process that relies on a willingness not to master content but to master conventions of communication.
- 75 In the university in Mauritius in which Kushal studied, he was, as suggested, absolutely normal in terms of both the experiences he brought into the room, and the expectations he had for his future.

vanity, hopes for
 money, recognition, praise
 locally grown, and⁷⁶

seeded, and nurtured
 long distance education
 on this African⁷⁷

island. Kushal looks
 up, sees digital knowledge
 economy, knows⁷⁸

the papers matter
 after work, after food he
 writes. One paragraph⁷⁹

and another. One
 citation towards his plan
 of graduation⁸⁰

-
- 76 What is the point of a university degree? In an environment so full of options, all institutions can strengthen their offerings by interrogating exactly why students choose them.
- 77 Of all the available canons, what were the accidents of history that led to the consolidation of each of our own? Mauritius is unusual because it lies in the middle of the Indian Ocean. As a former colony of the Netherlands, France, and England, and as a space whose population descends mostly from South Asia and contemporary China, it is a country of highly contested ancient knowledge systems. In this context, the Open university that Kushal attends has many canons to draw upon when structuring its curriculum.
- 78 Mauritius has a remarkable history of educational success. From high rates of illiteracy in the early 1960s, it has transformed itself into Africa's most educated population relying on a complexified economy in the service sector supported by free education, healthcare, and food subsidies (Dookhitram et al., 2018; Eriksen, 1998; Zafar, 2011). Though not without significant challenges, Mauritius demonstrates that it is possible to radically alter the lives of most of the population despite scarce material resources. Kushal's grandparents were indentured labourers, his parents were agricultural workers who gained literacy later in life, but he himself was able to go to university and his own children now study abroad. Like Marianna, there has been tremendous change within the course of two generations that South Africa and other countries might also do well to acknowledge and think with.
- 79 So much work in contemporary further education takes place before dawn and after dark, but this is often left out of public discourse of education. This institution has a model that four accepted papers equate to a PhD, so many students simply focus on journal articles right after they finish data collection.
- 80 The politics of citation are important to reflect upon and openly address in furthering education in this region. Who is cited, which voices are amplified, what knowledge becomes the gold standard for the field? These are all questions of paramount political and psychic importance. Movements such as #RhodesMustFall in South

Part VI: Questions

How do we serve them?
 Buhle, Marianna, and
 Kushal? They are our⁸¹

“African uni-
 versity students!” they each
 walk such unique paths⁸²

the people teaching
 them, are not in high profile
 places, their branding⁸³

is muted; impact
 vast, and sometimes, limited
 glorified high schools,⁸⁴

Africa gave some attention to this work, but by 2022 it already feels that much of this has faded into an echo and is no longer front and centre of university collective minds. This is arguably even more important for those like Kushal who are there for the certificate rather than to interrogate knowledge structures themselves. Knowledge curation in this context can build, nourish, and empower or it can serve to make him feel that he is only the most insignificant spot on the edge of the great knowledge empire.

- 81 Much ink has been spilled on the purpose of universities in the world, and of course that purpose is multiple and multidimensional. I write in this way simply to keep front and centre of mind the very real lives that are at the core of educational work, however it is parsed politically and sociologically.
- 82 The diversity of higher education worldwide is perhaps part of what makes it such a difficult sector to manage or on which to comment meaningfully. Emerging institutions such as Minerva, the London Interdisciplinary School, and the African Leadership College challenge the model of brick-and-mortar institutions, building on centuries of similar push-back from distance learning institutions such as UNISA or inclusive access education via community colleges in the United States or the Open universities worldwide.
- 83 Yet despite this diversity, conversation about the university sector continues to be led by a handful of wealthy brands in the US, UK and slowly an emerging number in China (Sharma, 2022).
- 84 It is widely accepted that university ranking tables such as that of *Times Higher Education* do not capture the impact of institutions of higher education in *localised* spaces. This is part of why three “high profile” Chinese universities have recently opted to leave the ranking system (see below). But what of universities such as those in Angola and Mauritius that never even try to “make” the rankings, but contribute significantly to the transformation of localised economies and the radical shifting of millions of lives?

