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Editorial

Humanising Pedagogies for Social Change

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Societal legacies of disempowerment and dehumanisation continue to persist despite attempts, worldwide, to transition to a more inclusive, socially just, and democratic political order. This also applies to education—a space in desperate need of humanisation. While the praxis of a humanising pedagogy could then be considered appropriate, a number of questions and uncertainties arise in its definition and praxis. For this themed issue, researchers across disciplines and contexts were accordingly invited to engage with related aspects. These included, for example, critical features of a humanising pedagogy, its enactment in various settings, and challenges related to the praxis of a humanising pedagogy. In particular, we were interested in articles engaging with the relationship between a humanising pedagogy and education for social change, the key focus of this journal. Scholars were thus encouraged to interrogate complex questions, such as:

- What are shared, contextually bound understandings of the term—rather than abstract definitions?
- What would culturally responsive and strategic teaching at schools and tertiary institutions look and feel like—rather than merely applying the "right" teaching methods and strategies?
- How can educators and education programmes incorporate an evolving political awareness amongst their students as knowers and active participants in their own learning?

The selection of articles included in this themed issue all aim to address these questions at various levels and in various contexts. Introducing profound interrogation of the concept, Aslam Fataar engages in a conversation between a humanising pedagogy and the social complexities of education. For Fataar, a humanising pedagogy should, in essence, address the notion of knowledge redistribution—including and recognising knowledges, literacies, and identities of students. Ultimately, according to this author, a humanising pedagogy should emphasise participation. He subsequently unpacks what it would mean to insert a conception of the social–subjective into educational theorising in South African education academic work, asserting that this dimension is currently largely absent in hegemonic educational academic orientations. The result, he argues, is a gaunt focus on curriculum and pedagogy, devoid of how the complex social–subjective frames the subject's access to education. Based on his ethnographic work in urban sites, Fataar then proposes a view of the social–subjective aimed at disrupting South African educational theorising, providing a pedagogical justice view of education, which may conceptually be able to account for the complex social–subjective in education. This, he postulates, may better enable the emergence of a humanising pedagogy in our educational discourses.

Foregrounding the notion of pedagogical justice, Margie Childs also explores the (potential) dehumanising nature of language use in many South African classrooms by highlighting the regular disconnect between the dominant language of the classroom and the home language of the learner. Using poetic inquiry, she then interrogates her own observations in multilingual classroom contexts, further exploring the possibilities of translanguaging to bring about humanising experiences for learners as well as teachers. By employing photography and researcher-voiced and literature-voiced poems, she encapsulates her own understandings of the complexities and possibilities of multilingual classrooms. She concludes that translanguaging practices are inherently humanising, affording teachers and learners opportunities to participate as social, thinking, transforming individuals.

Linking humanising pedagogies to issues of inequality in the current South African education system, Peter Pausigere focuses on present methods of mathematics teaching in South African primary schools, postulating that the current strong sequencing and pacing of pedagogic practices in mathematics classrooms is inherently dehumanising. Whilst resonating well with middle-class children, it disadvantages poor and working-class learners. Drawing from both educational sociological studies and Bernstein's central thesis about the social class basis of pedagogic framing, Pausigere subsequently promotes responsive pacing, sequencing, and mixed pedagogies that reflectively relate with the mathematical concepts to be relayed. Such pedagogies, he argues, are more humanising, enhancing learning for children from different social classes.

Linking a humanising pedagogy to the contextual realities of South African society and education, Yusef Sayed**,** Azeem Badroodien, Thomas Salmon, and Zahraa McDonald continue the train of thought by emphasising the crucial importance of contextually relevant pedagogical strategies that address diversity, reconciliation, and promote social cohesion. Highlighting the importance of teachers' pedagogic strategies in mediating inequalities and continuities within the education system and society they operate within, they then encourage teacher educators to pay special attention to the moulding of student teachers' dispositions and capabilities towards effecting change within social and educational systems. Ultimately, the authors argue, initial teacher education programmes need to prepare teachers as agents of social change and cohesion in South Africa.

