

SCHOLARLY PAPER

Education for public good in the age of coloniality: Implications for pedagogy

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Abstract

This paper critically reviews the theoretical foundations of the concept 'education for public good', revealing its analytical and practical limitations, inadequacies and detrimental effects in South Africa. The paper shows how an uncritical embracing of this concept in the education discourse continues to undermine hard-earned democratic gains. Coloniality, I argue, continues to 'devour' all well-intentioned postcolonial/post-apartheid educational policies. A truly decolonial project has the power to dismantle pedagogical practices and classroom traditions that evolved in the west to favour the elite while marginalising the majority. An alternative to education for public good is thus presented: education for common good. The Reading to Learn pedagogy is presented as an 'offspring' of the 'education for common good' concept. I highlight how this position engenders classroom practices that create conditions for epistemological access to success for all learners, regardless of their socioeconomic background.

Keywords: education for public good, coloniality, transmission of curriculum content, education for common good, Reading to Learn pedagogy, literacies for curriculum acquisition.

Introduction

I begin with a critical review of the theoretical foundations of the concept 'education for public good' in order to critique its analytical and practical limitations, inadequacies and detrimental effects in postcolonial, postconflict societies such as South Africa. I show how an uncritical embracing of this concept within the education (schooling and post-school) discourse has tended, and continues, to undermine well-meaning policies by the democratic government at the expense of the majority. I use the South African context to illustrate fundamental 'blind spots' that, if unchecked, will continue to privilege the elite and marginalise the majority. Coloniality,

a 'condition' that sees everything other than Euro-American and/or white as inferior (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2008), is perpetuated (often unwittingly) by the act of uncritically embracing the concept of education for public good. As a 'condition', coloniality 'devours' well-intentioned, politically progressive (post)colonial educational policies. I argue that coloniality continues to influence pedagogical practices in ways that privilege the historically favoured social classes at the expense of the historically marginalised majority. More specifically, the paper reveals how the ability to learn from reading in formal education is a skill students from literate cultures acquire unconsciously from home long before they enter schooling. This has serious implications for the way we think about educational desire and attainment in the South African context. The paper then proposes a conceptual shift that must, of necessity, enable us to rid ourselves of pedagogical practices and classroom traditions that evolved in the west to favour the elite and marginalise the majority. Pedagogical practices that will rid us of 'coloniality' in particular are the focus of the second section, where I explore how a shift from education for public good to education for common good could unlock the emancipatory potential of education. I argue that the strength of education for common good engenders cooperation from the government, private sector, educators and policy-makers in ways that create conditions for the inclusion and celebration of non-mainstream knowledge-generation traditions, knowledges and learning practices. The Reading to Learn pedagogy, an 'offspring' of education for common good, is presented to illustrate the power of this alternative to education for public good.

Education for public good: A concept we hate to love

A critical review of the theoretical foundations of the concept 'education for public good' reveals its limitations and inadequacies, particularly in postcolonial and/or postconflict societies such as South Africa. Engagement with this concept from a humanistic perspective reveals the extent to which the democratic government's uncritical embrace of it often leads to a struggle to undo the negative effects of past-legislated oppression and discrimination. In defining 'public good', Daviet (2016: 2–3) reminds us that,

Generally attributed to Samuelson, who mathematically formalized it (1954, 1955), the standard definition of public good was carved by Musgrave (1941, 1959, 1969). Such definition is very restrictive: a public good, defined as counterpart to a private good, is 'a good whose consumption does not diminish its availability to other consumers' (Samuelson 1954). The standard theory of public good considers two criteria: non-rivalry (once it is produced for one person, additional consumers can consume it at no additional cost) and non-excludability (a person cannot be prevented from using the good once it has been produced). Given these characteristics, individuals tend to act as 'free riders': they are likely to understate their preferences for these goods to avoid being taxed for their use and to let others pay for them. Consequently, the market cannot adequately estimate the demand and these goods are underprovided. Public goods are therefore considered market failures and justify state provision.

