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DOCTORAL THESIS

EDUCATION POLICY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A SOUTH AFRICAN CASE STUDY

by

MASEBALA TJABANE

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Supervisor: Prof V Pillay

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ABSTRACT

The study is a critical investigation of social justice concerns in higher education policy in emerging democracies such as South Africa. The study focuses on three initiatives at the University of Pretoria as exemplary projects that address social justice concerns in order to redress the situation in post-apartheid South Africa. These initiatives are the Institute of Women and Gender Studies, IGWS, which attempts to achieve gender equality, eliminate patriarchal tendencies and unleash women's potentialities within the University of Pretoria; The Centre for the Study of HIV/AIDS which seeks to eliminate any discriminatory tendencies against University of Pretoria members who are living with HIV/AIDS and contribute meaningfully in reducing the scourge of the pandemic; and The University of Pretoria Foundation Year Programme, UPFY, which attempts to increase the participation rates of the previously disadvantaged in areas of scarce skills such as mathematics and science.

The study seeks to share new insights into the limits of grand policy frameworks that promise much by way of social justice but deliver very little in real terms. This policy gap trajectory between intent and practice begins and ends at the University of Pretoria as a case study that provides important lessons for cognate institutions and other social structures. The study is further likely to contribute insights into how higher education can implement programmes so as to purportedly address and redress social injustices and inequalities when in essence; these programmes achieve little more than a public relations objective.

The intent of this case study is to illuminate attempts, through various programmes, by higher education to address social justice concerns such as inequality and discrimination, and reflects the inadequacy of such efforts that are not developed within an institution's capacity in order to affect the existing institutional culture.

In reflecting on the persistent policy challenges and the marginalisation of social justice agenda, the study points to the dominance of the neo-liberal discourse on a global and local scale and its manifestation in higher education in the form of commodification and marketisation. As a result, the study proposes the revival of a radical social justice

agenda so as to mainstream social justice concerns in higher education and promote its emancipatory possibilities.

KEYWORDS: Social justice, Higher education policy challenges, Gender equality, Access into higher education, HIV/AIDS, Neo-liberalism, Commodification of education, Emancipatory possibilities, Radical social justice agenda

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university, nor has it been prepared under the aegis of / with the assistance of any other body or organisation or person outside the University of Pretoria.

M TJABANE DATE

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INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

Higher education, globally, has operated in a context in which the powerful determine mainstream policies and define appropriate strategies to be followed. The powerful, today, are informed by a neo-liberal ideology that has resulted in the commodification and marketisation of higher education. The rationale behind the trend is that higher education plays an important role in economic development for the global economy. While the economic role of higher education is not in dispute, its role in promoting democracy and social justice is being marginalised. This has become a global trend that is gaining ground in emerging democracies such as South Africa and has continued to perpetuate socio-economic injustice and inequalities. It is against this background that the study investigated how higher education has responded to societal challenges through its mandate of promoting social justice.

This study focuses on the persisting inequalities in terms of the participation rates of the previously disadvantaged groups in higher education in South Africa, with the focus being placed on one historically advantaged higher education institution amidst the rhetorical "hype" regarding social justice as the discourse of choice in educational policy. The study focuses on three initiatives that claim to address social justice concerns in order to redress the situation in post-apartheid South Africa and threaten the human rights culture that South Africa is attempting to establish. These initiatives are the Institute of Women and Gender Studies, IWGS, which attempts to achieve gender equality, eliminate patriarchal tendencies and unleash women's potentialities within the University of Pretoria; the Centre for the Study of HIV/AIDS which seeks to eliminate any discriminatory tendencies against University of Pretoria members who are living with HIV/AIDS and to contribute meaningfully in reducing the scourge of the pandemic; and the University of Pretoria Foundation Year Programme, UPFY, which attempts to increase the participation rates of the previously disadvantaged in areas of scarce skills such as mathematics and science.

These initiatives have become necessary post-apartheid initiatives, especially since the adoption of the renowned South African Constitution that protects, and attempts to create, a culture of human rights and dignity. It is my contention that the South African constitution is strongly shaped by social justice discourses and that within the

educational policy framework, these social justice discourses assume, and are preceded by, the People's Education Movement that was prevalent during the ant-apartheid era. The said policy framework is currently at the heart of intense national debate since historically Afrikaner universities such as the University of Pretoria are struggling to achieve gender equality, to reduce discriminatory tendencies and racial inequality in areas such as mathematics and science.

The study seeks to share new insights into the limits of grand policy frameworks that promise much by way of social justice but deliver very little in real terms. This policy gap trajectory between intent and practice begins and ends at the University of Pretoria as a case study that provides important lessons for cognate institutions and other social structures. The study is further likely to contribute insights into how higher education can implement programmes so as to actually address and redress social injustices and inequalities when in essence these programmes achieve little more than a public relations objective.

