



I

PERCEPTIONS ON SOCIALLY JUST PEDAGOGIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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This chapter distils the perceptions and experiences of educators at institutions in the Western Cape, South Africa. It has been written at a time of crisis for South African higher education, brought to the fore by two years of student protests, in 2015 and 2016, calling for higher education to be decolonised and for better access to education. The protests resulted in multiple disruptions of examinations and academic programmes. The protesters' demands were initiated by the #RhodesMustFall (#RMF) student protests at the University of Cape Town, focusing on symbols of imperialism and whiteness (Luescher & Klemenčič, 2016; Nyamnjoh, 2016) and calling first for the statue of Cecil John Rhodes to be removed from campus, and then more globally for decolonisation as their sentiments spread to other higher education institutions (HEIs) both nationally and internationally. The #FeesMustFall (#FMF) movement, with the student-led protests being ignited at a large number of HEIs across South Africa in 2015 and 2016, demanded equitable access to higher education, especially for those students who experience race/class and financial barriers to gaining access (Nicolson, 2016).

These protests were indicative of the continuing problems of inequality in South African higher education (and other educational sectors) (Bozalek & Boughey, 2012; Cooper, 2015), and the constraints that these conditions make for achieving what Fraser (2008, 2009, 2013) calls “participatory parity”, namely the ability to interact as equals in higher education. This chapter contributes to ongoing discussions about the meanings and practices of social justice in higher education by considering the views and experiences of academics across a wide range of disciplines and faculties in HEIs in the Western Cape who identify themselves as practising socially just pedagogies. (Re)thinking about the meaning and practices of socially just pedagogies, especially in times of turmoil, re-energises the debates and renews the ways with which struggles for social justice can be enriched in higher education.

The chapter is based on a small section of research which was part of a larger National Research Foundation (2016) study (Grant No. 90384), which examined both students’ experiences related to participatory parity in achieving qualitative educational outcomes and higher educators’ perceptions and experiences related to social justice and socially just pedagogies. “Participatory parity”, a concept that Nancy Fraser (2008, 2009, 2013) equates with social justice, refers to the ability to interact on an equal footing in particular circumstances – such as students in the same disciplines across differently placed HEIs being in a position to achieve similar qualitative outcomes. Achieving participatory parity is regarded as particularly important for South Africa, where inequalities continue to plague the field of higher and other levels of education. The focus of this chapter is specifically on examining how a group of educators in higher education understand social justice and enact it in their pedagogical practices. The engagement of these educators with a set of important foundational issues must be undertaken if we are to disrupt inequities and injustices in the sector. The understandings identified and discussed in this chapter have the potential to not only help us delve into educators’ thinking and practice, but they also question uncritical assumptions about socially just pedagogies in South Africa and beyond.

The meaning of the term “social justice” is hotly debated throughout the field of education (North, 2006; Leibowitz & Bozalek, 2016; Moje, 2007), but here we define *socially just pedagogies* as the educators’ efforts to transform policies and enact pedagogies that improve the learning and life opportunities of typically under-served students (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994) while equipping and empowering *all* students to work for a more socially just society themselves (Freire, 1970; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1998; King, 2005). Examining how to ameliorate the educational experiences of marginalised students and empowering all students to be agents of change will have more chances of success if higher educators understand the tremendous challenges and potential implied in attempts to promote participatory parity in HEIs.

The #RMF and #FMF movements provide a fascinating focus of events that constitute South Africa as a large “experimental lab” of new ideas that could further the project of socially just pedagogies. While this chapter focuses specifically on higher educators in Western Cape HEIs, other studies from the same NRF research project have examined the experiences and perceptions of events in Gauteng (see, for example, Leibowitz and Naidoo, 2017). In addition to this, a much larger NRF study on “Professionalising Teaching and Learning in Higher Education” was conducted by Brenda Leibowitz and a research team from eight HEIs: researchers conducted interviews with vice-chancellors, deputy vice-chancellors, deans and 20 lecturers from each of the eight universities in South Africa regarding perceptions of teaching and learning. The interviews reveal that, although higher educators generally are reflexive about their teaching, very few engage with socially just practices and social justice teaching as described in this chapter (Council on Higher Education, 2017; Leibowitz, Bozalek & Kahn, 2017). In this study, most of the 160 lecturers who were interviewed about their conceptions of good teaching referred to the importance of enabling active student learning rather than transmission of knowledge from the lecturer; of alignment to desired course outcomes; and of competency in their field of study (Council on Higher Education, 2017). These 160 lecturers thus tended to focus on conventional conceptions of teaching and learning such as curriculum alignment and student-centred learning.

Theoretical framework

As a guiding framework, this chapter uses some ideas from Nancy Fraser’s (2008, 2009) construct of social justice, which she equates with participatory parity. Participatory parity, the ability to interact as equals, is influenced by the distribution of resources (economic dimension); by whether the attributes or knowledges of groups, individuals or institutions are valued or devalued (cultural dimension); and by whether certain individuals or groups of people are included or excluded from learning contexts and have a political voice (political dimension). These three dimensions of participatory parity can either be addressed in higher education pedagogies in ameliorative ways, addressing some of the symptoms; or in transformative ways, which are more fundamental and address the root causes of institutional arrangements that prevent participatory parity in pedagogical practices (Bozalek, 2017; Fraser, 2008, 2013). The student protest movements calling for decolonising of the curriculum can be seen to be part of the cultural dimension of participatory parity, drawing attention to the revaluing of indigenous knowledges, and different, more democratising ways of practising pedagogy in higher education (Pillay, 2016). The calls for equitable access, pertaining to the economic dimension of Fraser’s construct of social justice, relate to an equitable distribution of resources such as funding, labour, time, etc. to foster

participatory parity. The third, political dimension for bringing about participatory parity, is representation, inclusion and voice. In this dimension, the student movements themselves have brought greater political agency, representation and voice to students, who have been able to exert a potent political force in South African higher education, sometimes bringing HEIs to a standstill through temporary closure (Luescher & Klemenčič, 2016). How does this three-dimensional understanding of social justice contribute to the notion of socially just pedagogies?

First of all, few would disagree with the most basic intention of socially just pedagogies: improving the learning and life opportunities of typically marginalised students (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Delpit, 1995; Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Perhaps more controversial is the accompanying goal of empowering *all* students to act as agents of change in response to societal injustice (Ayers, 1998; Freire, 1970; King, 2005). In the South African context, for example, this goal could easily be misinterpreted as urging students to be disruptive of current affairs in HEIs. And yet, in light of the gross injustices in South African HEIs, the empowering of students to take action and disrupt the socially unjust situation should be seen as an important component of socially just pedagogies.

Beyond disagreements on the basic meaning of social justice for educators, there is also confusion in that different groups (theoreticians, policymakers and practitioners), embrace varying goals, and operate in relation to different domains, content, audiences, and agents of socially just pedagogies. Each of these components intersects with and influences the others, in both conflicting and complementary tensions, their very interconnectedness contributing to the confusion (see North, 2006, for a thorough discussion of several of these components). For instance, socially just pedagogies may indeed encompass varied goals. Some may argue that the goal is simply the recognition of specific cultural groups that have been marginalised. Others might emphasise that social justice is more accurately demonstrated in the redistribution of material goods and opportunities for those social groups that have been denied political, economic, and educational access because of institutional practices and policies. The issue is not either the one or the other, but rather, as Fraser writes (2008, 2009, 2013), all three dimensions of social justice, namely, recognition (cultural), redistribution (economic) and participation (political).

Finally, there is the question of what the role of the socially just pedagogue is in the higher education classroom (Carolissen, Canham, Fourie, Graham, Segalo & Bowman, 2017; Osman & Hornsby, 2017). Should socially just pedagogues be activists, providing sound academic instruction, equitable policies, and critical exposure to justice-related issues? Does this have a place in the classroom or should they encourage activism outside of that context (Giroux, 1988; Kincheloe, 2005; McLaren, 2003; O'Donnell, Chávez Chávez & Pruyn, 2004), limiting their role

to engaging in critical analysis of societal and institutional inequities (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2004; King, 2005; Nieto, 2000) and working for structural reform (Carlisle, Jackson & George, 2006; Taylor & Sobel, 2003)?

The complexity of these competing/complementary goals, domains, and educators' roles in relation to socially just pedagogies creates many tensions and possibilities that deserve deeper investigation, especially in terms of how higher educators themselves perceive and experience these tensions and possibilities (see Chubbuck and Zembylas, 2008).

