CHAPTER 1 – BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1   Introduction and Statement of the Problem

The introduction of a democratic government in South Africa in the mid-1990s played a significant role in foregrounding a social justice discourse in all aspects of public life. Indeed, the newly established government attempted to imbue most of its public policies, and especially education policies, with the language of social justice; many of these rhetorical commitments could be found in earlier discourses such as the People's Education (1) movement of the 1980s and the broad democratic movement in the 1990s (National Education Policy Investigation , NEPI, 1992). Social justice has always constituted a major political commitment in the long history of education struggles in South Africa. With widespread celebrations of "ten years of democracy" (CHE: 2004) there seems to have ensued a paralysis in the debate regarding issues of social justice, especially in the context of the public policy. It appears to be accepted that social justice has been substantially addressed and reflected in the education policies of the new government because of the euphoria of the democratic dispensation in the country that seems to promise more progressive possibilities than the past dispensation. While social justice might well be contained within new education policies, it is not at all clear that such commitments have been achieved in education practice. The present study consequently presents a critical investigation of the practice of social justice at the University of Pretoria, measured against the policy expectations for justice of this type in higher education contexts.

At the level of rhetoric, I sought to determine the nature, claims and expectations for social justice as reflected in higher education policy. At the implementation level, I set out to determine the ways in which the University of Pretoria has responded to social justice demands in policy, and the extent to which such responses are effective within higher education contexts. A working hypothesis in this study is that while institutions might formally reflect programmatic responses to social justice demands in the policy environment, in practice such responses might remain marginal within the mainstream higher education environment.

Research shows that in official government circles, there is a tendency to assume that formal commitments to social justice imply practical commitments to its realisation in educational contexts: a symbolic policy (Cloete and Massen, 2001: 449). Such an approach to social justice fails to take account of the myriad ways in which social justice claims on institutions can be limited, subverted, ignored or even resisted in institutional contexts.

Globally, social justice is under challenge, marginalised as it is by powerful counter-discourses associated with neo-liberalism and its expression through new managerialism and the changing academic workplace within higher education (Altbach, 2000; Jansen, 2000). Under these new global conditions, social justice cannot be assumed to enjoy prominence in higher education policies; even less certain is the assumption that (social justice) policy pronounced in theory is attained within the practices of universities.

Social justice, in the context of the study, refers to the extent to which higher education institutions reflect and pursue commitments to equity, democracy and redress in their institutional policies, plans, programmes and practices. This study therefore proceeds from the assumption that the practices of social justice are a reaction to policy demands for greater institutional responsiveness regarding complex issues including increasing access of disadvantaged students (such as that of black students to science and engineering), broadening the participation of marginalised groups (such as disabled or women students) and creating services and support for stigmatised communities (such as HIV/AIDS sufferers).

In pursuit of this objective, the current research consisted of comparative case studies of institutional-level initiatives designed to respond to and reflect commitments to social justice. These three initiatives are the University of Pretoria Foundation Year Programme (or UPFY), the Institute for Women's and Gender Studies (IWGS) and the Centre of the Study of AIDS (CSA) — all are responsive initiatives of the same institution, the University of Pretoria (see the motivation for sampling in the Methodology section).

1.2 Research Questions

The fundamental question explored in this study concerns how institutions of higher learning respond to the national mandate of social justice. This study is guided by four research questions, with the fourth question constituting a working hypothesis to be tested through data generated in the earlier segments of the study.

- What are the claims and expectations for social justice embedded in South Africa's new higher education policies?

- What are the modes of institutional responsiveness to social justice claims in higher education policy?

- How do these responsive modes or initiatives understand their roles and status within the broader institution with respect to the broader quest of social justice?

- Why do initiatives responding to the social justice commitment of institutions find themselves at the margins of institutional life?

The first research question was addressed by means of an extensive *analysis of relevant policy documents* in higher education. These documents included printed resources on higher education, publications of the National Education Policy Investigation's Oxford Series; the National Commission on Higher Education discussion documents; the Green Paper on Higher Education; and the White Paper on Higher Education Transformation (White Paper 3). The documented claims and emphases over the lifespan of higher education policy development were identified only as they relate to social justice concerns. In addition to the analysis of key policy documents, this question was pursued by means of *further critical scrutiny of publications of* key policymakers and policy authors who authored successive documents in order to elaborate and probe the underlying thinking (and shifts in thinking) behind the social justice claims made in each policy position.