though, are not what is
needed. The education
industry complex⁸⁵

must beat to new tunes.
Buhle, Marianna and
Kushal all think with⁸⁶

the internet, their
minds plug in to collective
insight, exploring⁸⁷

truths: both fake and real
surely universities
are the place to learn⁸⁸

-
- 85 The Education industrial complex builds on work that comes from war: how do we build factories of ammunition, production lines of human workers? Rufalow (2020) has demonstrated that technology itself can be co-opted in schools to prepare students to be knowledge workers, knowledge receivers, or knowledge makers depending on the structure of thinking (Williams, 1977) that is instilled in the school and by the teachers. He writes about one small school district in California. What are the implications for the world?
- 86 The COVID-19 pandemic had uneven and, in many cases, disastrous consequences for students around the world, and has widened global learning inequality. Yet for a moment, it also compelled institutions to force staff to engage with new technologies that enabled learning and to consider in concrete ways the material conditions in which their students lived and learned. In South Africa, it was particularly striking, and as so often South Africa highlights systems that manifest around the world: a majority privileged, middle-class faculty were forced to engage with the material circumstances of their students, not just abstractly but in practical terms. This enabled significant leaps in understanding.
- 87 New visual literacies now shape the ways that knowledge is internalised by billions of people. Universities, however, for the most part continue to rely on text as a primary tool of inquiry. My teaching has suggested that the same students who struggle to write a simple undergraduate essay are often capable of making sophisticated videos in which they articulate complex theoretical points and communicate with classmates and outside audiences highly successfully. Is it fair to penalise them because their knowledge skills are *different* to that of previous generations? Personally, I don't believe it is, but university structures have for the most part failed to recognise these emerging skills and ways of communicating.
- 88 Yet discernment of the quality of digital content is something that must be actively taught (Rufalow, 2020). Some people gain access to such teaching through parents and teachers in school, or through national digital policies that land unevenly. Many of us, however, are not formally trained in how to parse the many kinds of information so easily available online. I am convinced that teaching this will become the primary task of universities.

the difference? If not
universities then who?
who teaches the new⁸⁹

literacies and
capabilities of new
knowledge work? New forms⁹⁰

must be mastered by
students, but also by staff.
Today's status quo⁹¹

serves the interests
of empire unabated.
how do we now change?⁹²

-
- 89 In an already highly differentiated global schooling system, can we expect this work to happen at school? That seems unrealistic. There is, however, a real opportunity for the global higher education sector to take on this challenge collectively.
- 90 Learning to read, watch and listen with discernment whilst parsing multiple forms of online information is today's knowledge *work*. Depending on the story-telling skill, genre and personal preference, individuals now have multiple ways to communicate their insights and understandings, and even gaining a working comprehension of what knowledge already exists often requires the use of algorithmic or human-network based tools.
- 91 How do permanent academic staff adjust to such a seismic shift? Must they, or do the old systems of knowledge regulation remain important to teach? For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, many of us encountered colleagues who were uncomfortable using basic digital tools and insisted that the only place for pedagogy was in a lecture theatre. I found it easy to empathise with them as human beings, but much more problematic given the very real needs of very real students already up against a global emergency. Should a university require technological capabilities of its staff, and if so, how to address the systematic privileges that tenure systems enable? I remember watching Amanda Peet and Annie Wyman's US Netflix series *The Chair* (2021) during this time and cringing: though our learning contexts were far apart, the series was wholly relatable.
- 92 Whilst the early internet promised liberation and equality, global hierarchies of knowledge have simply been reinforced and reinscribed in new ways (Bratton, 2016). Paywalls make it impossible for even Africa's "top" university (UCT claims the spot, but it depends which table you look at) to have daily access to newspapers such as *The New York Times*. Relative currency strength means people in New York can easily afford to read South African news. Even open access publishing now comes with fees so eye-wateringly expensive to those not earning in dollars or euros that only some academics in wealthy countries can afford to publish that way. These are two of thousands of examples of knowledge hierarchy reinstatement with an iron fist clad in open clothing.