This mathematically formalised definition of ‘public good’ seems to fit well with the delivery of social services such as water and electricity, but is completely inappropriate and in fact problematical if used in relation to education. In terms of the delivery of electricity, for example, residents in affluent suburban areas subsidise those in poor, impoverished contexts within the same metropolitan area. The latter thus pay very little and in some instances nothing to receive such services (Crone 2010). To uncritically embrace the definition of education for public good as presented above and attempt to operationalise it within the context of education, especially in a country with a history like South Africa’s, is ludicrous. Education, at least within the human rights discourse, cannot be seen as a commodity whose provision is determined by market forces and dependent on demand. The assumption which predicates education as a private good does not fit into the non-rivalry and non-excludability criteria developed by Daviet (2016). Given the history of colonialism and apartheid in South Africa, it is a right earned and fought for by thousands, many of whom lost their lives. Contrary to the mathematically formalised definition of ‘public good’, education is not and cannot be a privilege to be enjoyed only by those who can afford it. An economic formulation that divorces education from social benefits is therefore problematic. I argue that education is a social tool for emancipation and social redress (DoE 1997; Freire 1970; Jansen 2009). Writing about South Africa, Spaull (2015) presents useful statistics that reveal the extent to which and the reasons why education has in fact become a privilege. He does this by presenting the country’s challenge as twofold:

First, most parents cannot afford the fees at Model C or private schools since they are frequently as high as university fees (ZAR 31,500 a year), and second, there are limited places in these schools. Of the 25,741 schools in South Africa, only 1,135 are former Model C schools and 1,681 are independent (private) schools. Together that accounts for only 11% of [the] total [number of] schools. Even if we abolished fees in all these schools – and I’m not sure that is the way to go – you cannot fit 12 million children into 2,816 schools. (*Spaull 2015: 1*)

In a country in which 89% of schools are dysfunctional, one does not need to go deeper to understand the problem with uncritically adopting slogan-like, politically correct and popular concepts such as education for public good, without properly examining their implications for the sector. This uncritical embracing ‘legalises’ the privatisation of education, thereby undermining the political work of social redress through education. This is a consequence of ignoring the nebulous and problematic relationship between the commodification of education and the notion of public good. Realising this, the South African democratic government has attempted to ‘sanitise’ the ‘education for public good’ concept. However, Daviet (2016) points to the underlying competing, and simultaneously contradictory, approaches in these attempts. They involve measures

to enlarge the standard theory of public good from within by fuelling it with ethical considerations. This approach explicitly refers to the standard theory of public good while interpreting it loosely: education is considered non-excludable not on technical grounds but on ethical and/or legal ones. The human rights approach falls within this

category and provides a rationale for compulsory education. From this perspective, education is an impure public good, since only the criterion of non-excludability is met; the under-provision of education that justifies state intervention is no longer linked to the free rider issue but to private provision. Indeed, given the technical possibility to exclude someone from school attendance, private actors are likely to provide education only for the children whose parents can pay school fees. There is therefore a need for state intervention to ensure equity. (Daviet 2016: 3)

The adoption of this seemingly better version of education for public good and its subsequent impact has muddied the waters in education debates and ensured that quality education is for 'the good' of selected sections of the 'public'. It constitutes the market demand symbolised by the 11% of well-resourced, properly staffed and functioning schools in the country. The private sector even funds such schools as their existence guarantees future generations of professionals. It is this group that will be admitted into prestigious private post-school institutions (both locally and abroad), and eventually take up high-profile positions within the private and public sectors. Such trends and practices sit comfortably, and in fact untroubled, in a context where education is seen as a public good. This is regardless of the official version of the concept of public good adopted: sanitised, or the original definition. In writing about the problematics of this concept, Daviet (2016: 3) argues that if 'the market cannot adequately estimate the demand, these goods are underprovided'. This is in line with the mathematical roots of the concept, and manifests in practice when government intervention becomes the only hope for the remaining 89% of dysfunctional schools in South Africa. It is here where 'the reality remains: the rich get education and the poor get "schooling" ... the rich get access to universities and well-paying jobs while the poor get menial jobs, intermittent work or long-term unemployment' (Spaull 2015). This neither addresses the circumstances in the country nor serves the nation-building project to which we have committed ourselves.