Context of the study

The White Paper for Post-School Training and Education (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2013) notes that South African (SA) higher education (HE) is geared towards white, male and middle-class students and staff. Furthermore, the Soudien Report on "Transformation, Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in the Higher Education Sector" (Department of Education, 2008) points out that there remains a disjuncture between policy intentions and the actual experiences of students and educators in the HE sector. Much of the literature on higher education in SA has tended to foreground how students are "underprepared" for study and need to adapt to the normative assumptions of higher education institutions (HEIs). The effect of these studies is to reinforce various types of deficit discourses, which have the effect of pathologising large groups of black working-class students attempting to enter the HE sector. Rather than focusing on students' deficits, it is important to consider how institutions themselves and those who work in them would have to change their practices and policies to respond to the different needs of learners (Leibowitz & Bozalek, 2016), as well as valuing the subjugated knowledges that students bring with them (Bozalek, 2004; Soudien, 2012).

The focus of this chapter is specifically on the perceptions of HEI educators regarding social justice and related concepts, as well as their experiences of practising what they see as socially just pedagogies across four differently located and positioned HEIs in the Western Cape:¹ Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT), Stellenbosch University (SU), the University of Cape Town (UCT), and the University of the Western Cape (UWC). Both the University of Cape Town and Stellenbosch University are historically advantaged institutions (HAIs): UCT catered in the past largely for English-speaking white students; SU catered largely for Afrikaans-speaking white students. UWC is a historically disadvantaged

1 The STIAS project, "Being Human Today: The Effects of Race", provided the funding for the transcriptions of the interviews. This chapter, therefore, focuses solely on the analysis of these interview transcripts.

institution (HDI), or historically black university (HBU), which was originally designed in the 1960s under apartheid as an HEI for the so-called “coloured” population, but in the 1970s became known as the intellectual home of the left and opened its doors to all students, including rural African women students. CPUT is a merged institution which combined a black and a white technikon to become a university of technology. According to Cooper and Subotzky’s classification of HEIs in South Africa (2001:2, Table 1.1 below), UCT is an English historically white university (HWU); SU an Afrikaans HWU; UWC a non-African historically black university (HBU); and CPUT a merger of a historically white technikon (HWT) (Cape Technikon) and a historically black technikon (HBT), the Peninsula Technikon (Pentech).

Currently, South African higher education is divided into three bands of institutions – five upper band, seven middle band and eleven lower band categories, grouped according to their research intensiveness as indicated by postgraduate enrolments and staff publications. Cooper (2015) shows how the continued socio-economic and racial inequalities are masked in official categorisations of HEIs in South Africa in Table 1.1 below, which indicates the figures of student enrolment in 2008 and 2012 in HEIs in these bands. As can be noted in the table, Stellenbosch University continues to recruit large groups of white students (69% in 2008 and 68% in 2012), while the historically black or disadvantaged institutions, mainly represented in the third band, are almost all populated by South African African students. UCT is shown to have remained constant in its enrolment across 2008 and 2012, with 39/34% white, 7/7% Indian, 15/13% coloured, 19/23% South African African and 20/23% foreign or unknown enrolments in 2008 and 2012, respectively. UWC in the second band is also quite consistent over the 2008/2012 period, with 4/4% white, 7/5% Indian, 48/46% coloured, 32/36% South African African, and 9/9% foreign or unknown enrolments in 2008 and 2012. CPUT as a merged University of Technology (UoT) is represented in the third band, of institutions that continue to enrol students from other racial categories, probably because they are merged institutions which amalgamated historically advantaged and disadvantaged institutions. The figures for CPUT are also quite consistent over the five-year period, with 17/14% white, 1/1% Indian, 33/29% coloured, 42/48% South African African, and 7/9% foreign or unknown enrolments in 2008 and 2012. It appears that the most transformation in terms of racial categories has taken place at CPUT, with nearly half the student enrolments in 2012 being South African Africans. Considering the South African population statistics regarding apartheid racial categorisation categories (79.2% black African; 8.9% white; 8.9% coloured; 2.5% Indian or Asian; 0.5% “other”) (Brand South Africa, 2017), it is clear from this and Table 1.1 that the racialised representation of students has not altered in significant ways, which was anticipated in the Higher Education White Paper (1997).

Table 1.1 Full-time equivalent (FTE) student enrolments at 23 universities by “race” and year – comparison of 2008 and 2012 (%)

UNIVERSITY	WHITE		INDIAN		COLOURED		AFRICAN (SOUTH AFRICAN)		FOREIGN & UNKNOWN		TOTAL	
	2008	2012	2008	2012	2008	2012	2008	2012	2008	2012	2008	2012
1 Pretoria	59	54	4	4	2	2	28	32	7	8	100	100
2 Cape Town (UCT)	39	34	7	7	15	13	19	23	20	23	100	100
3 KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN)	12	7	35	29	3	2	43	56	7	6	100	100
4 Stellenbosch	69	68	1	2	16	15	7	8	7	8	100	100
5 Witwatersrand	30	24	15	13	3	3	43	51	9	9	100	100
6 North-West	56	47	1	1	3	3	36	46	3	3	100	100
7 Johannesburg	24	13	5	4	3	3	64	74	4	5	100	100
8 South Africa (Unisa)	22	17	8	7	5	4	55	64	10	9	100	100
9 Free State	37	33	1	1	5	5	49	56	8	6	100	100
10 Nelson Mandela	27	25	2	1	14	14	47	52	10	7	100	100
11 Western Cape (UWC)	4	4	7	5	48	46	32	56	9	9	100	100
12 Rhodes	43	38	3	3	3	3	28	33	23	22	100	100
13 Limpopo	1	1	1	1	0	0	96	96	3	2	100	100
14 Cape Peninsula University of Technology	17	14	1	1	33	29	42	48	7	9	100	100
15 Tshwane University of Technology	9	6	0	0	1	1	85	90	4	3	100	100
16 Zululand	0	0	1	0	0	0	96	99	3	0	100	100
17 Fort Hare	5	3	1	0	2	2	76	85	16	10	100	100
18 Central University of Technology	14	9	0	0	3	3	77	83	6	4	100	100
19 Durban University of Technology	5	3	17	13	2	2	74	80	2	2	100	100
20 Vaal University of Technology	3	2	0	0	1	2	86	88	9	8	100	100
21 Venda	0	0	0	0	0	0	97	93	2	7	100	100
22 Walter Sisulu	0	0	0	0	0	0	98	97	1	2	100	100
23 Mangosuthu University of Technology	0	0	0	0	0	0	100	99	0	1	100	100
Total	23	20	6	5	6	7	57	62	8	6	100	100

Sources: DHET (2010, Table 1.13) for 2008; HEDA (2014) for 2012.

Notes: (1) Only contact tuition student full-time equivalents are shown for universities, with the exception of Unisa for which only distance tuition student full-time equivalents are shown. (2) All full-time equivalents include undergraduate and postgraduate students. (3) Percentages are rounded to the nearest 1 per cent.

This background information, including the racialised profiles and access to resources of HEIs (Bozalek & McMillan, 2017; Cooper, 2015), provides a sobering picture of the whole system of higher education in South Africa, and some reasons why student protests were so extensive across the country. It is crucial to know the historical background and current status of the HEIs that employ the academics who were interviewed for the research focused on in this chapter, as this provides the backdrop and context for what they do to engage with social justice issues at their institutions, which are different, and which thus also influences the way in which they practise socially just pedagogies.

Interviews with academics

Academics who were identified by others in their institutions, or who identified themselves, as practising socially just pedagogies were interviewed in Cape Town and Stellenbosch at UCT, SU, UWC and CPUT between 2014 and 2016. A total of 27 interviews were conducted with academic staff in from a range of disciplines, faculties, departments and centres at these HEIs, as demonstrated in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2 Interviews conducted with academics on socially just pedagogies at HEIs in Cape Town

HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION	FACULTY	DEPARTMENT/CENTRE	NUMBER OF PEOPLE INTERVIEWED	PSEUDONYMS
University of the Western Cape	Economic and Management Sciences	Business and Finance	2	Shafiek Graham
	Community and Health Sciences	Physiotherapy	1	Edgar
	N/A	Writing Centre	1	Beryl
	Arts	History	1	Jane
	Law	Constitutional Law	1	Carl
	N/A	Teaching and Learning	1	Rebecca
	Arts	Women's and Gender Studies	2	Kate Margaret
	Natural Sciences	Physics	2	Vuyo Leslie
	Natural Sciences	Mathematics	1	Fred
	Natural Sciences	Biodiversity and Conservation Biology	1	Tony
Stellenbosch University	Education	Curriculum Studies	1	Edward
	Education	Educational Psychology	1	Gail
	Arts	Design and Fine Art	1	Sheila
	Arts	Psychology	1	Nadia

HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION	FACULTY	DEPARTMENT/ CENTRE	NUMBER OF PEOPLE INTERVIEWED	PSEUDONYMS
University of Cape Town	Centre for Higher Education	Languages Group	1	Candace
	Humanities	Anthropology	1	Susan
	Humanities	Media Studies	1	Ben
	Humanities	Psychology	1	Thembi
	Health Sciences	Obstetrics and Gynaecology	1	Beverley
	Health Sciences	Occupational therapy	1	Lerato
	Engineering	Electrical Engineering	1	Robyn
Cape Peninsula University of Technology	N/A	Fundani	1	Renee
	Engineering	Geomatics	1	Zayan
	Informatics & Design	Visual Arts	1	Maria
Total interviewed			27	

Interview schedule

All interviewees were asked the same set of questions, which had been developed in a previous project examining socially just pedagogies in various South African and international HEIs. Interviews were conducted in the academics' offices or in public places, such as coffee shops, and lasted from 30 to 150 minutes. In cases where academics were not available face-to-face, interviews were conducted over Skype. All interviews, but one, were conducted by one of the authors, after initial e-mail contact to gain permission and arrange the time and place for the interview. The following questions were asked in each interview:

1. What are your perspectives on social justice? And on critical, compassionate citizenship?
2. What pedagogical approaches do you use for teaching about/for social justice?
3. What are your notions of critical citizenship/social justice education; how do you practise this in your classrooms; and to what effect? What are you trying to achieve in your own practice regarding critical citizenship/social justice/social inclusion? What is your perspective and/or practice in relation to emotional reflexivity?
4. What sort of knowledge/qualities/dispositions/values are you wanting to develop in your students, and why?
5. What are the achievements and joys you encounter when implementing your pedagogical approaches and how do you explain this?
6. What are the challenges or obstacles you encounter when implementing your pedagogical approaches and how do you account for these?

These questions form the basis of the data that was obtained.

The rest of the chapter deals with the findings from the interviews. The research questions that guided our analysis were:

- (a) How do higher educators understand the concept of “social justice”?
- (b) How do higher educators understand critical, compassionate citizenship and the role of higher education institutions towards cultivating this sort of citizenship?
- (c) How do higher educators practise social justice in their pedagogies?

For the purposes of data coding, we worked first with a smaller sample of data in order to identify the main emerging themes. These themes developed under three main areas, which largely corresponded to the research questions: higher educators’ understandings of social justice; higher educators’ understandings of critical, compassionate citizenship; and, higher educators’ socially just practices.

Findings of the interviews

Higher educators’ perspectives on social justice

The perspectives emerging from higher educators’ views on social justice confirm not only the multidimensionality of the term “social justice” but also its contextual complexity and the meanings attached to it in light of contemporary social and political developments in South African higher education. For example, most interviewees made some reference to social equality/inequality, discrimination, power relations. Many also referred to social inclusion/exclusion, having one’s voice heard, and how to address these in relation to higher education. There was also reference to a fair distribution of resources, opportunities and privileges in society; of maximising students’ ability to flourish; and to being responsive to the particularity of students’ needs, rather than treating everyone the same. Social justice was also conceived of as the freedom to be able to pursue significant priorities in one’s life, with higher education being one such priority. Interviewees also mentioned the power relations that shape higher education and the impact of this on students, in addition to distributive justice or legal mechanisms. The quotes from the interviews that follow demonstrate this contextual complexity and show how important it is to clearly understand how higher educators are calling upon the idea of social justice, and the range of priorities and visions they hold. Without acknowledging these differing perceptions, it would be impossible to evaluate their contributions and limitations in terms of the larger goal of developing socially just pedagogies.

Discipline-related and institutional views of social justice

Interviewees from different academic disciplines perceived social justice differently; perhaps unsurprisingly, their views seemed to be influenced by the disciplinary discourse of their fields. Tony from Biodiversity and Conservation Biology, for example, saw injustice in global terms, where poorer nations suffered because of the avarice of rich countries, thus highlighting the notion of interconnectedness that was foundational in biodiversity:

[...] excessive greed by a few selective societies at the expense of a multitude of poorer countries, citizens, in the world. So we push very hard the idea of justice across the different nations of the world. (UWC, Faculty of Natural Sciences, Biodiversity and Conservation Biology)

Beryl from the Writing Centre saw social justice as providing students with ontological and epistemological access to discipline communities, as did Hannah in Physics, who saw it as important to give students access to what might be invisible or taken-for-granted knowledge in a discipline such as Physics. These views are consistent with a Bernsteinian view of social justice in higher education, which holds that if students gain access to “powerful knowledge” – by which they mean disciplinary knowledge – they will be able to use this to change their circumstances (Wheelahan, 2010).

Sheila, in Design, regarded social justice in art as moving beyond just exhibiting a concern for societal issues:

[...] for me it's very important for students leaving this department to not only think about 'how am I going to exhibit in the best gallery', instead of thinking 'how can my art contribute to society, or how can it make society better' ... the way we are indoctrinated basically with a capitalist system where you have to exhibit in these galleries, you have to be a successful artist, and a very individual process very often because it's so much promoted that you could become famous when you exhibit in this gallery. (SU, Arts Faculty, Design and Fine Art)

Maria, from a design discipline, but from another institution, CPUT, also saw social justice from her disciplinary perspective, and saw her role as conscientising students about the sort of work that they would do. For Maria, the discipline is more than the technical aspects of learning, but the contribution that this would make to improving people's lives:

So for me the big question facing designers – which is what our students are becoming – in the twenty-first century, is: what does design do, what work does design do, what work do designers do, to create or respond to the need, the social needs – locally but globally as well? So at every point I try and raise that consciously, so it's not simply learning about form and function as much

as understanding the context and how it's going to, I guess, improve people's lives in an inclusive and empowering way. (CPUT, Faculty of Informatics and Design, Design)

Shafiek in Business and Finance also expressed the desire that students should be developing the ability to improve their own and their clients' life circumstances. He also saw it as important to be generous and give of one's own wealth to share with those who don't have – thus seeing social justice in material terms.

Gail from Educational Psychology in a historically advantaged institution had thought deeply about social justice in her teaching and had written academic papers about this. She saw it as important to think about social justice in relation to where she was located, particularly with regard to pedagogy. She emphasised that social justice has to do with the educator's relationship to who the students are. She had to adapt her teaching and think about the students at the institution where she was teaching, what their prior experiences had been and what exposure they had had to social justice debates:

If one is working with students, for example, who have been through a history of oppression – who have experienced in many, many ways a social justice conscientisation – one works at a very different level with students pedagogically; so one can use a lot more radical kind of social justice approaches. But if one works, like I do most of the time, with groups of students who have had little exposure to even debates around social justice, and who, for a large part come from very privileged environments, one cannot use those very same approaches in thinking about pedagogy because it will just push them away. And I have had those experiences where I taught about community psychology in a much more radical way – they didn't hear any of it. And so I think in those kinds of situations one may need to think about where are students at; what for them constitutes social justice, and how does one move them from that towards a more radical understanding and structural understanding of social justice. And so for me, of course, social justice really covers a whole number of components, so to speak. It's about redistribution, it's about cultural justice, it's about people having a voice. But I think it's not only at an objective level; it's also at a subjective level and the interaction between those. And so for me that's what social justice is. (SU, Faculty of Education, Educational Psychology)

As this strand of thinking about social justice is primarily disciplinary and institutional, it relies heavily on offering broad ideas and principles at a level that takes into consideration the epistemological and sociological context in which higher educators work. The contribution of this strand of thinking is that it helps us to get greater clarity about the contextual assumptions, terms and visions that are made about social justice from discipline to discipline and from institution to institution.

