

For Peter Kallaway

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I first ‘met’ Peter when, during my doctoral research, I hit a wall finding primary documents relating to ‘native education’ in Natal in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Having come across Peter’s name on various publications relating to the history of Black people’s education in South Africa, I decided to email him to ask if he knew where the relevant materials were. What I received in response was an extremely enthusiastic reply about the nature of my project, a bibliography that he had been in the process of compiling for several years, published in the *Journal of Natal and Zulu History* in 2012, and a sad confirmation that he did not know where the sources I was hoping to find were, either. We then met face-to-face at a workshop on colonial education in Africa that he hosted at UCT in July 2013. After this, once I returned to South Africa for a postdoc at the same institution, Peter and I met often and collaborated, co-editing the volume *Empire and Education in Africa: The Shaping of a Comparative Perspective* in 2016, and then hosting a workshop on comparative histories of colonial education in 2016. Papers from that workshop were ultimately published in 2016 in *History of Education*. Peter took me under his wing at a momentous historical moment in South African higher education, shaped by widespread student protests, providing me with sage advice and a collegial ear when necessary. As historians of education, we were both aware that we were witnessing a watershed moment, and Peter’s long-term perspective, shaped by his years of teaching at various South African institutions, was a helpful reminder of the nature of educational change across the decades.

What struck me about working with Peter was his genuine curiosity about the complex and varied nature of the histories of education in South Africa and globally. He is motivated not by ego, but by a real desire to see educational change in the present. At the heart of his scholarly work is a strong empirical basis and a love for the archives and reading. Peter’s research addresses big questions. While increased specialisation within the fields of history and of education has led to scholars studying narrower topics, Peter’s more recent work, the culmination of years of thought and collaboration on the topic, boldly connects educational

thinking across Empires, over centuries and between disciplines. Placing the South African case into its continental context, and including reference to broader scientific, governmental and religious organisations that shaped the emergence of ‘modern’ education systems, is crucial, Peter points out, to producing histories of education that challenge South African exceptionalism. At the same time, Peter’s recent work, including on school texts written in isiXhosa, does not shy away from a close and detailed engagement with very particular local contexts and periods of time.

Peter has had a strong commitment to developing the history of education as a field on the continent. I remember talking with Peter at an international conference, and later, when he was on the editorial board of *History of Education*, he was truly concerned about the lack of representation in these spaces by scholars based in Africa. Peter has aimed to foster these forms of scholarly networks between researchers in the region, although in the context of a lack of funding for historical research, this has not always been straightforward.

Over the years, we have had many discussions about new publications in the history of education, a field that, since the #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall protests in 2015-2016, has received increased scholarly attention. As we grapple with the ongoing legacies of unequal education during colonialism and apartheid, Peter’s research spanning almost half a century reminds us that these are complex issues that cannot be resolved without an in-depth examination of the path that led us here.