At individual and local levels, this state of affairs produces asymmetrical relations of power, resulting in the political environment in which teaching and learning takes place, teacher education occurs and teachers' professional identities are negotiated being intrinsically antagonistic, despite evoking supposedly liberatory concepts such as democracy. Morgan (2016: 708) argues that post-independent, postcolonial, postconflict societies' education systems often operate in spaces that are 'fundamentally hegemonic and antagonistic, marked by intensified partisanship and often irreconcilable social struggles – an environment that contributes to the scapegoating of teachers for complex societal problems far beyond the classroom'. Often the presence of such hegemonic and antagonistic dimensions is fuelled and perpetuated, among other things, through 'an increasing involvement of non-state actors, including for-profit organizations' (Daviet 2016: 1), in the education system. This involvement is inevitable, particularly given the uncritical embracing of a mathematically conceived concept of education for public good. Part of the reason for this, I argue, is the indiscriminate linking of education and the concept 'public good'. The consequences of such a linking include an unintentional

transposition of this concept to education, ... [which] has implications that run against the humanistic approach to education: not only does it fail to consider the

social, cultural and ethical dimensions of education, but it also provides a rationale for privatization and commodification of education. (Daviet 2016: 4)

It is in this context that the rich and privileged, owing to a historical asymmetrical social structure largely based on race and, lately, increasingly on class (Sidanius & Pratto 2001), can always afford high school fees and purchase better educational opportunities, and therefore post-school returns, for their children. Within a society that espouses democratic principles, this is a 'ticking bomb' that could explode at any time as (mainly black) youths fall prey to opportunistic political and religious demagogues. The 2015/2016 often-militant #FeesMustFall, #RhodesMustFall and other protests demanding the decolonisation of the curriculum are concrete signs of the student body's loss of faith and patience.

Thus, in our circumstances and given these signs, the government's intervention to improve educational opportunities and provide quality education for all cannot be seen to be the result of market failure, but rather a 'natural' response that is part of the broader social project of restorative justice. Our democratic principles should help us see ourselves not as a 'market' but as a people of different races with an inequitable past and an unstable present, but hoping for a future in which racial identity is not used to determine access to social resources, education and better life opportunities. Realising such a future requires educational policies, educators and institutions to appreciate the negative effects of colonial worldviews on knowledge, knowledge generation and teaching and learning. They need to value various ways of knowing, types of knowledges and ways of learning that are not necessarily mainstream. I contend that the issues sketched above act as the instantiation of coloniality, which manifests as the assumption of western universalisms sublimated through a global economic order. As defined by Tlostanova and Mignolo (2009: 132), decoloniality and decolonisation in praxis mean the 'decolonisation of knowledge and being by epistemically and affectively de-linking from the imperial/colonial organization of society'. The imperial/colonial organisation of society manifests as the economic privatisation of education, framed in my critique as education for public good. My analysis now turns to consider the role of the continued link between postcolonial society and colonial modes of social organisation.

Coloniality: Impact on education

Most educational policies appear to be laced with a yearning for the realisation of Euro-American success stories in Africa without critically analysing the differences between the global North and global South. The dismal failure of outcomes-based education in South Africa is one example (Jansen & Christie 1999). Through the globalisation discourse, the 'condition of coloniality' remains an invisible presence that still reinforces and achieves the colonial agenda set through the slave trade and imperialism. In clarifying the concept of coloniality, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013: 11) argues that

Coloniality must not be confused with colonialism. It survived the end of direct colonialism. In post colonies it continues to affect the lives of people, long after direct colonialism and administrative apartheid have been dethroned. What, therefore,

needs to be understood is not just the 'not yet uhuru' postcolonial experience but the invisible vampirism of technologies of imperialism and colonial matrices of power that continue to exist in the minds, lives, languages, dreams, imaginations, and epistemologies of modern subjects in Africa and the entire global South.

The 'epistemologies of modern subjects in Africa' were mainly learned, as Batibo (1995: 79) points out, through placing

strong emphasis on traditional forms of education well before the arrival of Europeans. Adults in Khoisan- and Bantu-speaking societies, for example, had extensive responsibilities for transmitting cultural values and skills within kinship-based groups and sometimes within larger organizations, villages, or districts. Education involved oral histories of the group, tales of heroism and treachery, and practice in the skills necessary for survival in a changing environment.

Assuming no European imperialist tendencies, it would be reasonable to expect this status quo – the transmission of 'oral histories of the group, tales of heroism and treachery' – to still be in place today. Although formal education in the context of schooling and higher education cannot focus exclusively on these topics, we should not undermine or discard Indigenous knowledge, knowledge-generation practices, and teaching and learning that draw from African oral traditions and local contexts. As a matter of principle, both black and white educators, academics and researchers need to evidence a conscious, deliberate, non-hypocritical and diligent interest in Indigenous knowledge systems, cultures, peoples and languages. A positive and embracing attitude has the potential to lead to the generation of theories that are informed by life as it is lived, experienced and understood by 21st-century local inhabitants. It is in this context that universities will be able to introduce well-theorised scholarship emerging from, underpinned by and 'speaking' to the African local experience.

