KEYNOTE TO THE EAST AND SOUTH-AFRICAN CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES AND MANAGEMENT - ELDORET KENYA (CERM/ESA)

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Transformation and Change in the Knowledge Generation Paradigms in the African and Global Contexts: Implications for Education Research in the 21st Century

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• A strategically focused knowledge and human resource intervention into the South African Higher Education system.

• **Mandate:**
  
  – Advance the **frontiers of knowledge**, **create new research career pathways** and **stimulate strategic research**.
  
  – Fast track **leadership building through postgraduate training**.
DST/NRF SARChI Chair in Development Education

- Funded by the South African Department of Science and Technology.
- Administered by the National Research Foundation.
- Hosted by the University of South Africa (Unisa), which has positioned itself as “the African University shaping futures in the service of humanity”.

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Hosted at the University of South Africa (UNISA)

- It is a mega-university (450,000 students)
- It is the biggest university in Africa
- It is the 8th biggest in the world
Change in South Africa

• In South Africa, the focus is on both **quantitative change** (the numbers) and
• in altering the **institutional form** of the higher education sector.
• In other words: the **architecture of higher education itself**
Change (cont..)

• The country is beginning to tackle the content of **academic offerings** (in the case of teaching and learning); and

• **paradigms of knowledge production** (in the case of research); and the

• **quality of our graduates** (in the case of both under, and post-graduate training).
Transformation

• The agenda for the transformation of the academic systems that demands attention is paid to the default drive of the academic system itself.

• Here, Transformation is seen as distinct from Reform and Restructuring
In that:

• It draws attention to the **basic cultural structures** within which our systems of thought have been constructed across all the disciplinary domains, and

• Goes beyond the “**regulatory rules**”

• Into what Howard Richards has called the “**the constitutive rules**”.
The brings us to several questions

• How can the **numerical access and quantitative gains**
• be turned into **intellectual outcomes**
• that can bring about **transformation**
• in the way we think about issues facing society in the twenty first century?
The SA Chairs Initiative (SARCHI)

The SARCHI in Development Education:

• fosters a models of **indigenous-directed partnership** approach to international research collaboration;

• It creates **cutting edge articulations in rethinking paradigms in knowledge production** in its TAPROOT Series; and

• It fosters transformation by **expansion of existing parameters of thought in key disciplinary areas**.
Rethinking knowledge

• The twenty-first century has been called the **century of knowledge and of mind**.

• Innovation is no longer contained within the laboratories of **formal scientific systems** (Mashelkar, 2002).

• It is contained also in **knowledge systems of diverse people**.
Justice and Fairness

• A core need that is emerging is that of understanding the conditions for the modernization of these knowledge systems of the “other” in a just and fair manner.

• Therefore there is a need see the link between democracy and knowledge production; human rights and intellectual property protection;
Form and Content

• ...and the link between all the above and the actual FORM and content of global education, and the building of sustainable societies in Africa and globally.
Rethinking Gender

• **Gender:** The Study of Human Failing to Understand Human Equality

• It is part of a struggle as we have all learnt, to create new foundations, a new basis for renewal of societal possibilities.

• It is an invocation of the democratic ideal of the right of all to ‘be’, to ‘exist’, to grow and live without coercion, and from that, find a point of convergence with the numerous “others”.

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Gender cont...

• Where women’s issues were once upon a time,

• a subject for **gossip and subdued rationalizations**, 

• it has today become a **central tenet of thinking about development, politics, and institutional transformation agenda**.
KEY QUESTIONS

• What kind of transformative actions must be brought to bear to enable both restorative action and sustainable human development to occur in Africa and elsewhere?

• How can key areas of disciplinary knowledge production (such as science, economics, education and law) be reconstituted in order to bring about a just and human-centred development on the continent and globally?
Epistemology, diversity, and democracy

For instance:

- The integration of knowledge systems into the academy also highlights the need to explore deeper into the interface between epistemology, diversity and democracy, and of the potentials for true exchange and the “reciprocal valorization among knowledge systems”.

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Transformation of the academy: creating space

1. **Deepening space**: Ethical space imperatives and dialogues on epistemological and cultural jurisdictions (Ermine and Poole)

2. **Widening space**: Transformation by enlargement on what we consider as “knowledge” which in the end, brings about restorative action

3. **Deeping and widening in context**: e.g. African metaphysics and paradigms of livelihood

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In other words: what we are trying to combine:

- Democratic imperative
- **Pragmatic and strategic** imperative
- Epistemological imperative
- Ethical imperative
- Livelihood imperative

But

- what does it mean????????
To cut it short: The Imperatives

• Thus all **theory** must be linked with its **epistemological** locus and anchored in **ethics**.
• The link with the “**other**” through the **democratic imperative** prevents **duress** from setting in.
• This is the meaning and task of **cognitive justice**.
Keeping in mind: Duress and Humiliation

• In Africa, and most of the colonized world,
  ➢ Duress and humiliation are the “single” and most important weapon of mass destruction
  ➢ It has imprisoned Africans and African academics and policy makers into a corner

Therefore the SARCHI Chair in DE has brought in dignity studies – beyond humiliation.
Cognitive Justice

• The Chair has Cognitive Justice a central pillar of its work.