The second research question was pursued by means of a *critical description* of the three sampled projects as illustrative cases of social justice commitments of the institution. The data was extracted largely from *extensive documentation* on each project and *intensive interviews* with senior managers and facilitators responsible for each of

these three projects in order to gain a nuanced sense of how and to what extent these projects are regarded as responses to social justice commitments of the institution.

In terms of the <u>third research question</u> data was sought on the functions, roles and status of each project in its institutional setting. This segment drew its data from *extensive* and *intensive interviews* with the first-order participants (project staff) in these three projects, with the objective of describing their understandings of the roles and status of each initiative within the broader institution.

The <u>fourth research question</u> tested the emergent data against the principles of critical theory in order to explain the status (assumed to be marginal) of each project in institutional life. This segment of the study *developed the position* that initiatives responsive to social justice concerns remain in the margins of institutional life as a result of factors such as the lack of funding and institutional support.

1.3   Rationale for this Study

While much has been written on the subject of social justice in schools (see Adams et. al., 1997), available literature regarding the meaning and achievement of social justice in higher education contexts is relatively sparse. Yet higher education policies, especially in new democracies, are often invested with enormous expectations for achieving social justice on and off the university campus (see Department of Education, 2001) Department for Education and Skills, 2003). However, the questions that arise are: What kind of "take-up" occurs within higher education institutions, given the policy pressure for social justice, especially in newly emerging democracies? How do universities engage with social justice in their day-to-day operations? What does the institutional culture tell us about the social justice claims of the state as the primary resource of funding in public higher education? These are the puzzles that have led to this inquiry into the context of South African higher education institutions.

Universally, higher education systems are under pressure to be socially responsive to changes in society by addressing social justice concerns such as equity, access, success and the creation of a democratic culture. In South Africa, this has been a priority item in policy formulation and implementation. The policy documents formulated post1994

were informed by a democratic culture that advanced the transformation of the higher education system. The intellectual climate was fuelled by great optimism and celebration because the legacy of apartheid injustices had been overthrown and South Africa embraced the promise of democracy ready for the 21st century. However, ten years later in 2004, the optimism had faded and the bright anticipation had evaporated – almost to a point of paralysis. Currently, there appears to be a transformation paralysis regarding issues of social justice in the sense that the noble calls to address social justice concerns have remained at symbolic and rhetorical levels with limited substantial implementation. Even those aspects that have been implemented fall short of portraying a complete social justice agenda. It would appear that the current democratic dispensation in the country seems to possess all the answers to address social justice and therefore that this society has reached a state of stagnation and cannot think of any other alternatives. For social justice to be elevated to the level of significance it deserves, there needs to be a revival of debate so that its worth and relevance can be evaluated and subjected to critical analysis. This is an important exercise that holds higher education institutions accountable for meeting the social justice imperatives and being socially responsive.

The transformation paralysis currently affecting higher education is detrimental to an important function of higher education: the creation of a democratic culture. This study will contribute to the steps being taken to shift higher education from such a paralysis to a transformational dynamics. This entails the resuscitation of the social justice agenda. In addressing the stagnation of debate, the study begins the optimistic task mentioned by critical educators like Giroux (2003): that of doing the impossible in counteracting the mainstream discourse of neo-liberalism. The *social significance* of this study lies in the fact that this research opens up terrain for an inquiry into social justice against the grain of neo-liberal policies and managerial cultures infecting higher education environments. The *intellectual significance* of the study is that it seeks to understand the complex ways in which social justice is programmatically encoded in institutional scripts for transformation and democratic culture.

Since neo-liberalism is the policy framework that has an overarching impact on the context of higher education in the 21st century, a brief explanation is furnished to

highlight its influence. Neo-liberalism is an invention of the Enlightenment and this is seen in the concept "liberal" that has been hybridised over time. It contains a set of economic policies that reflect some elements of classical liberalism. The genesis of the term is found in the writings of the Freiberg school of Germany which used the term to refer to a moderate alternative to classical liberalism that infused humanistic ideals with economic policy as opposed to strict free market policy (Boas and Gans-Morse, 2007:9). In this manner, neo-liberalism contained more positive connotations. However, in the 1980s, the term has come to mean the opposite of its original position in that it came to be used by opponents of liberalism to critique features of advanced modern capitalist socio-economic policies of the western countries (Larner, 2000).