If a decolonial education system is to be realised, it needs to happen across disciplines. Charles Eliot (1869: 30), a former Harvard University president, described the characteristics of an American university as follows:

A university must grow from seed. It cannot be transplanted from England or Germany in full leaf and bearing. When the American university appears, it will not be a copy of foreign institutions, but the slow and natural growth of American social and political habits.

Similarly, my definition of a decolonial education system foregrounds African identities and worldviews. However, this does not exempt knowledge generated in this context from critique, nor does it suggest abandoning the problematisation of what knowledge is and the processes involved in generating it. Such critique can be ensured by opening a dialogue between African knowledge and knowledge from the Greek, Arab and European worlds. In other words, African knowledge cannot be considered the be all and end all. In the context of education for public good and its inherent

exclusion of non-mainstream members of society, this is not negotiable. Educators, researchers and educational institutions should value many types of learning and knowledge, inspired by a post/decolonial orientation to education. However, it is still important for marginalised populations to have access to the knowledges and skills that are valued by the current mainstream society as they fight for liberation.

The impact of coloniality on pedagogy/teaching practice

It is necessary to consider the pedagogical practices required to enable the marginalised to access the knowledge needed to navigate society and survive, while simultaneously using their acquired skills to fight for complete liberation. This is particularly important in a country where a transition from an education system and policies that privilege mainstream cultures to one that is democratic is under way. By pedagogical practices, or what Bernstein (1990) calls pedagogic discourse, I mean content selection, framing and pacing, as well as teaching and assessment practices. As I show in this section, as 'modern subjects in Africa', to use Ndlovu-Gatsheni's (2013: 5) term, we need to interrogate the extent to which the theoretical underpinnings that inform our pedagogical choices and practices still favour the colonial enterprise, that is, white middle- to upper-class lifestyles, family traditions and tastes. For Bernstein (1996: 47), pedagogic discourse is 'a principle by which other discourses are appropriated and brought into a special relationship with each other, for the purpose of their selective transmission and acquisition.' Underlying Bernstein's (1975: 85) pedagogical theory is his claim that institutions of learning act as the social classifier through what he terms the three 'common message systems' that all educational institutions possess:

Formal education knowledge can be considered to be realised through three message systems: curriculum, pedagogy, and evaluation. Curriculum defines what counts as valid knowledge, pedagogy defines what counts as a valid transmission of knowledge, and evaluation defines what counts as a valid realization of this knowledge.

Bernstein (1996) argues that in modern societies the school curriculum perpetuates the class system, that it is socially constructed to maintain the hierarchical order of a class-based society and that there is an alternative way of conceptualising knowledge. By curriculum, Bernstein means what is defined as knowledge. Transmitted knowledge (or content) is a selection of knowledge. Some knowledge is regarded as appropriate while other knowledge is not. The fact that students coming from low-literate families and low-income homes tend to have less access to written stories means that they are more likely to find it difficult to engage with written texts, which are legitimated as the carriers of knowledge. Oral tradition, a dominant discourse in many African contexts and an established carrier of knowledge, does not feature prominently in formal education, either as a legitimate medium for knowledge generation or as a valid tool for assessment.

Within our current undemocratic education system and traditions, as Bernstein (1990: 75) puts it, 'the age by which a child should be able to read is a function of the sequencing rules of the pedagogic practice of the school'. By constructing written texts, at the exclusion of oral ones, as the

medium for curriculum contents, formal education ‘acknowledge[s] the fact that these contents are transmitted primarily through reading, and that their acquisition is demonstrated primarily through writing’ (Rose 2005: 132). As a result, the focus of educational practice at all levels is on *transmitting curriculum contents* rather than on the *literacy skills needed to acquire such contents*. A shift in focus from simply transmitting curriculum contents to prioritising the development of the literacy skills needed to acquire such contents is long overdue. Scholars argue that resistance to this shift has ensured that teaching methods are not ‘responsive to or consistent with the socio-cultural background and educational needs of African learners’ (Lebakeng, Phalane & Nase 2006: 78). I argue that without these necessary skills, students outside mainstream cultures can neither succeed with their homework nor engage with classroom activities at the level expected of their grade (Rose 2005).