• **Cognitive Justice** is the right of all forms or traditions of knowledge to co-exist **without duress**.

• The approach seeks to free **African knowledges** to co-exist with other knowledges **WITHOUT DURESS**.
The transdisciplinary approach: a new look at the disciplines

• The SARChI Chair and its Fellows takes a **cryptic look** at the disciplines and examines their trails from the past up to the present.

• It traces crimes of **omission or commission** which the disciplines have committed to Africans and thus embarks on their restitution.

• The disciplines influence the national and institutional policies...**therefore they ARE important.**
Meta-capacity building strategies (beyond disciplines)

• Conditions for the integration of IKS
• Transformation of knowledge production paradigms
• Codes of power in the academy
• Combining post-graduate training and leadership building
• All combine to form a META-CAPACITY BUILDING STRATEGY nation wide, and gradually continent-wide, and globally.
Therefore the goals are embedded in:

1. Making transdisciplinarity a core facet in Leadership Building.

2. Offering robust expositions of the constitutive rules and norms that control current thinking and practice.

3. Representing an epistemology of hope - hope that probes the future and thereby illuminates the possibilities of the present.
Questions for the African University in the 21st Century

• **At issue here is the *African* university** – i.e. what does it mean to have universities in Africa?

• What are the **cultural/epistemic identities** of universities in Africa?

• What constitutes the **ecology of a university in Africa**, and how can this be *reworked* to respond to the human question in Africa?
• When we talk about supporting community outreach, the question arises as how to determine the **methods for reaching that goal**?

• What should this new ‘**social contract**’ consist of in Africa?

• Are universities **becoming more closely linked to societal needs**?
Generally speaking, it is the university itself that decides on the quality, usefulness and integrity of its “service”, not the communities being served.

The university controls the discourse from start to finish -- goals, research methods, communities of practical application, right through to assessment.
Quoting Nandy

• Who states that the meek do not inherit the earth by their meekness alone – they need defences of the mind and conceptual categories around which they can organise their thoughts and actions.
Citing the Unesco Declaration

• there is a need for a **vigorous and informed, constructive inter-cultural and democratic debate** on the production and use of scientific knowledge.

• WHY???
Social and public memory must meet in a contemporary space.

In the South especially:

• Individual memory must meet social memory and public in a contemporary space.

• It is a time when public memory accepts responsibility for the past and commits to restoring agency (Cleary & Connolly 2005).
In other words;

• the first level of the revolution
• is not a revolution in technology, machinery, techniques, software, or speed,
• but a revolution in CONCEPTS, and
• thus
• THE WAY WE THINK about issues (Unesco 2005, Odora Hoppers 2009)
Towards shared knowledge

• Emerging societies cannot make do just with mere components of a global information society.

• To remain human and liveable, knowledge societies will have to be societies of shared knowledge in which a solid ‘s’ is attached at the end of the word knowledge itself.
The “s”

• The plural here sanctions the need for accepted diversity.
• The emergence of new concepts
• and approaches to theorization such as those outlined above
• that capture the lived realities and experiences of those long triaged from the arena of citizenship....
Return to the universities

• Universities have to be reminded that as
• makers of the future,
• it needs to remain a hermeneutic institution
• that can read,
• and re-read,
• and reinvent justice through the three axes of liberty, equality and justice (Visvanathan 2000).
It is through the slow but repeated encounter with culture and with culture as politics that the university reworks its notion of democracy.
The “S” in knowledges

• actively reintroduces history and culture;
• and cultures to science
• It anticipates a liberation of the mainstream
• from its narrow, parochial,
• and eschewed understanding of “universal”
In other words...

• by recognizing the dissonance in the application of dialogue;
• we aim at socio-economic, spiritual upliftment
• within a project of enlarging the meta-cognition
• and epistemic cognition of all humanity in general,
• and African people in particular.
The dialogue we call for:

Is essentially about:

• developing a mutually enriching and sharing that encompasses transformation in worldviews and ethics of humankind,

• a forward looking liberation of substance and a shared paradigm shift,

• not a return to some golden age...but transformation to new futures of a different kind...
A reflexive praxis
creating a third interstitial space in which knowledge can be reframed
and social organization of trust can be negotiated.
a new social contract for an expanded citizenship globally, in other words:
an alternative project of globalization!
IN THIS WAY

• New levels of action in the production of knowledge

• Where education as whole and

• Indigenous knowledge systems which was lost in action can be remade

• and linked to development with intent that never again shall the knowledge of our people be taken for GRANTED as long as we live!