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CHAPTER 1

Curriculum as praxis in the age of coloniality: implications for pedagogy

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Abstract

In setting up the context within which formal education is enacted, and from which individual chapters in this book emerge and respond to, this chapter critically reviews the theoretical foundations of the concept 'education for public good'. As a consistently touted concept, the chapter reveals its analytical and practical limitations, inadequacies and detrimental effects in formal education. Implicit in the concept, the chapter argues, is an unintended perpetuation of coloniality, a phenomenon that continues to 'devour' and undermine all well-intentioned postcolonial/post-apartheid educational policies. The chapter concludes with offering a possible alternative: 'education for common good', and presents the *Reading to Learn* pedagogy as one of the perspectives on curriculum as praxis. This pedagogy is also presented as compatible to 'education for common good', capable of enabling a shift from teaching what to learn, to how to learn.

Keywords: curriculum as praxis, education for public good, education for common good, coloniality, Reading to Learn pedagogy.

1.1 Introduction

Across the South African higher education, endless efforts are set in motion to rid the sector of the procedures, values, norms, practices, thinking, beliefs, and choices that appear to be exclusionary. They are seen to be compromising a redefined purpose of the university in line with the transformation and decolonisation imperatives it faces. Practices that lead to the marginalisation and exclusion of the majority of undergraduate and postgraduate students and impose hostile managerial processes that undermine the academic and knowledge generation projects are frowned upon. As would be expected, curriculum reform forms a major part of this work. But what does curriculum actually mean?

The definition of *curriculum* remains a contested terrain. A general and emerging view is that in its broader realisation, it comprises not merely the subjects in a qualification, but also all the aspects that make up a programme of learning (Boughey & Mckenna, 2021). This includes considerations concerning what topics are being taught and texts drawn upon to tackle such topics. Most crucial for this chapter, it also includes questions about: Who does the teaching? How is the teaching carried out? Who does the learning? How is the classroom set out? Who does the speaking in class? What behaviours, including reading and writing practices, are permitted? Which behaviours are seen as appropriate and inappropriate? From whose world view are answers to these questions? In addition to all these dimensions of the curriculum, the definition also acknowledges that learning can happen outside the formally planned curriculum, and that conversations at home, in residences, and experiences on the sports field also have consequences for student learning (Mgqwashu, 2009).

In this broad understanding of curriculum, students are not simply a collection of the skills and attributes they bring into the university.

Instead, they are people with rich histories, languages, norms and values, which may or may not be welcomed into the cultures and structures of university lecture halls, laboratories and libraries. Within this broad framing of curriculum, recent research draws on the work of Maton (2014) to ask three key questions:

- What knowledge is legitimated by the curriculum?
- Which knowers are legitimated by the curriculum?
- How are these knowledges and knowers legitimated in the curriculum?

In a world in which higher education has been viewed largely through the economic lens (that is, higher education should prepare participants for the world of work), the scope and purpose of higher education are narrowed, and in fact threatened (Ashwin, 2020). Indeed, curriculum events cannot mainly focus on providing access to immediate work place skills. This holds the potential for higher education to pay less attention to the underlying principled, abstract and powerful knowledge that could help us solve world problems, critique and interrogate the conditions from which such problems emerge (Mckenna, 2020). As illustrated in various chapters throughout this book, all these aspects form part of what can be considered critical aspects in curriculum work.

As illustrated in the book, curriculum theory is thus seen as cross-disciplinary exploration of educational experiences (Pinar *et al.*, 1995). Educational experience implies more than simply the topics covered in a course; it encompasses the attitudes, values, dispositions and worldviews that get learned, un-learned, re-learned, re-formed, deconstructed and reconstructed while studying towards a university qualification. Thus, what approach to curriculum theory and practice do most South Africa's universities subscribe to? Once again, there is no single answer. In any post-conflict, transforming and decolonising society, this question is critical. It appears that there are four ways of

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approaching curriculum theory and practice (Pinar *et al.*, 1995) These are:

- curriculum as product: certain skills to master and facts to know;
- curriculum as process: the interaction of teachers, students, and knowledge;
- curriculum as context: contextually shaped; and
- curriculum as praxis: practice should not focus exclusively on individuals or exclusively on the group – but must explore how both create understandings and practices.