Rose (2005: 136) challenges this focus on transmitting curriculum contents and argues that it makes no difference if these contents are taught ‘in terms of academic subjects, of personal or cultural growth, or of a critical stance; they all serve to mask the underlying skills required for acquiring these contents’. In other words, a focus on *how* to learn as opposed to *what* to learn is missing in formal education from primary to tertiary level. Such a shift will need to incorporate ways of learning characteristic of Indigenous cultures, traditions and ways of being, as well as western ones. As Lebakeng, Phalane and Nase (2006: 76) put it,

in advocating for the reversal of epistemicide, we necessarily seek to place indigenous knowledge systems of the conquered peoples of South Africa on the same level of parity with other epistemological paradigms in order to achieve both formal and substantive equality.

A pedagogic practice that insists on transmitting curriculum content without asking where that content is from, who created it and at whose expense, and that ignores teaching *how* to learn, culminates in the transmission of what Rose (2005: 136) refers to as a ‘hidden curriculum’ – ‘classroom practices that engage and enable different learners unequally’. This is a consequence of focusing on transmitting curriculum content that misrecognises its recipients and ignores the need to develop the literacy skills they require to master such content. In other words, the skills of reading and learning from prescribed written texts in order to learn independently from the content are often linked to competence models of education and reading competence. These are competencies that learners are assumed to have acquired prior to entering school or university, which is why literacy development curricula tend to completely ignore explicit instruction in reading and writing beyond the level of junior primary school (Rose & Martin 2012). This is typical of pedagogical practices that have evolved to favour those who, prior to schooling, have been exposed to the literacies legitimated in formal education.

South Africa is not immune from these pedagogical practices. They evolved in the west and are designed to favour the elite (mainly white and middle class) and marginalise the majority (mainly black students from rural and township areas). Put differently, we are trapped by coloniality, a mindset that considers everything European and white to be superior and standard, and everything else as the ‘other’. We are trapped in discourses that normalise the supremacy and infallibility

of Euro-American cultures, ideas, worldviews and definitions of the world. This points to the persistent characteristics of Euro-American imperialist and colonial vestiges and their power over former colonies like South Africa. In clarifying the 'real power' the west possesses, Sardar (1999: 44) points out that

The real power of the West is not located in its economic muscles and technological might. Rather, it resides in the power to define. The West defines what is, for example, freedom, progress and civil behaviour; law, tradition and community; reason, mathematics and science; what is real and what it means to be human. The non-Western civilisations have simply to accept these definitions or be defined out of existence.

Having considered the nuances which define education from the perspective of colonial impositions and colonial modes of being, I next consider an alternative way of framing education as a means of unlocking its emancipatory potential.

Reading to Learn: A pedagogy for the common good

According to Daviet (2016: 8), education for the common good is an alternative framework within which to make decisions and organise education in contemporary society:

Common goods are those that contribute to the general interest, enabling society as a whole to be reinforced and to function better, as well as individuals to live better ... Defining what is a common good is a collective decision that involves the state, the market and civil society.

If educationists, teacher educators, the government and the private sector were to adopt the 'education as common good' concept, we would all acknowledge that we are faced with a challenge to undo school classroom practices that evolved to reward the elite and marginalise the majority. We would then combine resources to implement practices that manifest in progressive approaches emphasising learner-centredness and discovery learning. These practices would circumvent the necessity for questions such as: On what kind of learners does learning have to be centred? What home and family backgrounds do they come from? Raised by which parent(s)? Under what social circumstances? With what financial and educational resources? Bringing what kind of cultural capital into the classroom?

In some contexts, traditional approaches are still embraced: the teacher is the source of all learning and rote learning constitutes assessment practices. While progressive approaches have been sold since the 1880s as empowering learners (Radu 2011), research reveals that both progressive and traditional approaches have failed equally to change educational outcomes (Cope & Kalantzis 1993; Macken-Horarik 2002; Martin 1993, 1999; Martin & Painter 1986; Martin & Rose 2005; Rose 2005; Rothery 1989, 1996). Part of the reason is that both approaches are premised on an incremental learning model, theoretically legitimated by Piaget (1928), based on the notion that

learning occurs from the ‘inside out’ (i.e. biological development of the physical body). As a result, learners within the formal education system are continually evaluated to assess their readiness for advancement rather than being diagnostically evaluated in order to receive targeted tuition. While traditional approaches legitimate streaming into different ability classes, progressive approaches promote individuated learning activities, thereby constructing learning as an autonomous process, with every student supposedly possessing inherent skills and talents akin to the demands of formal education. Therefore, under the assumptions of this model of educational practice, if students fail, the problem is with them and *not* with the system. Given that students come from different economic and educational backgrounds, their rate of development is unequal and both approaches ensure that the ability gap never closes.