In the succeeding article, four teacher educators employed at a South African tertiary institution, Denise Zinn, Kathija Adam, Raj Kurup, and André du Plessis, also attempt to extend shared understandings of the complex phenomenon of a humanising pedagogy. They do so through a process of enacted reflexivity and transformative learning, demonstrating that, while a humanising pedagogy can be a mechanism to facilitate (re)humanisation in the South African education context, a diversity of perspectives related to the concept still prevails. By employing a participatory mode of inquiry, using metaphor drawings as a means of deconstructing a humanising pedagogy, they demonstrate the catalytic potential of transformative learning processes.

Also linking the arts and arts-based methodologies to research and practices intended to be humanising in nature, Nicholas Rowe interrogates the healing and humanising possibilities that arts learning forums can provide for traumatised and dislocated communities to gather, re-imagine, and exchange ideas. Reflecting on the design of a programme in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, which provided workshop training in arts education methodologies to over a 1,000 teachers and youth leaders in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, he then proposes threshold concept theory (Meyer & Land, 2005) as supporting pedagogies aimed at humanising education and the broader society. Threshold concepts create borders around understandings of a subject. Learning experiences need to enable crossing of these boundaries. Rowe points out that, while this may seem simple, the movement across such a conceptual threshold can involve much oscillation as the learner seeks to reconcile this new way of seeing the world with former ways of seeing the world (Land, Meyer, &

Smith, 2008). Educators need to attend to this period of oscillation, enabling learners to construct their own unique pathways beyond the threshold, rather than "banking" a new set of knowledges and testing them on its application. Only once learners have crossed the conceptual threshold, seeing the subject in a new way, will they be better located to direct their own learning.

Further extending our thinking about humanisation of the broader society, Caleb Mandikoza and Heila Lotz-Sizitska remind us of the potential impact of climate change on southern Africa—a reality exacerbated by intersecting concerns such as health-, economic system- and poverty-related ills. They remind us that education has the potential to facilitate catalytic transformation of society through enhanced understandings of environment and sustainability concerns, and supporting engagements with more sustainable social practices oriented towards the common good. Focusing more specifically on teacher education in this regard, they share insights gained through the implementation of courses that employed a change project model and approach, illustrating how such an approach can mediate change among course participants. Linking humanising pedagogies to social change, they subsequently propose education for sustainable development as a sensitising construct for initiating sustainable social change.

In the final article, Anne Becker and Cornelia Roux emphasise the role of dialogue as humanising praxis. Reflecting on recent and current upheavals in the South African higher education arena brought about by students' experiences of alleged racist, discriminatory, and exclusionary practices, these authors propose two interrelated conditions for dialogue as humanising praxis in education: first, the acknowledgement of situated selves and second, the ontological need for, and right, to voice. Becker and Roux take us back to Paulo Freire's (1993) core premise: humanisation is the fundamental objective of education.

In the selection of articles published in this issue of *Educational Research for Social Change*, several researchers engaged with the complex construct of humanising pedagogy from various angles and through a variety of lenses, all trying to make meaning by translating their personal understandings into praxis. Despite the subsequent rich variety of diverse prism colours enlightening the construct, all authors concur that at the heart of a humanising pedagogy is people's humanity—and that all human beings are equal in their humanity. Humanising pedagogies are clearly directed by compassion, care, respect, and love for others, their identities, histories, and experiences. Another leitmotiv emerging clearly and permeating all articles is the necessity of critical reflections and self-awareness as prerequisites for humanising pedagogies. In essence, humanising pedagogies are rooted in cultural, spiritual, and linguistic dimensions of everyday life.

The ultimate aim of a themed issue is indeed to provoke deeper engagement with complex issues from multiple perspectives. It is our contention that the selection of articles in this issue does indeed prompt those of us interested and concerned about the nature of education worldwide, as well as its need to bring forth social change, to think more deeply and critically about a term nowadays often used loosely and arbitrarily. Several questions are still unanswered and need to be interrogated, for example, what are the links between humanisation and the decolonisation of education? Can humanising pedagogies be abused, and what would the boundaries of humanising pedagogies be? When does humanising become patronising? And as researchers, we too, need to revisit our practices, asking ourselves: How can educational research be conducted in more humanised ways? Conversations and critical dialogue clearly need to continue—between theory and practice, among academics, with teachers, students, and learners. Our journey towards enhanced humanisation of society through humanising the pedagogies we use is indeed a shared, evolving one. *A luta continua*!

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