Philosophical/theoretical conceptions of social justice

In contrast to the above contextual understanding of social justice, some academics interviewed regarded social justice from more abstract and theoretical perspectives. Kathy from Engineering referred to Amartya Sen and saw injustice as “inequality with regards to not only material but other resources in society, the freedom to do the things you want to do and what matters to you in life” – which refers to Sen’s notions of freedoms, and of valuable beings and doings (Deneulin & Shahani, 2009; Sen, 1999, 2009). Carl, an academic teaching constitutional law, saw social justice in a similar way to Nancy Fraser, foregrounding participation rather than access to resources:

[...] if you look at socio-economic rights, many people think of socio-economic rights as welfare or as poverty alleviation. To me that’s a sideshow – the injustice is not that people are poor; the injustice is that they can’t *participate* and therefore they are excluded from this possibility of a transformative civic identity and belonging in that sense. And so participatory parity is all about achieving that – and so it has an economic basis, it has a recognition basis, but it also has a voice basis. (UWC, Law Faculty, Constitutional Law) [our emphasis]

Ben, an educator in Media Studies, referring to the #RhodesMustFall student protests which were occurring at UCT in 2015, also emphasised participation through recognition, representation, voice and student agency in his view of social justice:

And the big thing for students – #RhodesMustFall right now this year – being here is not enough; the actual value of participation is significant: What is the actual quality of our life here? How visible are you? How audible? Are we able to set the agenda? Are we able to debate the merits of the curriculum as opposed to just worrying about assimilating? So all of those things link to social justice; it’s about not just being present but being recognised as such and actually being able to speak on your own terms – exercise agency. And the big thing for students – #RhodesMustFall right now this year – being here is not enough; the actual value of participation is significant: what is the actual quality of our life here? How visible are you? How audible? Are we able to set the agenda? Are we able to debate the merits of the curriculum as opposed to just worrying about assimilating? So all of those things link to social justice; it’s about not just being present but being recognised as such and actually being able to speak on your own terms; exercise agency. (UCT, Faculty of Humanities, Media Studies)

Susan, an educator in Anthropology, thought that justice should be extended beyond the human to the non-human, and that the emphasis should not only be on the *social* of social justice. This perspective is consonant with a critical posthuman perspective on justice (Bozalek & Zembylas, 2016):

I think social justice for me has got to do with the human condition whereby we just have so much suffering in the world on so many different levels and

that anything we can do to eliminate the gap or lessen the gap between the haves and the have-nots, would be something that's socially just. But I also think it extends to non-humans – you're thinking about the environment, possibly other actors. I must say Latour, I think, has really influenced me in thinking about what he calls 'actants' and thinking about how it is that ... living, non-human living beings and also just other objects have their own agency and a will; and how [we can] actually think about protecting those. So I was fascinated in New Zealand when they issued a river with full rights, so it's a river and its given the kind of agency that we would give to human rights; and I thought that was just such an interesting ontological shift in the way that we value and understand what it means to be a being on this planet. So social implies that it's possibly only humans but I guess I want to extend that to non-humans as well. (UCT, Faculty of Humanities, Anthropology)

Some interviewees articulated philosophical stances regarding the notion of social justice. Edward from Curriculum Studies in Education, for example, expressed his views in the following way, showing an inclination towards a relational ontological view of social justice:

My approach to social justice is informed by the Neo-Aristotelian view that you do things in association with others in a deliberative spirit, listening attentively to what others have to say; and others in turn should oblige – taking [under] critical scrutiny one another's views and recognising vulnerabilities [in] making changes. (SU, Education Faculty, Curriculum Studies)

Similarly, Rebecca from Teaching and Learning, expressed a relational and feminist new materialist view of social justice, drawing on the work of Karen Barad (2007) and Donna Haraway (2016):

[...] intra-acting responsibly and being part of the world. They talk about 'worlding'; and Haraway and Barad also talk about human flourishing, but [they] very much [see] human beings as being entangled with non-human and other matter. (UWC, Teaching and Learning in Higher Education)

The higher educators' thinking in the theoretical or philosophical strand seemed to foreground the meaning of social justice from a few different perspectives. Common theorists to which references were made included Amartya Sen, Nancy Fraser, and Karen Barad. As this strand of thinking was primarily theoretical or philosophical, it relied heavily on offering theoretical principles and constructs for application in thinking about social justice. This reminds us of the importance of being cognisant of the richness of existing theories and of taking care to articulate them in relation to the realities of each context in which we find ourselves.

A few interviewees were motivated by spiritual beliefs in their ideas about what should be done to act in a just manner. Shafiek from Business and Management Science saw generosity and charity to be important, stemming from his Islamic

spiritual beliefs, while Fred from Maths also has beliefs regarding social justice which stem from, amongst other things, spiritual or religious convictions:

[...] driven by ... your conviction that all people deserve – I don't know if love [laughter in voice] is the starting point ... I suppose mine would be informed to a large degree by morals, by faith, by experience of course as well. (UWC, Faculty of Natural Sciences, Mathematics)

Uneasiness with the concept of social justice

While the majority of interviewees were quite definite about their views of social justice and saw it as a useful and necessary concept, others were more tentative about it. One interviewee saw the concept as a meaningless one: it means nothing as it means so many things to so many people, changing from context to context. Another interviewee, Jane, expressed her concerns regarding the term, critically examining her own positionality and that of her students:

I'm wary of the term 'social justice' because far be it for me from a privileged background to preach to my students. I think they probably know more about it than I do – so I'm very wary. (UWC, Faculty of Arts, History Department)

Candace, from the Languages Group at the Centre for Higher Education also expressed an uneasiness with the concept of social justice regarding herself – seeing the concept as having many layers. She firstly locates injustices in the South African society and the effects that these have on her. She also reflects on her own institution which she regards as privileged, and difficult to access for students, and then, more generally again, on different forms of discrimination. She prefers to locate herself within the disciplinary field of academic literacies rather than a personal position when she considers how she responds to the notion of social justice:

I think that's also what makes it hard to easily say, to use a term like 'social justice' at the forefront of what I do. I can talk about it [more] in the collective [...], when I'm thinking about the work we do in the language development group or the bigger academic literacies project – then I can say when I'm talking about the 'we'. But when I'm talking about the 'I', I find it much harder; and I think it's something about that as well. (UCT, Centre for Higher Education Development, Language Development Group)

The different strands identified in this section on social justice include discipline-specific and institutional; philosophical/theoretical; and also demonstrate some dis-ease with the concept of social justice). All in all, it is useful to develop some kind of organising framework to make sense of the various kinds of perspectives and visions that higher educators hold in their respective institutions when they claim to ground their pedagogies in social justice. What was also fascinating in our sample, for example, was how the perceptions of social justice differed between

those in similar disciplines or faculties at the same institution, with some being more responsive to where students were starting from and working from there; and others being more provocative and challenging towards students. Despite the progress that has been made in South Africa regarding efforts to promote social justice, one of the pieces that seems to be missing is a genuine and critical dialogue across disciplines and institutions: this would help us to build on each of the contributions of each strand of thinking (such as those identified in this study, but also others that may emerge), as well as to better acknowledge the contextual challenges of each institution.

Perspectives on critical, compassionate citizenship

One might wonder why we include in this study an investigation of the notion of critical and compassionate citizenship, or how it might be relevant to social justice. In recent years, there have been growing discussions about citizenship as compassionate and empathetic understanding of “the other” (Fortier, 2010; Johnson, 2010; Mookherjee, 2005); namely, how citizens can be encouraged to develop compassionate feelings and actions as part of efforts to promote social justice. In the context of education, for example, the notion of critical and compassionate citizenship emphasises the interrogation of how individuals and groups are taught to feel certain emotions about themselves and others and examine the consequences of those emotions (Zembylas, 2014). In addition, a broad concept of critical and compassionate citizenship cultivates emotions of compassion and empathetic understanding of the other rather than monolithic emotions of loyalty and attachment – to the nation, or to those who are considered “citizens” in a narrow legal sense. Therefore, the notion of critical and compassionate citizenship is very relevant to social justice and we included its investigation in this study in order to explore how higher educators make sense of this notion as an element of their work in terms of social justice.

Unsurprisingly, many of the interviewees had not heard of the term itself, nor of the combination of critical and compassionate citizenship, and had to think very hard about what this meant, although they had some ideas about each separate notion, or about critical citizenship. With regard to the notion of criticality, many of the interviewees saw it as being an important attribute for students to develop, for example about their own disciplines, as Leslie conveys in her wish for her physics students to develop a view of the world that is more transdisciplinary and fuller, rather than only a narrow scientific view:

I’ve been very aware of scientists or students not being aware of science in the broader context, of the social and ethical dimensions of science. I try in my teaching to undermine that whole scientism – which is that idea that science is the best or the only way of knowing the world. From my own experience as an undergraduate, the science community can be quite

smug – I remember as an undergrad myself, this snide [way of] referring to arts students – that science is somehow a better way of knowing about the world. And so I actively try and resist that with the students; to [make them] aware that science is just one way of understanding the world; and [that] to be more [fully] human beings they need to engage with literature and with other ways of understanding. And also contesting this idea that science is going to solve all our twenty-first century problems ... clearly it's not – it's actually climate change and inequality and all those problems that science alone cannot solve – it has to be science in relation to sociology and human understanding. (UWC, Faculty of Natural Sciences, Physics)

Other interviewees, however, applied the notion of criticality to themselves and their own practices as teachers in higher education. Shafiek, for example, regarded it important to interrogate what he did in class to see if he could inadvertently be perpetuating injustices towards students:

[...] critical for me is looking at how what I'm doing perpetuates injustices – so in other words if I teach poorly or if I don't empower some of the students that come from a different cultural background in my class, if I don't do that then ... I am keeping them behind and I'm perpetuating this. So the critical part would be my awareness of what I do, that inadvertently without me knowing perpetuates injustice – and that's the critical dimension: in thinking about your own involvement or your own role in the perpetuation of injustice. (UWC, Faculty of Economics and Management, Business and Finance)

Another example of criticality towards oneself as a teacher is Renee, from Fundani Centre for Higher Education who finds it difficult to empathise with students who are defensive in her classroom, particularly about their privileges:

I think this is one of the things that I struggle with – [it's] to feel empathetic for all students, also for those for whom it's much more difficult to open up and to understand what I'm trying to do or where I'm going, and who react very defensively. For me that is my biggest challenge – [it's] how to be with those students who act understandably defensively because they are being put immediately in a position of the oppressors or the ones who are guilty or who are painted guilty because of where they are coming from. (CPUT, Fundani Centre for Higher Education)

Although not initially *au fait* with putting together the concepts of critical and compassionate citizenship, most interviewees had thought about this and provided some of their understandings of how these were related, and would play out, in their views relating to social justice and higher education. Susan from Anthropology was very committed to the notion of critical citizenship, which she saw as a graduate attribute and also believed that anthropology assists with the development of all three of these concepts:

Critical citizenship for me when I think about what it is that I want our undergraduates to exit with; the ability to see the world as complicated, messy; to feel a degree of comfort in that messiness and to therefore start

to unpack it and not try to put it in boxes. I guess one of the things we do a lot of in anthropology is deconstructing just about everything, including our own discipline. We do cast a critical eye on ourselves constantly; others do it for us. I think compassion for me would be the ability to see the world from another's eyes; but that's also really anthropology of course also, and my job is to be able to translate the world in another so that people can in a sense talk to each other. So, ja, I guess in presenting a worldview of another, you hope to develop the compassion. (UCT, Faculty of Humanities, Anthropology)

Thembi, a Psychology academic, was critical of the notion of compassion from a sentimental or patronising perspective, of doing good, but found it acceptable from a relational and political perspective, to understand the perspectives of others:

As long as compassionate doesn't mean being nice; I think being nice is what's caused us a lot of problems – and so the point is not to be nice. I think perhaps compassion should be about trying to understand the perspective of others and trying to take on the perspective of others in our lives, in our lives as citizens, in our relationships. So then in that case it would make sense to me. Often compassion means charitable type of thing, and that I think is not helpful. (UCT, Faculty of Humanities, Psychology)

Generally in the interviews, compassion was seen as an affective rather than cognitive response (felt rather than thought), and as the ability to reach out and have a nuanced understanding of the other. One interviewee went back to the original meaning of the word *compassion* as *with* passion, which led to a more active notion of compassion – acting on one's understanding with passion and empathy rather than coldness, as can sometimes be the case with academics putting another down in debates or reviews. Compassion was also seen as the ability to give and receive, to show fallibility as a teacher to students, and to indicate that students have affective impact on the teacher too. Zayan from Geomatics expressed it this way:

[...] being able to give of yourself to your students, also being able to receive graciously – not because I think that I'm a martyr – I don't pretend to know. It's important for me to show that I am fallible also, to my students, and I can be wrong. And I like to show that it affects me, whatever they do does affect me, [...] whether it's positively or negatively. (CPUT, Engineering, Geomatics)

Citizenship was seen to be about participation, belonging, and for some also being human – as Gail expressed it:

[...] for me citizenship, the core of it is – what is it that makes us human? For me that is the core of citizenship: the kinds of things that make us actually at the personal, individual, interpersonal and structural level that makes us feel that we belong or don't belong. (SU, Education Faculty, Educational Psychology)

A few interviewees were more critical of the notion of citizenship in its conventional conception. For example, the nation-state view of citizenship, which could lead

to “othering” (Jensen, 2011:63-78) and on the concentration of “human” that citizenship could imply, which could lead to anthropocentric views:

But I think that to be a citizen of a place means that – I suppose it gives people a sense of belonging. But it is something that I’m finding a little bit problematic in a sense because citizenship of a nation ... for example: nation-states and hierarchies that are built up imply ‘othering’. But after having thought about global citizenship for a bit I realised that it’s also anthropocentric. So again, there’s that species hierarchy that’s kind of implicit in there. (CPUT, Engineering, Geomatics)

Carl from Constitutional Law had given much thought to all three concepts – critical, compassionate, and citizenship – and how they worked together. He came to conclusions similar to those of Fraser (2008, 2009, 2013) and Zembylas (2014) in the notion that citizenship is not equivalent to nationality:

So citizenship in the classical sense would be overlapping with nationality and would entail an element of patriotism towards the nation and nation building. My understanding of citizenship is subversive of that, it’s completely not that; it is to try and resist framing of issues in terms of nationalism. One of the pre-conditions of forming a civic identity, participating democratically as a citizen, is this kind of empathy and openness towards difference and the ability to look across and beyond your own interests. So compassion in that sense I think plays a key role; but compassion in the sense of reflective compassion, a judgement – it’s seeing the world from your perspective, understanding your plight, your position and your framework and then feeding that into a reflective judgement where other perspectives are also taken into account. So to me one should separate citizenship and nationality. Nationality is a legal technical concept that you carry a passport: that doesn’t make you a citizen, it makes you a national and [you] can claim international benefits and [sanction of] international law and then you go for your passport – it’s got nothing to do with citizenship. And the same with an identity document. Citizenship involves something different – so it’s a new citizenship, which involves this critical compassionate dimension – then you become a citizen. (UWC, Law Faculty, Constitutional Law)

This is similar to Francis Nyamnjoh’s (2016) view of flexible citizenship in his writing about the #RMF movement in South Africa. He regards open-mindedness as crucial in encounters and relationships in order to be and become citizens. His view is that citizenship should not be bounded by “race, ethnicity, class, gender or geography”, and that one must be “both conscious and critical of hierarchies that make a mockery of the juridical-political regime of citizenship provided by the coercive illusion of the nation-state” (Nyamnjoh, 2016:232). As well as seeing citizenship as broader and more fluid than the nation-state, and foregrounding criticality, similarly to Carl, Nyamnjoh sees citizenship as relational, as resulting from social action, as establishing balances between competing interests of collective groups, and as a means that privileges are “claimed and contested, sought

and maintained” (Nyamnjoh, 2016:233). The notion of conviviality is important to Nymanjoh when thinking about citizenship from a relational and interdependent positionality and could perhaps be a useful addition to the concept of compassion, with regard to citizenship.

All in all, with regard to the interviewees’ responses to critical and compassionate citizenship, although many of them had not thought about the three concepts together, they offered insightful ideas about these three concepts, as can be seen in the excerpts in this section. These notions offer a useful critique of the normative ways in which citizenship has been defined so far, because they acknowledge not only some neglected aspects of citizenship (e.g. conviviality, compassion), but they also enrich discussions about socially just pedagogies by empowering students to become more hospitable to others. The investigation of these ideas, then, in conjunction with socially just pedagogies, suggests the need for a more complex discourse of social justice and citizenship education at the higher education level.

Practising social justice in teaching

In this chapter, the last section in reporting the findings of our interviews with higher educators pertains to how they practised social justice in their teaching. In contrast to the more abstract and philosophical orientation of the previous two themes, this one is more practical, offering criteria and ideas for what socially just pedagogies in higher education look like in the interviewees’ work settings. Scholars have pointed out that socially just pedagogies are about the content of what is being taught; the way in which the teaching is happening (Moje, 2007); and the mechanisms and social arrangements which are put in place by institutions to arrange pedagogical practices (Leibowitz & Bozalek, 2015). Therefore, it is a valuable experiment to identify precisely what sort of content and mechanisms are used in higher educators’ everyday practices for promoting social justice.

Content and strategies used in socially just pedagogies

Kate, from Women’s and Gender Studies, thought that for socially just pedagogies, both content and pedagogical approaches were important for developing student agency:

I mean, obviously the content is important – that we attempt to shift [from] the kind of dominance of Eurocentric models, Eurocentric theories, Eurocentric examples, Northern examples; but what we have not given enough attention to is the actual practices in the classroom and how we continue to model an expert, dominant, authoritative voice of the Lecturer – a didactic model of teaching and learning, which – I think – is not conducive to ... Social Justice Pedagogy. [We need to think] very critically about what we do in the classroom, and outside the classroom; and [find] ways in

which we get students to be agents and to develop scholarly identities and participatory kinds of active education. (UWC, Faculty of Arts, Women's and Gender Studies)

Like Kate, Thembi in Psychology regards a socially just pedagogy to be a combination of a critical stance towards the discipline, a consideration of who your students are, and an interactive approach to teaching:

[...] a critique of the discipline and a critique of society. So both of those things kind of come into the classroom or the curriculum of what I prescribe [for reading]. And how, for instance, psychology is also very gendered, it's a very male discipline – so it's led us to believe certain things about the differences between men and women and fixes people in particular identity categories. So my approach is really to offer a critical reflection on mainstream forms of psychology. I try to make the curriculum also relevant to people's experiences in my classroom. So we'll talk a lot about issues of race, class and gender, sexualities. And then in terms of experience, like day-to-day experiences, I also link those experiences to perhaps broader issues around ideologies; how does capitalism fit into it, how ... the ideologies around racism or ... the past fit into the historical context of apartheid, colonisation and what they've led us to believe.