All students bring this ability gap into formal schooling and university learning, and my contention is that the basis of this inequality lies in students’ differing capacities *to learn independently by reading*. Thus, the difference between students who qualify for university education and those who do not, but who gain access through other means such as admissions and/or placement tests, hinges on their *ability to engage independently with reading*. For Sternberg (2007: 8), the ‘essence of the problem in using merit-based approaches has been that certain groups consistently perform more poorly in traditional admission tests than do other groups’. The difference in ability is a consequence of the primary socialisation in the home in terms of the extent to which each child experiences parent–child reading from an early age. Research shows that ‘children in literate middle-class families experience an average of 1,000 hours [of parent–child reading] before starting school, whereas those from oral cultural backgrounds may experience little or none’ (Bergin, in Rose 2005: 133). To emphasise, ‘literacy development does not begin when a child first enters school and conventional literacy instruction is initiated. Instead ... [it] begins from birth and seems to represent a continuum of development’ (Wood & Hood 2004: 103).

The majority of young adults enrolled in post-school educational institutions in South Africa come from cultural backgrounds that value speaking more than reading and that are at the bottom of the economic scale. Most come from ex-Department of Basic Education schools that are based either in rural areas or in black townships, where the culture of reading in most families is virtually non-existent. As a study by Thomson (2008) indicates, the majority of such students lack the necessary reading skills prior to entering the higher education sector. In addition, and to exacerbate the problem, the lack of explicit attention to teaching reading across the curriculum in formal education means that throughout the primary and secondary levels, these students do not get the opportunity to develop the skills to *independently learn by reading* – a skill that is necessary to access knowledge in higher education. This disadvantage is compounded by the fact that English, the medium of instruction in most South African institutions of learning, is rarely spoken in rural and black township communities. Language thus still functions as a system which substantiates and reinscribes the colonial matrix of power in the education sector in this country.

Faced with similar challenges among the Aboriginal community in Australia, Rose (2011) reports on how the development of a pedagogy for the common good emerged. In his ‘Beating Educational Inequality with an Integrated Reading Pedagogy’, Rose (2011) describes how in the late 1980s he and his colleagues developed a pedagogy from his experience with the Pitjantjatjara Indigenous community in Australia. This community suffered a disaster of self-destruction,

primarily because their inferior education could not pull them out of the quagmire of their social relegation to the status of 'disadvantaged'. Rose (2011) relates how virtually every child of school-going age in this community abused substances and lived a life filled with despair. He discovered that learners could not read at age-appropriate levels despite their teachers being similarly trained to their counterparts in other Australian state-funded schools: '[w]hatever other problems were hampering the education of these children, their inability to read the school curriculum was clearly an overwhelming stumbling block' (Rose 2011: 104). He asserted that this was a worldwide phenomenon for all communities in distress.

As a social justice project, Rose (2005) took on the challenge of attempting to reverse the social inequalities faced by this community through implementing interventions in the classroom setting. Using a series of studies (Alexander 2000; Folds 1987; Gibbons 2002; Malcolm 1991; Nassaji & Wells 2000; Rose 2004), he devised a methodology that involved a question-response-feedback pattern, backing it up with the Scaffolding Reading and Writing for Indigenous Children in School programme, developed in collaboration with colleagues in other initiatives targeted at disadvantaged communities (Christie & Martin 1997; Rose 2008). He noted that non-exposure to early parent-child reading had a direct bearing on learners' performance, and that learners in primary schools were not ready to learn from reading as expected.