Part VII: Propositions for Good

reading, writing, and
arithmetic remain the
bedrock of human⁹³

communication.
in an era of climate
catastrophe, we⁹⁴

must add: empathy
resilience, ethics and
compassion. Students⁹⁵

must leave with the doors
open: education will
be there whenever⁹⁶

-
- 93 I remember being told by a senior experimental-university manager that these were “20th century skills”. I understood what he meant but vehemently disagree. How we read and write and count has changed, but the skills remain even more critical. To make sense of 21st century data, we all need sophisticated analytic skills based on numeracy and literacy that go beyond what is presented on the page and into the “black box” (O’Neil, 2016) of argument creation.
- 94 As worldwide weather systems change and predictability breaks down, effective communication that bridges partisan and political divides is critical. How do we communicate such that the people who need to believe us, believe us? How do we teach this to the students we are entrusted to educate in a meaningful way? Most countries now have a sense of what lies on the horizon: how do we use knowledge systems to adequately prepare?
- 95 This comes down to the ability to build direct personal relationships of trust and accountability. What is missing from digital information are the critical skills of humanity. For those able to study at in-person institutions, relationships with academic staff become morally loaded in significant new ways. Some scholars rage against the incursion of “identity politics” into the scholarly arena, but arguably miss the point that what students are seeking is less information and more guidance on how to navigate the cacophony of a world where everyone — all nine billion of us and some of the non-human — have a voice.
- 96 Further education in this context becomes a revolving door through which students should feel able to enter whenever they need. Some of this might happen through online learning and short courses, but if the sector was to imagine itself as a site of civil service towards the public, its entire structure could radically alter towards the good of society. In this imagination, the university becomes a site of expertise accessible to the public. A website shares knowledge expertise as a form of public consultants. Instead of universities choosing which issues their researchers are interested in addressing, communities approach the university to ask for help with what they are already doing (see Misra & Mishra, Chapter 25, this volume).

it's needed. They must
return to fill in new gaps
to resource themselves.⁹⁷

make a video
edit Wikipedia
influence anyone⁹⁸

everything that we
can find online we do not
need to teach. Instead⁹⁹

the time we used to
give to content can go to
that which separates¹⁰⁰

knowledge producers
from knowledge consumers and
enables insight.¹⁰¹

our students need to
have advanced digital skills
whatever field, they must¹⁰²

-
- 97 In a rapidly changing world, all of us need to constantly upskill ourselves with new technologies and forms of communication (Doxdator, 2017). A revolving door policy at universities would make this much easier. The system, including the concept of degrees, needs reformulation and reconceptualisation.
- 98 As mentioned earlier, in my experience, teaching students how to edit Wikipedia is a far more effective writing intervention than teaching them how to write an essay. When working on Wikipedia, students engage systems of knowledge production, peer review, the politics of knowledge work as well as structure, language, grammar, referencing and so on. In addition, many feel empowered, and the pool of available knowledge expands to include parts of the world and life experience that may be invisible to the gaze of the typically white, typically “Northern” editors of Silicon-Valley platforms (Davidson, 2017; Giannella, 2015). Marking a Wikipedia entry is a lot more difficult than marking an essay, but the question remains, which is the structure that needs to change?
- 99 Teaching how to find information and making sure students have time and the ability of focus to process it is the key, not the contents.
- 100 Time is a precious resource — perhaps the most valuable in our distracted, diffuse economy.
- 101 In my opinion, this is the critical distinction that differentiates groups in the 21st century. This is the transformation that universities can facilitate for their constituents.
- 102 I am saying the same thing in multiple ways, so the point is clear here: knowledge work matters.

parse data for its
quality, integrity.
they must be taught how¹⁰³

power plays into
a fractured internet that
is shaped by firewalls¹⁰⁴

they must make content
that changes collective views.
using emerging¹⁰⁵

tools now no longer
a negotiable skill.
these tools come to life¹⁰⁶

with baggage: loaded
intellectual property
and algorithms¹⁰⁷

they may make their own.
feel ready to shape new and
expansive stories¹⁰⁸

digital skills need
knowledge histories grounded
in storytelling¹⁰⁹

103 If a student has never used a computer before arriving at university or has used one but never interrogated how it works, they need to be taught how, why, and politics all at once. When this happens, the effects are transformative on just as many levels.