According to Larner, a leftist social scientist,

> The most common conceptualization of neo-liberalism as a policy framework is marked by a shift from Keynesian welfare towards a political agenda favouring the relatively unfettered operations of the markets. Often this renewed emphasis on markets is understood to be directly associated with the so-called globalization of capital… New forms of globalised production relations and financial systems forcing governments to abandon their commitments to the welfare state. Rather than formulating policies to ensure full employment and an inclusive welfare system, governments are now focused on enhancing economic efficiency and international competitiveness (Larner, 2000:5).

In its current state, neo-liberalism is identified by the following values:

- Individual freedom

- Freedom of choice

- Market security

- Minimal government

- Laissez faire policies (Larner, 2000:5, Martinez and Garcia, 2007:1, Bundy, 2005:86).

In the current century, neo-liberalism involves the paradigm shift in policy and ideology from welfare policies informed by Keynesian macro economics to a free market,

privatisation, deregulation and decreasing public spending. Some of the notable proponents of neo-liberal economic policies are western governments such as the United Kingdom and the United States of America who have in turn influenced international organisations, for instance the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, to adopt policies informed by neo-liberalism (Levidow, 2002:1-6). An equally important feature of neo-liberalism is the discourse of globalisation which entails the centrality of concepts like the information society and the knowledge economy (Levidow, 2002:2).

This study is premised on the observation that although in neo-liberalism there are some positive elements contained in the liberal ideals, such as freedom, the concept in theory and practice has come to display illiberal tendencies that compromised the ideal of social justice as conceptualised in this study. Against this background and in the context of increasing global inequalities and injustices, it is fitting to scrutinise the suitability of policies informed by neo-liberalism in advancing the ideals of social justice.

The neo-liberal policy context manifests itself in higher education through the following changes:

- The transition from elite provision to mass provision. This entails increasing and opening access into higher education and emphasising its role in contributing to national economic competitiveness (Bundy, 2005:86).

- An accelerated penetration of market relations in academic life. This involves the entrenchment of new market discourse characterised by dwindling public funding and focus on private funding, an increasing academic industrial agenda and the general commodificaion of intellectual labour. This has been translated into doing more with less (Bundy, 2005:87).

- The introduction of the corporate culture into higher education. This process is evidenced by the infusion of business practices and values in higher education. This is seen in the introduction of decentralisation to increase efficiency, performance targets, the audit culture borrowed from the finance field and quality assurance mechanisms (Bundy, 2005: 88).

In the African educational context the impact of neo-liberalism and its accompanying globalisation is an issue of great concern. According to Jansen,

> The most dangerous consequence of globalisation is that it has established a broad consensus not only about what kind of economy is desirable, but about what education is for. This consensus holds that education is for economic productivity, for technological advancement, for greater competition and market share, for institutional and learner performance management, and for regulation and accountability to ensure that performance-driven economies and pedagogies are not only achieved, but sustained… in terms of education globalisation has redefined how we teach, what we teach, where, who we teach – and even whether we teach (2007:25).

The study is in alignment with the position that neo-liberal theories of economic rationalisation have adversely affected society in general and higher education in particular. In higher education, neo-liberalism's entrenchment is described as academic capitalism, a phenomenon described by Slaughter and Leslie as "the market like behaviours on the part of universities and faculty. Market-like behaviour refers to institutional and faculty competition for monies… from external resource providers" (2001; 154). These changes have become visible in most higher education institutions in the west and in South Africa and they generally indicate that the neo-liberal university functions along similar lines to the corporate world with an obsession to maximise profit and with limited concern regarding the role of higher education in advancing the social justice agenda and democracy in general (Cloete, Fehnel, Massen , Moja, Perold and Gibbon 2002).