The key difference with the Pitjantjatjara children was not just that a non-English language was spoken in the home, since a high proportion of other Australian children also come from non-English speaking families, but that there was no parent-child reading in the home. (Rose 2011: 103)

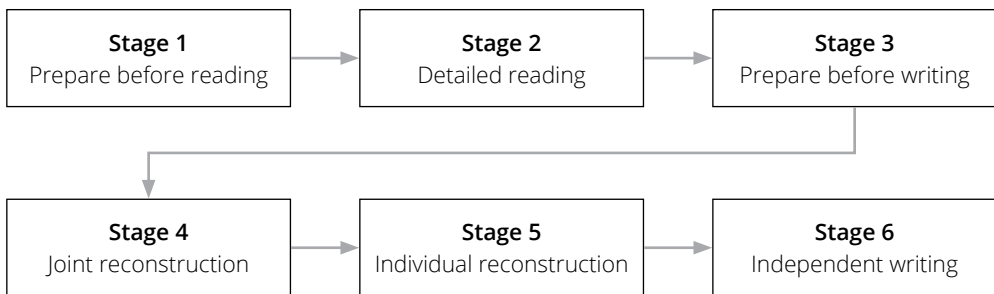
His pedagogic approach, Reading to Learn, was then structured and used to overcome these shortcomings. It was 'developed in response to current urgent needs, particularly of Indigenous and other marginalized learners, to rapidly improve reading and writing for educational access and success' (Rose 2005: 131). Reading to Learn focuses on teaching reading and writing to democratise the classroom, that is, to enable learning and to ensure the meaningful classroom participation of children who come from less advantaged backgrounds and who frequently experience a gap between home and school literacy practices. To develop this methodology, Rose (2005) drew from Vygotsky's, Halliday's and Bernstein's theories of social learning, systemic functional linguistics and pedagogic discourse, respectively. Vygotsky's (1981) idea of learning as a social process, Halliday's (1993) conception of language as embedded in social context, and Bernstein's (1999) notion of pedagogic discourse are combined in the Reading to Learn pedagogy to scaffold learners whose literacies do not necessarily parallel those required by the schooling system (Gee 1991). While learners' literacies outside of the school environment are generally context-dependent and verbal, and thrive in familiar face-to-face contexts, school literacies are context-independent, generally written and do not depend at all on physical proximity between the addresser and the addressee (Bernstein 2000).

To realise the goals of the Reading to Learn pedagogy, a Scaffolding Interaction Cycle is implemented. This cycle suggests that, in engaging with written texts, teachers need to ensure that learners are provided with the prompts or cues needed to understand sequences of meanings at

the level of the whole text, paragraph, sentence, word and sound/letter patterns. It insists that the pattern needs to be repeated through each activity in the sequence that makes up the scaffolding approach. When implemented in the classroom, the Scaffolding Interaction Cycle underpins a series of activities in two carefully structured pedagogic routines or 'lesson sequences': one for narrative texts and one for factual texts (Rose 1999).

In applying the Scaffolding Interaction Cycle, each activity during the lesson sequence draws on the discourse pattern of the text to provide the degree of support learners require to understand and recognise patterns of meaning in the text at a number of levels: the genre of the text and the way meaning unfolds, the sentences and wording of the text, and the sound/letter or spelling patterns in the text. Figure 1 illustrates the six stages of this cycle.