104 (Hillman, 2021; Starosielski, 2015).

105 The power of storytelling has never been as critical as when shaping imagination (Adichie, 2016).

106 This is an active process. Pasi Välaiho refers to this as the use of “biopolitical screens” — drawing on Michel Foucault, he points out how screens *make* life as well as reflect it (Välaiho, 2014).

107 In *Weapons of Math Destruction*, O’Neil (2016) explores how algorithms uphold unequal systems that privilege elite interests in schooling, healthcare, incarceration, and a host of other areas.

108 I often hear colleagues decry the aspiration of young people to become “influencers”. I think that this desire to shape narrative is a powerful force that universities can tap into as a motivation and as a project of global political reform.

109 Knowledge-histories are part of the literacy needed to parse contemporary information. Where do ideas come from? How do we trace them? Who are the guiding intellectual ancestors?

in mental health. There
is no sense guiding a new
cohort if we¹¹⁰

fail them at finish
line of working within their
own minds: strengths and pain¹¹¹

disciplinary
boundaries will slowly melt
in the face of the¹¹²

crises must confront
we can't afford the ego
of existing shapes¹¹³

nibble this structure
open the blocks into air
fill the gaps with the¹¹⁴

work we know we must
do. Buhle has rage and he
will not wait too long¹¹⁵

Marianna has
choices — so many paths lead
to gentler futures¹¹⁶

110 I also hear many colleagues acknowledging the mental health catastrophe so many of us and our students confront daily. What could be a clearer signal that our processing systems are broken, and that we need new tools and new approaches to ensure that we are healthy?

111 Academics lead by example. What if we ourselves modelled mental health practices with the same pragmatism that we share insights into article and data generation?

112 Most of us still teach in disciplinary silos created for the needs of empire. These are not effective for solving global and local crises.

113 The egos in academia are astonishing. Petty chiefs of micro-kingdoms unwilling to acknowledge that the emperor so often has no clothes. "Let them eat cake" she says while she strides up the corridor and slams the door. Many academics are married to and only socialise within academic circles, so often don't even *know* how unusual much of our collegial behaviour is! The system reinforces itself partly because there are so few spaces of exit and re-entry.

114 (Nyamnjoh, 2016).

115 Growing inequality will only lead to crisis. The curve must be corrected as a matter of urgency on every level.

116 With so many options, contemporary higher education is not a given first choice. Academia relies, in its current funding model, on classroom numbers — but what if these decline?

Kushal needs a piece
of paper, and paper's made
from trees. As long as¹¹⁷

there are trees, Kushal
will be just fine. So, do we
wait for the boards to¹¹⁸

review our curry-
culums? Our stews of knowledge
in empirical¹¹⁹

pots? Or do we look
to the sky at the edge of
our horizons and¹²⁰

recognise that we
must take our students so much
further than we can¹²¹

ourselves, in this time
even see? As we move to
uncertain futures.¹²²

“the pedagogy
of care” is way too easy
universe branding¹²³

training scholars and
admin who care: we should talk
remuneration.¹²⁴

117 Pragmatism is part of the inertia that limits systemic reform.

118 COVID-19 showed that we can change systems quickly — we usually simply don't.

119 What are the ingredients of education? Who does it nourish? Should everyone be eating the same food? What of those whose stew is made of bones?

120 I think that we must go further.

121 Going further is the work of the *good*.

122 4IR is the term most often used to capture this, but it usually assumes acceptance of the exigencies of existing technologies of control.

123 The COVID-19 pandemic saw a multitude of universities around the globe embracing a “pedagogy of care” in different ways — including the one in which I worked at the time. I do believe that a lot of people enter further education *because* they care, and so there is a certain truth to many of these claims. Yet without systemic analysis that addresses both staff and student burnout, industrial labour and thinking, and overwork, it is difficult to experience sincerity in high-level slogans.