For the purpose of this chapter and in the context of this book, curriculum as praxis is explored. Praxis creates conditions to democratise learning spaces. It makes room for both individual and group identities within the teaching and learning context. This is the reason the chapter begins with a critical review of the theoretical foundations of the concept '*education for public good*' so as to critique its analytical and practical limitations, inadequacies and detrimental effects in postcolonial, post-conflict societies such as those in South Africa.

In this endeavour, the chapter shows how an uncritical embracing of this concept within the formal education (schooling and post-school) discourse has tended, and continues, to undermine well-meaning educational policies by the democratic government and formal education institutions at the expense of the majority. We use the South African context to illustrate fundamental 'blind spots' that, if unchecked, will continue to cushion coloniality and 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. We argue that colonial influences persist in shaping pedagogical practices, favouring historically privileged social classes, while disadvantaging the historically marginalised majority.

More specifically, the chapter reveals how the capacity to acquire knowledge through reading, a privileged practice in colonial formal education, is a skill the students from literate cultures acquire unconsciously from home, long before they enter formal schooling. This has serious implications for the way we think about educational desire and attainment in the South African context. The chapter then proposes a conceptual shift that must, of necessity, enable us to rid ourselves of pedagogical practices and classroom traditions that are colonial and evolved in the west to favour the elite and marginalise the majority. Pedagogical practices that will rid us of ‘coloniality’ in particular is the focus of the second section in this chapter. It explores how a shift from education for public good to education for common good could unlock the emancipatory potential of education. We argue that the strength of education for common good engenders cooperation from the government, private sector, educators and policymakers 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, which we consider to be compatible with the concept of ‘education for common good’, is presented to illustrate the power of this alternative to ‘education for public good’.

1.2 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 post-conflict societies such as that in

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South Africa. Engagement with this concept from a humanistic perspective reveals the extent to which the democratic governments' 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 formal education through which the young acquire knowledge and skills needed to survive by gaining access to material goods. 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 such as that of South Africa, is ludicrous.

Education, at least within the human rights discourse, cannot be seen as a commodity of which provision is determined by market forces and dependent on demand. The assumption which predicates education as a ‘public good’ does not fit into the non-rivalry and non-excludability criteria developed by Daviet (2016). Considering South Africa’s history of colonialism and apartheid, it is instead 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 therefore is problematic. We argue that education is a social tool for emancipation and social redress (DoE, 1997; Freire, 1970; Jansen, 2009). Writing about South Africa, Spaul (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. (Spaul, 2015:1)

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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 muddled 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 (Zancajo, Verger & Fontdevila, 2022). 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, the consequences are the same.

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’. Indeed, for 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, 2015:1). 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. This results in the political environment in which teaching and learning takes place, teacher education occurs, and university teachers’ professional identities negotiated. It is an environment that is intrinsically antagonistic, despite evoking supposedly liberatory concepts such as ‘democracy’. This is the reason Morgan (2016: 708) argues that post independent, postcolonial, post

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conflict societies’ education systems often operate in spaces that are ‘fundamentally hegemonic and antagonistic and are marked by intensified partisanship and often irreconcilable social struggles. This is an environment that contributes to the scapegoating of teachers and academics 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, we 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 unequal social structure largely rooted on race and, recently, increasingly on class (Sidanius & Pratto, 2001), can always afford high school fees and purchase better educational opportunities; 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 in and patience with democracy as an institution.

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. However, we argue that 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.

We 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 this chapter as 'education for public good'. The analysis in this chapter now turns to consider the role of the continued link between postcolonial society and colonial modes of social organisation.

1.3 Coloniality: Impact on education

Within the African continent, most educational policies appear to be laced with a yearning for the realisation of Euro-American and/or economically advanced societies' success stories, without critically analysing the differences between those contexts and ours. 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, by 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, non-patronising and diligent interest in Indigenous knowledge systems, cultures, peoples and languages. A positive and embracing attitude holds the potential of leading 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.