The classes are very interactive. I try and get colleagues from different departments to come and present so that it's more interdisciplinary. I get my students to present. (UCT, Humanities Faculty, Psychology)

Rebecca referred to the significance of modelling democratic practice in one's teaching, rather than just focusing on social justice in the content of the curriculum:

For me it's going beyond the content. If you are talking democracy and you are behaving in a very autocratic or dictatorial way towards students, for me it doesn't make much sense. One needs congruency [in] what you're actually doing – because I think it's in the doing that people would learn more than in the actual saying. Ja. It's not only modelling – modelling is also important but it's how you give people spaces to express themselves as well. And I suppose also what you would hope for for your students, and how you try and grow people rather than diminish them. (UWC, Teaching and Learning in Higher Education)

Following on from the conviction that both the content and what we do in the classroom are significant, the relationship between lecturer and students is a crucial consideration for socially just pedagogies, as Fred from Mathematics explains, indicating how his modesty and egalitarian stance is important for teaching mathematics:

Teaching is about a relationship between the teacher and the learner, and like any relationship the openness of that relationship will hinder or encourage the person to learn – so to be absolutely fair and open and non-judgemental at a human level is crucial, even whatever your subject is. But I think [it's] in

mathematics in particular where it does have an emotional effect on people. I certainly try to convey to the class, if I've got a class, that I am approachable, that I listen, that I am there for them, that I don't laugh at them, make them feel small; that I'm not there to lord it over them – that kind of attitude for me is really important to get across – that I am fortunate that I have knowledges that I can share with them, but not that I'm better than them. (UWC, Faculty of Natural Sciences, Mathematics)

Carl, from Constitutional Law, emphasised the methodology that he used in teaching, which he saw as pertaining to social justice. His approach is unusual in a discipline like Constitutional Law, in that he uses novels and storytelling to teach it, which he relates to poetic justice and to transformation. He also tries to convey to students that knowledge is contested – that there are no right or wrong answers. However, he is unsure of the impact that his course makes on the large groups of students he teaches:

The method that comes close to that is this method of storytelling, the storytelling methodology; because there are some people that write and say when you apply/interpret legislation or apply rights, [they] are getting that poetic justice idea, to act as a poet, that you'd need those poetic skills and literary skills to be able to be a judge in the first place. So the methodology that I try and teach in that course is one that is open to this kind of transformative effect and would not allow a judge to say, well, I'm just applying the law – it's about law and not about justice. So it's a methodology in which justice is the central focus. So, I don't accept that there's a right or wrong answer first of all – it's all contestable. It's what values you bring to the table – and right and wrong on whose book? The legal test for right and wrong is too limited. (UWC, Faculty of Law, Constitutional Law)

With regard to the sorts of arrangements that would assist in promoting social justice in higher education pedagogies, Tony from Biodiversity and Conservation Biology had some ideas of how higher education institutions should change to accommodate difference and spend less funding on infrastructure. He makes reference to the dissatisfaction that is being experienced more generally in South African society and which is being manifested in higher education:

I think we in South Africa are going to have to really rethink how we do our education – big time. You're going to see a political change – you have a ruling government that has certainly in the local elections got bruised. We are seeing a lot of discontent. At the moment the education is the target, though I think it goes far deeper than the education. The real challenge is: should we still be investing in big concrete structures at university or should we have the idea of [a] sort of distributed university – a series of fairly simple buildings, very connected to the internet – and we start to run virtualisations across. First of all, environmentally it will be sound because there will be so much less transport. We could get education to communities that are disadvantaged. We don't necessarily need to pull students out of their family to be in residence.

It might also help the idea that students can also still get an education but support their family. So I would like to see the idea of a sort of distributed university rather than these kind of corporate structures. Universities are starting to try to resemble big corporate buildings with shiny facades. (UWC, Faculty of Natural Sciences, Biodiversity and Conservation Biology)

What emerged as interesting from the interviews, and which was alluded to in the previous section on conceptions of social justice, was the extent of the differences in the views of people from the same faculty and the same institution. In their conceptions of socially just pedagogies, two academics from the same institution and faculty completely differently saw their roles in changing how students think. The one was more interested in getting to know the students and proceeding to work with where they were coming from and use participatory techniques where the students reflect on their own experiences to come to a more structural understanding of discrimination and injustice:

How do I practise it? I think there are a couple of ways. Firstly – and [it] has taken me quite a while to get to this place, and certainly from 2004 onwards – it became quite important for me to really recognise where my students are coming from, because most of them come from very, very different backgrounds from the one that I come from, and some have very different views as well: often very conservative views. And I realised – long before I had read stances towards critical pedagogy or critiques of critical pedagogy – that adopting a political soap-box stance was just not going to work with students and that in fact I was going to cut them off completely and actually not create opportunities for them to engage with work in community psychology. So I tried different ways of working with them. So that [was] like thinking about who my students were. And I think that is still very, very important for me to know a little bit more about my students. (SU, Education Faculty, Educational Psychology)

In contrast to this more conciliatory approach, which starts from where the students are, Edward in Curriculum Studies uses a more confrontational approach – what he calls a provocative or belligerent encounter, which is disruptive and provokes students by asking questions and providing spaces for alternative imagining:

[...] so you can throw into a pedagogical relation – or insert into a pedagogical relation – what I would call a belligerent encounter, something that is more provocative; and in that way it's about opening the minds of students and yourself, and you connect with one another. For me, a provocative encounter will just open up – and often [a] complex pedagogical situation is messy – [in this way] disrupting the pedagogical encounter, which is really an encounter whereby students are free to speak their minds. And there are some students who are very responsive to the kind of work that I've been doing – no, but not overwhelmingly. The encounter is not about your intellectual engagement only; the encounter is where student and I bring to the encounter our own cultural orientations – and that's vast and diverse. So you cannot

overwhelmingly use destructive teaching as a way to include; then you have to act more responsibly towards students, I call it compassionately. I think our work in education should remain to ask questions – because if we are not going to ask questions then we are not going to let anybody – and ourselves think. So even – you don’t have to be so disruptive – but even asking a question in a particular way can be a form of disruption because you’re making the other person think, and creating that opportunity to see things differently. (SU, Faculty of Education, Curriculum Studies)

An important consideration, then, that seems to be relevant to compassionate teaching in socially just pedagogies is paying attention to affect. Some of the interviewees saw the inclusion of affect as central to thinking about socially just pedagogies:

Ja, for me you can’t think about education without thinking about affects and emotion. If students aren’t emotionally engaged, I don’t think they will learn. And it is a more inclusive way of engaging with education because it’s something that everyone can respond to. (UWC, Teaching and Learning in Higher Education)

The necessity of thinking about emotions as political (Zembylas, 2007, 2008) was also stressed by other interviewees, who made specific reference to the pedagogy of discomfort, which was deemed necessary for learning about issues of social justice:

I want them to reflect back on the emotional responses they have both in writing and hearing their stories and when listening to other stories. And so it’s one way of showing that what’s happening in the classroom is political ... That’s one of the things I want to try this year – for example, ask them on a piece of paper to draw a story and say how do you feel, and then have each of them tell the first thing that came to mind – and some might feel angry, some might feel pity – and then start a conversation, why is it that you felt angry and the student next to you felt pity? And those are uncomfortable conversations, but I see if I get something ... But there are raw emotions and one has to handle those raw emotions and they have to be handled in a safe space, otherwise I think it would be extremely unethical – because our students do not go there completely voluntarily. (CPUT, Fundani Centre for Higher Education)

By drawing on these emotions and enacting “critical emotional reflexivity” about socially just pedagogies (Chubbuck & Zembylas, 2008), educators in higher education may take up the call to engage in interrupting their teaching practices as part of the struggle to improve the learning opportunities of their marginalised students. Critical emotional reflexivity could serve as the basis for educators’ work, eventually bringing about changes in themselves, in their relationships with students, in their conceptualisation and practice of socially just pedagogies, and in their activism/advocacy at the institutional level. This point of engaging and reflecting on emotion as political is precisely where an exploration of socially just

pedagogies advances our understanding, as educators in higher education, of how to prepare students better to be compassionate and critical citizens. By engaging in practices of critical emotional reflexivity in their teaching, educators in higher education can begin to create spaces for interrogating unjust and exclusionary teaching methodologies or policies.