124 This is where the proverbial rubber hits the road. Payment, job security, promotion, and other benefits are almost never linked to the key performance indicator: “how

Education for
 Good life. Good future. Good plans
 it is captured in¹²⁵

these stories of three
 young Africans. each one of
 them quietly in¹²⁶

pursuit of a good
 future. We must remember
 that the good does not¹²⁷

rest in the tables
 of university ranks
 or the shininess¹²⁸

of lecture theatres.
 rather the good nestles in
 amongst between us¹²⁹

in unseeable
 spaces, (if the lens used is
 Harvard <--> Nullius.)¹³⁰

have you demonstrated a pedagogy of care in your teaching or work with students?" Until this changes, the "good" is individual choice in a system that is interested in citation scores.

- 125 For the brief period in human history that comprises the past 500 years, education in western industrial societies has been seen as an investment to be made in children and young people that pays dividends later. However, this is atypical of humanity-wide experiences of learning through deeper histories, where "life-long" learning has been experienced and valued in the way that those educated in the "west" now seem increasingly invested in.
- 126 Just as tools of technology now zoom effortlessly between eye-level and the macro-picture, those in further education must constantly grapple with the multiple scales of teaching and planning that may shift in salience depending on the micro-subject at hand.
- 127 The everyday actions of everyday people are ultimately what shapes lived experience (Stanton, 2015).
- 128 This is not the place for a critique of university world rankings, but it is worth noting that as with so many systems that shape how quality is evaluated, the structure was developed to be used with western tools to make sense of western realities (Jöns & Hoyler, 2013).
- 129 (Tempest, 2016)
- 130 The mental models most of us are trained to accept make anything that does not at least *try* to look like Harvard seem all but invisible.

across Africa
across much of the planet
learning's happening¹³¹

it is not dressed in
the robes of elite courses
the classrooms often¹³²

have mildew and rust
on the walls, but nonetheless
serve their students well.¹³³

What is the image
of the good that is pursued?
we do not need a¹³⁴

thousand Stanfords here
we need spaces of learning
linked to everyday¹³⁵

-
- 131 Given the complexity of most learning spaces, it is not unsurprising that even governments rarely have full records of all learning institutions that operate on their territories — particularly, when extra-curricular and religious education are also factored in. What learning looks like, feels like, and sounds like, varies dramatically from place to place.
- 132 At one of the universities, I have worked in, we had some power to shape the way the first class graduated. I remember the horror expressed by a colleague from South America who observed that if our students were allowed to graduate in robes reflecting the European 18th century judiciary, we would have failed at our work of decolonisation. They graduated in those robes, with Kenti cloth from Ghana as a decoration, ironically speaking to Europeans and African American traditions rather than the many available options in the country in which the university was located. We felt we had failed.
- 133 How “well” is understood is of course the critical issue here. I personally believe that if students see value in what they are learning and enrol year after year, finding ways to make their studies improve their lives or open new doors, perhaps outsiders should be cautious about judging too fast.
- 134 Success or failure depends largely on personal internalised reference points. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder (and perhaps in particular the eye of influencers) (Nuttall, 2006; Taussig, 2012).
- 135 I have such gratitude for Stanford and all it gave me personally, but I found myself continually bewildered by the disconnect between institutional grappling with privilege and claims of excellence. In one public meeting with the president, I remember standing up and asking why, if Stanford was as committed as it said it was to educational inclusion and equity, it didn't give some of its budget to Berkeley. Unsurprisingly, the president didn't know how to respond to my sentiments, but the point could be made beyond the national as well.