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Similarly, our definition of a decolonial education system emphasises African identities and perspectives. However, this does not place knowledge produced within this framework beyond critique, nor does it imply avoiding the questioning of what constitutes knowledge and how it is developed. To ensure such critique, there must be a dialogue between African knowledge and that from Greek, Arab, and European traditions. In other words, African knowledge should not be viewed as the ultimate or exclusive source of understanding.

In the context of ‘education for public good’ which inherently excludes non-mainstream members of society, this principle is non-negotiable. Educators, researchers, and academic institutions should recognise and appreciate diverse forms of learning and knowledge, influenced by a post/decolonial approach to education. However, it remains crucial for marginalised groups to access the knowledge and skills valued by mainstream society as they continue their struggle for liberation.

1.4 The impact of coloniality on pedagogy

Through pedagogical practices, or what Bernstein (1990) refers to as pedagogic discourse, we are referring to a selection of content, framing and pacing, as well as teaching and assessment practices. As we show in this section of the chapter, as ‘modern subjects in Africa’, to use Ndlovu-Gatsheni’s (2013:5) term, it is imperative to investigate the extent to which our pedagogic practices still favour the colonial agenda. For Bernstein (1996: 47), pedagogic discourse is ‘a principle by which other discourses are appropriated and brought into a special relationship with one another, 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’ 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. Bernstein defines curriculum as the knowledge deemed important. The knowledge that is taught (or content) is a selection, with some knowledge considered suitable and other knowledge excluded. Students from low-literate or low-income backgrounds often have limited access to written stories; something that compromises access to what is to be learned. This is crucial, 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’. Having written texts as the main carriers of knowledge, at the exclusion of oral ones, 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). Consequently, educational practice at all levels emphasises delivering curriculum content rather than developing the literacy skills required to understand and acquire that content. This shift in focus is long overdue. Without it, pedagogic practice will not adequately address or align with the sociocultural background and educational needs of African learners (Lebakeng, Phalane & Nase, 2006:78). A focus on a mere transmission of curriculum contents, whether couched ‘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’ (Rose, 2005:

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136). Put differently, as long as formal education pedagogy does not take seriously the fact that it *lacks an emphasis on how to learn rather than just what to learn*, educational outcomes will stay the same. Thus, having considered the nuances which define education from the perspective of colonial impositions and colonial modes of being, the chapter next considers an alternative way of framing education as a means of unlocking its emancipatory potential.

1.5 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 a commitment to *learning-centredness* and not learner-centredness, learning to *how to learn* and not what to learn, and learning *how to know* to know and not what to know. Learner-centred education needs to answer: on what kind of learners does learning have to be centred? From which home and family backgrounds? 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 for this failure 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 with a view to receive targeted tuition.

While traditional methods support dividing students into ability-based groups, progressive approaches advocate for personalised learning activities, viewing learning as an independent process by which each student is assumed to have innate skills and talents that align with the requirements 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 varied economic and educational backgrounds, resulting in unequal development rates, both approaches contribute to the persistence of this ability gap.

All students enter formal schooling and university with this ability gap, and we argue that the root of this inequality stems from students'

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varying abilities to learn independently through reading. Consequently, the distinction between those who are admitted to university and those who gain entry through alternative methods such as admissions or placement tests depends largely on their capacity to engage with reading independently. 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 capability is the results of the primary socialisation in the home in terms of the degree to which each child experiences parent-child literacy 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).

Most young adults enrolled in post-school educational institutions in South Africa come from cultural backgrounds that prioritize speaking over reading and are economically disadvantaged. Many of these students hail from ex-Department of Basic Education schools located in rural areas or Black townships, where a reading culture is largely absent in most families. According to Thomson's study (2008), most of these students lack essential reading skills before entering higher education. Furthermore, the insufficient emphasis on teaching reading across the curriculum in formal education means that, throughout primary and secondary education, these students are not granted the opportunity of developing the skills needed to learn independently through literacy skills crucial for accessing knowledge in higher education. This

disadvantage is further exacerbated by the fact that English, the primary language of instruction in most South African educational institutions, is seldom 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 South Africa and many former British colonies.

