

KEYNOTE TO THE EAST AND SOUTH-AFRICAN CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR
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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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South African Research Chairs Initiative (SARChI)

- **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”.

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”.

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**”.

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

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?

Cont.....

- 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?**

Cont.....

- 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 **mekness 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).

Cont..

- 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...**

Cont...

- **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!**

THANK YOU