Issues of privilege and disadvantage in socially just pedagogies

Many of the interviewees were people who took a different and more critical perspective on their own disciplines and tried to get students to think about issues of privilege and disadvantage in relation to that. What is significant in Shafiek's case is that he actually brought these issues into the summative assessment tasks in Business and Finance, so that the students were obliged to think about and respond to these issues:

I put a question in the supplementary exam to ask the student: what would you say to a young white male if he said, why must I pay for the sins of my father's support and my grandfather's supports of the Nationalist Party, why must I pay for it, what did I do? So I gave a question like that. I expected two answers. The one would be to say people are continuing to be privileged because they have a particular wealth advantage that perpetuates, and that affirmative action is a positive discrimination. And then the other answer would be to say, no, but this is discrimination between the same thing to what they did to the black students and the non-whites, and there has to be some other way. It's the owners of the capital that must pay, not the young child. So in other words Rembrandt, all these big groups – they've gotten the money out so they should be paying. In the final exam I put questions like, why do you think executives pay themselves – three executive salaries [are] equivalent to [the combined income of] all the miners? What makes people accept that? What makes executives do that? So I ask those kinds of questions, which I don't think [have] ever been asked in the first year course. (UWC, Economic and Management Sciences Faculty, Business and Finance)

Susan, in Anthropology, had come to South Africa from another country, and was very conscious of the failure rates of black students. She initially felt hopeless about it, but then saw how she could use her influence as a teacher in the classroom to be an advocate and activist for these students' educational trajectories, particularly their paths into postgraduate education. She decided to focus specifically on black students, in order to promote participatory parity, leaving white students to fend for themselves, as they had had previous privileges and still had access to resources. She welcomed the initiative of the #RhodesMustFall movement, seeing it as an opportunity for conversations in her classroom:

I think to me teaching in South Africa is a real wakeup call; when I first got here you could put a line through your marks and go: here [go] your black students, here [go] your white students – and I found it so despairing.

Look, for me that's where my activism lies, it lies in the classroom. So I realise that one can't just be nice; I can't be nice to all in the same way, I don't have the capacity to change all lives and so I realise what my job is, the target above others, and I do – so my activism is student learning and trying to establish a kind of parity among my students. I also have a further goal, which is to take any student who wants to get into postgraduate and get them there, get them ready. I do quite a bit of deconstructing my whiteness through demonstration, to try and get students to actually start to think about their own whiteness. On the whole I neglect my white students; [but] I'm not criticising whiteness. But my sense is they've got the resources.

One time I was teaching them Foucault and someone asked the question, are you not just an agent of the state then? Given everything I've said, I was absolutely floored, and I went home practically in tears; I just kind of displayed it. I came back the next day and I said, you guys *really* upset me yesterday. I said, I've had to think about why I'm so upset because what you've said is the truth and it really is; in many ways I am an agent of the state or something, an agent of societal denial which is to be productive workers. (UCT, Faculty of Humanities, Anthropology)

While Susan shows sensitivity to the lack of participatory parity between black and white students, it could be possible that white students may still need different kinds of intervention in a socially just pedagogy.

An important element of this differential kind of intervention needed for white students is providing space to recognise the consequences of white privilege that are still prevalent nowadays. Maria from Visual Arts found that in the discussions of the removal of the Rhodes statue at UCT and the statues which were destroyed by ISIS, it was the white female students who dominated the discussions in her classroom. As a white female herself, she attempted to interject in these conversations by alerting them to their privileged positions by using herself as an example:

So my first question [to the students] was: so what did the ISIS militants and the UCT students have in common? So the one white student said they both want to destroy art. And then there was a response saying, no, the one removed and the other destroyed. And so then a comment came back, well, at least they got education, why did they want to mess it up? And so this very complex, I think very real, conversation ensued. The challenge for me obviously was to contain it *and* to participate. So what I found was also very interesting, is that I said, 'Look, where I come from my children go to fantastic schools, I was on the governing body and I speak English; I can help them with language, with the homework, I can fetch them from extramurals, I can attend the extramurals – you cannot begin to' ... So that position of privilege is one that I think so many of the white students take for granted. So one of the women in the group, an African student who went to a former Model C school, said, 'My parents forced me to go, and they said just bite your tongue, just go and get the education.' But at every turn she was excluded in the most subtle [or] obvious and overt ways ... Okay, this is about me, more within

me – within the white community – to be able to say, ‘Well, I believe this’ – and feeling safe enough to say what I believed. So from that point of view – so I often try and set projects to get them to talk and to force them to see, or firstly to formulate their own opinions and then to share them. (CPUT, Faculty of Informatics and Design, Visual Arts)

The issue of recognising white privilege, then, seemed to be a fundamental pedagogical challenge in the teaching practices of these higher educators. This challenge, our participants seemed to be telling us, was not addressed merely by providing space for students to discuss provocative questions in the classroom; it had to go beyond that, because it demanded that higher educators – especially white ones – put themselves on the line and expose their own privilege and its consequences. This was clearly not an easy task for higher educators, yet students needed their instructors to actually live by the lessons they taught.

Students' material circumstances and neoliberal university structures

Finally, many of the interviewees, particularly those working at UWC and CPUT, made reference to the impact of students' material circumstances on their learning and how these circumstances affected the teaching process. Maria spoke about students as parents, their transport challenges and lack of access to funds; and of the administrative inefficiency of the HEI and the impact that this had on pedagogy, for example:

[...] public transport is a nightmare. A number of our students are parents, young women [who] have got children and they have asthma and all sorts of [health problems]. You've got children, you know about that. Money, students can't afford to come to the school and they spend hours trying to secure their bursaries for next year. So I feel in a way that the institution doesn't support the students; it kind of sets them up – and it makes me mad because they can't afford to miss out on a day at our art courses – they really can't because it's so intense. And they can't help it, they have to go through these interminable queues. I'm sure they could streamline those processes. (CPUT, Faculty of Informatics and Design, Visual Arts)

Leslie from Physics at UWC found that teaching students who come from rural and poor backgrounds was very meaningful and motivating for her as a teacher in higher education and gave her a lot of pleasure in her pedagogical practice:

[...] at UWC there's that sense that you can really make a difference. And I think the inspiring part of seeing students who ... have taught themselves maths and science in a rural school in Transkei, where there was no teacher – and those kind of students [come] into an environment where suddenly there's support and interest, they are just flourishing, and it's so gratifying. And it's so inspiring; so often I've felt so inspired by the students' determination. Ja, I just felt quite humbled, like I'm not sure I would have had the drive to do what you're doing. (UWC, Faculty of Natural Sciences, Physics)

Another UWC academic from the Natural Sciences Faculty was less optimistic about how students' needs were understood and how they were being met:

We've actually failed to fully understand many of the students' problems which are outside of the curriculum. And the one thing that keeps hitting me in the face is many students are actually hungry. They are hungry – they do not have access to food.

One of his recommendations regarding the position of students who are hungry is to start food gardens and involve the students in that:

I think that one of the problems is the university is still operated a bit as an ivory tower. They are not as – shall we say – accountable to the public as I think they could be. And if we think of our own grounds here; we've got students hungry, why can we not have a food garden and then use the food garden to feed back into various education programmes? Yes, there's a lot of management, and also it does take some sort of financial investment. But I believe from this active learning you could be a lot more efficient. (UWC, Faculty of Natural Sciences, Biodiversity and Conservation Biology)

Another challenge in trying to implement socially just pedagogies is that one is not supported by one's peers in the department/faculty/university/discipline and one is a lone voice. Some of the interviewees spoke about the limitations of the impact that they could make in a neoliberal world, which rewarded particular sorts of values and behaviours:

[...] so it becomes this big corporate legal world, and they want to access that because then they get international mobility and all of that. And so to do that – to do an advanced course in corporate and mercantile law, or company law, tax law – they feel will be [more] worth their while, than to do an elective in refugee law. So I'm afraid I think the days when UWC and the students here were driven by social consciousness and social conscience – that's not the case anymore, not in the law faculty in any case. A further problem in doing this on an individual course basis is that the LLB is very, very structured – it's four years, 40 courses – so you can imagine if you do 40 things and it's all broken up into those 40 things, 40 different subjects really – to now have one or two here at the end, or anywhere, in which you want to bring in certain themes, it falls flat. (UWC, Faculty of Law, Constitutional Law)