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 based on their experiences with the Pitjantjatjara Indigenous community in Australia. This community faced significant self-destructive challenges, largely because their inadequate education failed to elevate them from their marginalized status as 'disadvantaged'. Rose (2011) describes how almost every school-age child in this community was involved in substance abuse and led lives marked by despair. He found that, despite their teachers being trained similarly to those in other Australian state-funded schools, the learners could not read at age-appropriate levels. '[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 by 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 incorporated a question-response feedback pattern and supported it with the Scaffolding Reading and Writing for Indigenous Children in

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School program, created in collaboration with colleagues working on similar initiatives for disadvantaged communities (Christie & Martin, 1997; Rose, 2008). He observed that the lack of early parent-child reading had a direct impact on learners' performance, and that primary school students were not adequately prepared to learn from reading as anticipated:

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 emphasizes teaching reading and writing to democratize the classroom, aiming to facilitate learning and ensure meaningful participation for children from less advantaged backgrounds, who often face a gap between home and school literacy practices. To develop this methodology, Rose (2005) drew from Vygotsky, Halliday 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 1.1 illustrates the six stages of this cycle.

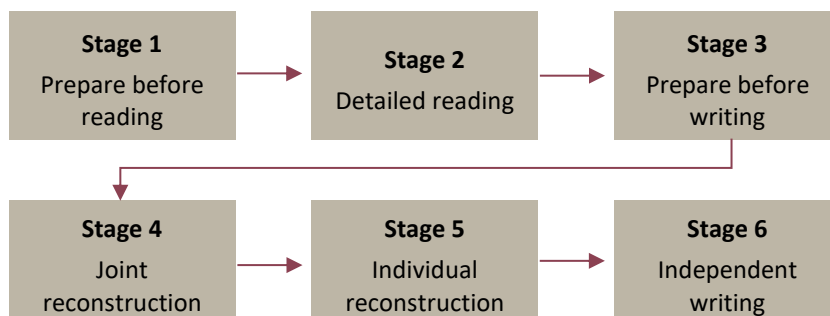


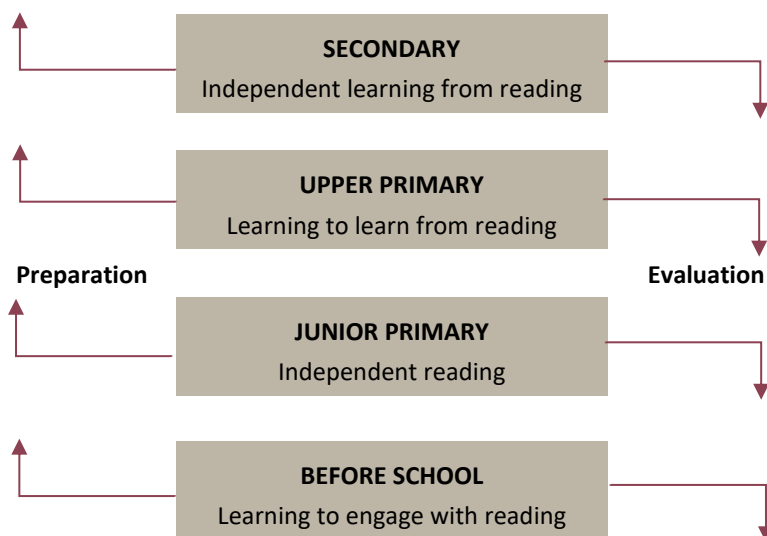
Figure 1.1: The Scaffolding Interaction Cycle. The Scaffolding Interaction Cycle

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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 draft 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 (2015), Mgqwashu and Makhathini (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 1.2 shows the reading development curriculum underlying the overt content-focused curriculum sequence of schooling:



Source: Adapted from Rose (2005)

Figure 1.2: Stages in literacy development sequence

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, as Figure 1.2 attempts to show, each stage of the reading development curriculum, from parent–child reading onwards, prepares

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learners with the skills they will need for the next stage (represented by upward arrows in Figure 1.2). 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 1.2). Since most assessment tasks in formal education, particularly at secondary and tertiary levels, are intended to measure whether students have learned from reading (Rose, 2005), neglecting explicit instruction in reading throughout the curriculum, from primary to higher education, leads to the continuation of inequalities in our classrooms. 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.

1.6 Conclusion

The underlying argument in this chapter 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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