The intent of this case study is to illuminate attempts, through various programmes, by higher education institutions to address social justice concerns such as inequality and discrimination, and reflects the inadequacy of such efforts that are not developed within an institution's capacity in order to affect the existing institutional culture. While the University of Pretoria is the focus of the present study, its selection may reflect similar treatment of social justice in former Afrikaner institutions. A discussion of social justice in terms of the achievement of gender equality, increased participation rates of previously disadvantaged groups such as blacks, women and the disabled, in subjects such as those mentioned, and other discriminatory tendencies, is attempted by assessing higher education policy as regards the presence of a social justice discourse and its implementation in three programmes at the University of Pretoria.

At this stage in the present research, social justice is conceptualised as the significant and meaningful reduction and total elimination (ideally) of gender and racial inequality as well as of other discriminatory tendencies or of the use of artificial social categorisation to perpetuate unfair distribution and social inequality.

The first chapter offers an introduction to the research with a description of the main research questions, the purpose and significance of the study, the conceptual framework and the research methodology used in the study being discussed. The study employed the qualitative research paradigm and the case study approach in order to study experiences of the implementers of initiatives with respect to social justice.

Chapter two focuses on a review of literature related to social justice and education in higher education. This includes research carried out internationally and locally with regards to the status of social justice in various areas. The purpose of this chapter is to present a review of literature on key issues related to the central research problem. This analysis informs the study of that which is already known from research on social justice.

Chapter three provides a literature review of the transformation movement of higher education in South Africa. It focuses on the transformation pillars of increased access and broadened participation to higher education, and responsiveness to societal needs, research and cooperative governance. This chapter illustrates how South African higher education has performed with reference to the three pillars of transformation.

Chapter four deals with the University of Pretoria during the democratic dispensation. It provides a brief background of the transition from a conservative university to one that has embraced the transformation agenda of the current government. The Innovation Generation Document is also analysed with regards to how it meets the transformation agenda and social justice mandate. In addition to this, some transformation indicators are discussed to illustrate how the university has transformed with a focus on the social justice imperative.

Chapter five provides a consideration of access to higher education as a transformation imperative and part of the social justice agenda. Furthermore, it examines certain elements of social justice education and how they facilitate access and success in higher education. Finally, the UPFY is critically discussed regarding the role it plays in fulfilling the higher education social justice mandate of access.

Chapter six considers the gender aspects of social justice in the global and local contexts. The women's movement agendas ranging from that of the Women in Development to that in gender mainstreaming are discussed from a global perspective while, locally, the present author critically considers how the IWGS fulfils the higher education mandate of promoting gender justice.

Chapter seven investigates HIV/AIDS as a global emergency and social justice imperative globally and locally. It discusses how HIV/AIDS has been conceptualised and the responses to the phenomenon at state and Institutional level. The CSA is critically examined as a case study of the University of Pretoria's response to HIV/AIDS as a social justice imperative.

The final chapter provides an analysis and discussion of the main findings and contains the conclusion. The researcher suggests that the social justice agenda is under siege globally and is marginalised, and in order for it to be a lived experience for everyone, radical scholars and activists need to pursue the liberatory and emancipatory possibilities of education inherent in radical social justice.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABREVIATIONS

Acronym	Description
ADEA	African Development Education Association
ANC	African National Congress
ART	Anti-Retroviral Treatment
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women
CGE	Commission on Gender Equality
CHE	Commission on Higher Education
CHET	Centre for Higher Education Transformation
CHR	Centre for Human Rights
CSA	Centre for the Study of AIDS
DAAD	German Academic Exchange Service
DFiD	Department of International Development
DOE	Department of Education
EFA	Education For All
ERS	Education Renewal Strategy
GEAR	Growth and Employment and Redistribution: A Macroeconomic Strategy
GETT	Gender Equity Task Team
GENNET	Gender Network
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus / Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
IDASA	Institute for Democratic Alternatives in Southern Africa
IWGS	Institute for Women and Gender Studies
MDG	Millennium Development Goals

NACOSA	National AIDS Coordination Committee of South Africa
NCHE	National Commission on Higher Education
NEPI	National Education Policy Initiative
NPHE	National Plan on Higher Education
POWA	People Opposed to Women Abuse
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
SADCC	Southern African Development Coordinating Committee
SANAC	South African National AIDS Commission
TAC	Treatment Action Campaign
UK	United Kingdom
UNAIDS	United Nations HIV/AIDS Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational and Scientific Council
UPFY	University of Pretoria Foundation Year Programme
USA	United States of America
VTC	Voluntary Testing and Counselling
WAD	Women and Development

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