realities, that
hold up mirrors to leaders
give students new tools.¹³⁶

It is not to build
New, but rather to strengthen and
bolster those who are¹³⁷

already doing
this work, already meeting
challenges that are¹³⁸

visible at ground
level; entwined with hope, aspir-
ation, and tiny¹³⁹

steps. For good, include
them. university change
with small places, small¹⁴⁰

campuses outside
ranking agencies' purview
engage with what is¹⁴¹

-
- 136 Just as Stanford and Berkeley are both products, most of all, of different streams of US policy towards higher education, the Catholic University of Luanda and Augustino Neto speak to the same in Angola. Recognising the ideological, political, and social imbrication of higher education in local realities is an important component of thinking with and for higher education for good.
- 137 The expansion of institutions of learning across Africa and across the globe makes sense given growing populations, but it also runs the risk of segregating populations further based on financial capital. There is great importance in the reality that South Africans from all walks of life meet at national universities. If these options are removed through the proliferation of private streams for learning, we run a serious risk of deepening segregation and losing some of the few opportunities we currently have for building genuine social networks based on shared experience.
- 138 Again, so much work towards the goals of better futures is already going on. The challenge is those doing the work are often simply not invited to the tables at which it is discussed, praised, or planned for.
- 139 If a tree falls in a forest and nobody hears it, does it make a sound? If a professor does not have a Google Scholar profile, does she really write?
- 140 It is currently infinitely easier for a South African postgraduate student to go on exchange to Europe than for the same student to go to Mozambique. This is not an inevitability, however, but a result of choices. Change the choices.
- 141 If our evaluation of prestige rests on internalised assumptions of what is and is not excellent, we are unlikely to learn from examples that fall outside of that internalisation. But what if we are wrong?

actually goes
on, actually making
change, actually¹⁴²

transformational.
It requires learning new tools
language, context, form¹⁴³

requires suspending
internalised visions of
what education¹⁴⁴

should be. Requires forms
of listening, of seeing
through double sided¹⁴⁵

glass, then opening
wide the doorways crossing in
between in entries¹⁴⁶

we find solutions
waiting in plain sight if we
use sense, not tables¹⁴⁷

expand the frame of
vision and clear listening;
reference markers¹⁴⁸

142 In most of my meetings with “global” higher education foundations, I have found Angola and Mozambique left out, simply because they operate in Portuguese. Portugal and Brazil do engage but they too operate in very particular ambits of influence, and there are few points of intersection (Cesarino, 2011; Ribeiro, 2020).

143 When I have incentivised undergraduates to learn the languages of neighbouring African countries, I have found the uptake positive and enthusiastic. These undergraduates’ curiosity can be molded, and the benefits of exchanges with Africa can be powerfully shaped. However, that’s only possible if those teaching them have done this work.

144 If nothing else, my hope is that this text provokes a meditation on what these are.

145 Here I reiterate the value of a deep engagement with literature outside of academic publishing. Novels often reveal far more than scholarship in terms of how things were, how they are, and how they might become (Ghosh, 2008).

146 (Ghosh, 2020).

147 Angola is unlikely to become like Portugal in the next 40 years, but it could much more conceivably operate much like Brazil. Instead of looking North, it makes a difference to teach us to look left and right instead.

148 Many of us in higher education are deeply ignorant about academic institutions in neighbouring countries and regions, whilst simultaneously being very conscious of “how things are done” at Oxford or Yale.

that are closer to
home; futures that are much more
realistic. And to¹⁴⁹

assume the good is
not already here in the
labour of thousands.¹⁵⁰

Recognise them all.
Value the work of edu-
cation. Leave space be-¹⁵¹

Yond the algorithm.
Syllables to go far with¹⁵²
Openings to grow.¹⁵³

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149 This is not to suggest that we settle for “less”, but rather to reframe the discussion so that we ourselves are not always found wanting.

150 The deep commitment and powerful work of so many people cannot be in vain.

151 As a lot of wise people have observed, hitting the same rock again and again with the same stick is unlikely to yield new results, until the stick breaks. We should be careful not to try to address 21st century crises in the same way.

152 I’ve been moved by the reactions to this piece so far. It seems many of us are short of breath, perhaps other forms of expression might support us differently.

153 In as many directions as there are thinkers, teachers, practitioners in further education: forests of fresh imagination and care that are needed to revive the failing planet.

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