Edward from Curriculum Studies in the Faculty of Education at SU was also conscious of the impact of managerial performativity and its impact on teaching. Furthermore, he felt doubtful that his provocations and encounters with students always panned out in the ways that he had hoped they would – what he considered a provocative encounter could end up alienating student or lecturer instead of leading to more inclusive teaching:

Look, obviously the biggest thing is performativity, that we have to comply with particular managerial constraints. And it's really out of our hands also to do as we think best for our pedagogical encounters, because often as,

I just think practically, a lesson which I thought was highly provocative and I would categorise as one of my best encounters with students; they didn't see it as a best encounter, they saw it as quite debilitating. So for me that's the biggest constraint – that sometimes we think that we connect with them but I think with this kind of provocative disruptive way of encountering the other, we actually become alienated. So that's for me the biggest obstacle: if we imagine what is good for the other and how you can establish a more inclusive classroom, you might just alienate yourself further from students. (SU, Education Faculty, Curriculum Studies)

All in all, students' material circumstances and neoliberal university structures constitute major challenges in higher educators' efforts to enact socially just pedagogies in their institutions. Having a vision for socially just pedagogies in higher education, then, is not enough, no matter how progressive or transformative it is. This vision can be idealistic if it fails to consider the pragmatic obstacles emerging in each context. The gulf between rhetorical claims about socially just pedagogies and university realities are wide.

Discussion and implications

What can we learn from these interviews with 27 academics from different disciplines in differently positioned Western Cape HEIs? First of all, what has become clear from these interviews is that it mattered where these interviewees were located in terms of their discipline, faculty and higher education institutions. The HEIs had different access to resources, different historical legacies, and attracted different sorts of students, and this impacted on the sorts of issues picked up by academics in terms of their notions of socially just pedagogies. It also mattered what sort of national and international imperatives, which affect higher education globally, were in operation. Academics were also influenced by the sorts of theoretical, philosophical and spiritual perspectives from which they envisaged social justice and pedagogy. Depending on these varying perspectives, very different forms of socially just pedagogies were described and different views of themselves and students were presented in the interviews. From a participatory parity perspective, economic, cultural and political issues (and how they were experienced and accommodated by the institutions and the academics), played a significant role in how socially just pedagogies were enacted.

The #RMF and #FMF student movements of 2015 and 2016 were significant events in higher education in South Africa, and were perceived in affirmative ways by most interviewees during those periods. The movements were perceived as opening up spaces for dialogues in the classroom and as providing the potential for curriculum and pedagogy changes; and changes more generally in the higher education sector. The cultural issues of subjugated knowledges not being

recognised were very significant for those at HAIs, whereas economic issues of resources and the lack thereof were foregrounded in HDIs in the study. The student movements of #RMF and #FMF had profound impacts on the content of what was being taught in class and in the ways that discussions were facilitated between differently placed lecturers and students, as well as between students themselves. A more nuanced concept of citizenship, which incorporates compassion and criticality was alluded to in the interviews. Francis Nyamnjoh (2016) in his analysis of the #RhodesMustFall movement writes about the importance of embracing the complexity and the unfinished nature of citizenship, rather than starting from the position of the autonomous and fixed. Many lecturers were interested in students' flourishing and were thinking carefully about the best ways to achieve that. An important component of socially just pedagogies was the quality of the relationships that developed between students and lecturer and amongst students – the attempts of lecturers to make themselves vulnerable to students was one of the ways in which more egalitarian relationships could be developed (Leibowitz, Bozalek, Carolissen, Nicholls, Rohleder, Smolders & Swartz, 2011). Another important element for developing socially just pedagogies was lecturers' attentiveness and responsiveness to their students' needs, and the rendering of each other's capabilities (Tronto, 2013; Haraway, 2016). Therefore, rather than seeing a socially just pedagogy as a one-way process, it is necessary to regard both academics and students as becoming-with – as mutually benefiting and changing through the interactions with each other. In this last part of the chapter, the potential implications for higher education in South Africa and beyond raised by this analysis are explored.

First, it is important to note that socially just pedagogies at the higher education level begins with the acknowledgement that socially just educators understand the multiple complexities – e.g. emotional, political, economical – in the unjust systems and practices that inform our everyday lives. Participants in this study demonstrated this understanding by constantly coming back to their core beliefs and understandings about fighting injustice in society. Yet, it is important to emphasise that it is not enough for educators as individuals in higher education to have the intention and will to enact just teaching practices: these efforts have strong implications for them as educators and for their students at many levels – emotional, institutional, societal. Their efforts to engage in socially just pedagogies might be threatening to normative politics and practices. Coping with these challenges requires strategic responses from the higher education institutions as such. An important implication, then, is that educators in higher education need to address how to contribute to sustaining or dismantling structures of power, privilege, racism, and colonisation – both individually and collectively.

Second, there need to be systematic and sustained explorations from HEIs on how students' experiences affect the practice of socially just pedagogies in specific

contexts. The participants' enactment of socially just pedagogies, as seen from their narratives, required them – fundamentally and personally – to recognise and challenge the ways that disillusionment, denial, or hopelessness (both in themselves and in their students) are used to reproduce existing unequal structures. Thus, the struggle to engage both students' and educators' experiences, perceptions and emotions in specific settings seems to be a productive component of socially just pedagogies. Educators in higher education, then, need to confront themselves, as well as to help students to enact critical emotional reflexivity, compassion, and critical citizenship, so they can analyse and take a critical stance towards everyday unjust practices that are perpetuated in HEIs and the community (see Chubbuck and Zembylas, 2008).

This process has to be carried out strategically and patiently, institution by institution. Higher educators working in each institution are likely to create their own versions of socially just pedagogies, in formats useful for them. Despite this work though, we want to highlight that one of the pieces that seems to be missing is a dialogue across various versions and manifestations of socially just pedagogies: this could help us build on each of their strengths, as well as to recognise challenges better, and to reflect on the complexities of enacting socially just pedagogies in different institutions. We don't see it as the goal of this dialogue to come up with a consensus or definition of socially just pedagogies in South African higher education, but rather we see this as an important aspect of the wider decolonisation process, namely of engaging in the difficult work of challenging taken-for-granted epistemological frameworks, and making alliances that may help us to become more effective in foregrounding social justice in the higher education sector and the society. As Santos (2014) highlights, the struggle for social justice is inseparable from the struggle for cognitive justice, namely, the recognition of epistemic diversity. Further, we also emphasise that the struggle for decolonisation in higher education is inextricably connected with inventing and enacting socially just pedagogies that consider contextual diversity. Speaking in particular about creating pedagogical practices that are empowering and socially just, bell hooks (hooks, 1994) writes that it is crucial that critical thinkers and educators "who want to change our teaching practices talk to one another, collaborate in a discussion that crosses boundaries and creates a space of intervention" (hooks, 1994:129). Ultimately, we hope that outlining here the different strands of socially just pedagogies can help us to better build bridges across disciplines and institutions and create openings for more sustained dialogue amongst higher educators in South African universities. Better understanding of what we mean by socially just pedagogies within and across each institution can hopefully contribute to opening up new possibilities, commitments and agendas in the process of decolonising higher education.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we would like to suggest how our analysis might further assist socially just pedagogies in higher education. First, studying multiple perceptions and experiences of socially just pedagogues in higher education can provide a deeper understanding of how transformation in higher education can emerge in the context of seemingly few opportunities; and perhaps even in counter-response to the wider social and political context of HEIs. Our study examined the experiences of educators in a few HEIs in the Western Cape; the experiences of other educators all over South Africa also need to be studied to understand applications of socially just pedagogies relevant to their experience. Second, our analysis suggests the important and ongoing role that multiple components play in “translating” perceptions about socially just pedagogies into practices. Scholars in higher education need to look beyond their own institutions to see how other educators conceptualise and enact socially just pedagogies. On the other hand, the particular discipline, the type of HEI, and historical and contemporary context were seen to play a major role in how academics conceived of and performed social justice and socially just pedagogies.

An analytical focus on socially just pedagogies in higher education raises new questions and modifies those that already dominate the field: how are educators in higher education enabled to handle teaching for social justice in the face of substantial institutional or societal obstacles? What mechanisms at the institutional level are necessary to promote socially just pedagogies so that those who enact these pedagogies are not fearful of having to take huge risks? What do educators in higher education need to change when they move from one context to another? Would educators benefit from exploration of alternative venues for pursuing socially just pedagogies? In what ways can tools, such as compassionate teaching or critical emotional reflection, further deepen educators’ knowledge about socially just pedagogies? The explicit attention to these and other relevant questions in the future could certainly create new openings for rethinking and renewing the project of socially just pedagogies in higher education.

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