Figure 1. The Scaffolding Interaction Cycle

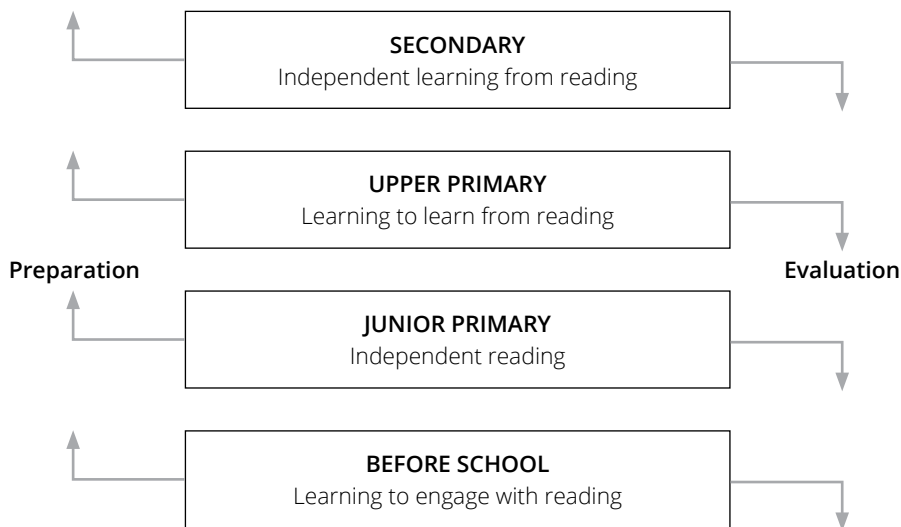


In the 'Prepare before reading' stage, the teacher reads the text aloud and summarises it. The learners listen and get the idea of the passage. They then read the passage, sentence by sentence, in the 'Detailed reading' stage. In this stage, the teacher gives meanings of words in each sentence. The learners read after the teacher and develop confidence in reading the passage. During 'Prepare before writing', the learners manipulate sentences on cardboard strips to practise spelling (primary school) or make notes from the passage to practise spelling (secondary school). This sets the stage for 'Joint reconstruction', when learners use the same words in the passage read to create a new story, new events, new characters and a new setting. In factual texts, the passage read is rewritten using the notes that the learners wrote in 'Prepare before writing'. However, the language used is the learners', not that of the text. This is a whole-class or group activity. In 'Individual reconstruction', a crucial stage, learners write a new story, as individuals, using the same words as in 'Joint reconstruction' to create their story. In factual texts, the new passage is rewritten using the notes, but this time the learner writes alone. In the final stage, 'Independent writing', the learners are given a new, different task emerging from the same text used in previous stages. They write as individuals and the task is assessed.

Recent studies on the role of Reading to Learn pedagogy within the South African context reveal its major contribution in turning education from a public good into a common good (Mataka 2017, 2019; Mawela 2018; Mgqwashu & Makhathini 2017). Mataka's (2017, 2019) three-year interventionist action research case study traced 32 learners' literacy development from grades 10 to 12. Of these learners, 13 received a bachelor's pass and entered universities in South Africa.

They entered their second year of university study in 2019. Makhathini's (2015), Mgqwashu and Makhathini's (2017) and Mawela's (2018) studies, on the other hand, examined the role of Reading to Learn in teacher professional development and teacher education programmes, and the changes it brought to their classroom practice. Figure 2 shows the reading development curriculum underlying the overt content-focused curriculum sequence of schooling.

Figure 2. Stages in literacy development sequence



Source: Adapted from Rose (2005)

As skills in learning from reading are rarely taught explicitly in upper primary, secondary and higher education institutions, successful learners acquire them tacitly over years of practice in reading and writing the overt curriculum content in class and as homework. The accelerating volume of this content at the secondary level forces successful students to develop the skills they will need in tertiary study to independently read academic texts and reproduce and interpret what they have read in assignments.

Therefore, each stage of the reading development curriculum, from parent-child reading onwards, prepares learners with the skills they will need for the next stage (represented by upward arrows in Figure 2). However, as these skills are not explicitly taught in the following stage, learners are evaluated on skills they acquired in the preceding stage (downward arrows in Figure 2). Given that most assessment tasks in formal education, especially at secondary and tertiary levels, are designed to *evaluate whether or not students have learned from reading* (Rose 2005), failure to pay attention to the explicit teaching of reading across the curriculum, from primary to higher education, means that our classrooms perpetuate inequalities. For most of the students I teach, such inequalities are a consequence of the lack of pre-schooling experiences necessary to prepare children for formal learning.

In many respects, then, the Reading to Learn pedagogy shifts our model of education by actualising Jansen's (2009) 'teaching to disrupt' proposition. It achieves this by:

- tapping into the agential capacity of the student/learner; which
- actualises Freire's (1970) notion of problem-posing education, which we can frame as decoloniality in praxis; all of which
- allows students' epistemic access to educational concepts and ideas.

The Reading to Learn pedagogy is rooted in a conception of education as a common good, which allows us to actualise the emancipatory potential of education.

Conclusion

The underlying argument in this paper is that, at this point in our history, perhaps a viable option to fast-track change is to enable everyone to reach 'common standards', as well as equality of opportunity and epistemic access. To do this, we need to recognise and deliberately undo the inherently colonial dimension of most ideas of 'common' pedagogical practices that are supposedly suitable to all. Educators and educational institutions need to begin to value many types of learning regimes and knowledge traditions. Such a move could be inspired by a post/decolonial orientation to education. However, it is still important for marginalised populations to have access to the knowledges and skills that are valued by mainstream society, so that they can navigate and survive their current world as they simultaneously fight for equal recognition, a decolonial education system and liberation. The Reading to Learn pedagogy is offered as a tool to enable this. Furthermore, it is presented as a mode by which we can begin to truly realise the emancipatory potential of education in a system which is oriented towards a decolonial paradigm.

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