There is a growing and enduring tension with respect to the dynamics of neo-liberalism in higher education around the world. Proponents and exponents are in constant conflict over the potential benefits and dangers of neo-liberalism. For instance the feature of massification in seen in a positive light in as far as it increases access into higher education for people who have been denied access due to exclusionary policies, but it also has a negative implication in that it may continue to increase inequality if higher education continues to be informed by elitist policies.(Currie 2004:42)

I take the view that the neo-liberal project is anti-social justice and that radical and socialist alternatives to educational problems and their solutions are worth pursuing more fully than before so as to defend the contribution of higher education to the public good and the promotion of the democratic culture informed by principles of radical social justice.

The democratic culture forms part and parcel of the quest for social justice which is being relegated to the periphery because of the dominant paradigm of neo-liberalism that is propelling global and market capitalism The language of neo-liberalism informs most organisations and universities and has been described as inhuman and devoid of any human provenance or possibility because of the increasing level of injustice that exists uncurbed across the globe (Davies, 2005:1). In this light, the present study concurs with, and advances, the position of radical scholars that the struggle for the advancement of democracy and social justice needs to be pioneered in and through higher education and other progressive spheres:

> Another challenge that needs to be addressed in order to "take back" higher education is the threat that neo-liberalism and corporate values pose to higher education and the necessity to once again remind us that those democratic rather than commercial values should be the concerns of the university. While the university should equip people to enter the workplace it should also educate them to contest workplace inequalities, imagine democratically organized forms of work, and identify and challenge those injustices that contradict and undercut the most fundamental principles of freedom, equality and respect for all people who constitute the global public sphere (Giroux, 2003:4).

In the context of a hostile neo-liberal environment and discourse, it might appear to be impossible to further social justice; however, this study takes its cue from radical scholarship in advocating what appears to be impossible in either theory or praxis.

1.4   Conceptual Framework

This research is informed by critical theory, which stands in opposition to conventional or traditional theory. According to Shalin (1992),

> The term critical theory is commonly used in connection with the Frankfurt school, and in the broadest sense, it refers to the project of

emancipation which seeks to open up society by subjecting it to a critique through standards set up by reason. Across between the French Enlightenment and German idealism, critical theory combines the former's determination to purge society from oppression with the latter's liberating insight that obsolete practices are due in large measure to reason's own unreflexivity (Shalin, 1992: 252) .

In line with the above, critical theory has been described as a Marxist critique of capitalist society (figure 1 by Paulston, 1999 reproduced on page 21). It is a form of opposition to bourgeois society and traditional conventional theory which sought to reproduce the relations of domination and subordination of a capitalist society (Peters, Lankshear and Osslen, 2003:2). The connoisseurs of critical theory are located in the New Left movement and argue that positivist traditional theory does not address the historical, cultural and situatedness of research and also fails to offer transformative possibilities to the domination and oppression of capitalism (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002: 87-88). The founders and first generation scholars of critical theory, such as Horkheimer, intended to develop it as a philosophical orientation with the goal of leading to the development of society without injustices by subverting or undermining relations of a capitalist society (ibid).

In the contemporary context, critical theory is associated with second generation theorists, such as Habermas and Freire. Habermas is regarded as the most influential theorist as regards his concern with the revival of the Enlightenment project and the defence of democracy and freedom that is being continually threatened by the development of late capitalism and globalisation in the 20th and 21st centuries. Habermas advances the view that in order to free society from the crisis of oppressive and exploitative modern capitalism, the theory of communicative action is the solution. The solution lies in reasoned, rational and democratic communication that allows human beings to understand and make common plans that will gradually transform capitalist society into a more radically democratic one. Thus the injustices of modern society will be addressed (Morrow and Torres, 2003:47). Critical theory according to the perspective of Habermas forms part of a wider radical tradition of politically engaged analysis that stands in direct opposition to various forms of leftist and rightist dogma and tyranny. This implies that while being critical of other forms of oppression, it is also self-critical of itself, continuously practising reflectivity (Willmott, nd: 1).

Freire as a contemporary of Habermas shares a similar concern in so far as addressing oppression and emancipating people from the grips of modern capitalism are concerned. However, Freire's significance lies in inserting the pedagogy in critical theory that appears to have been glossed over by Habermas (Morrow and Torres, 2003:5). He has also been influential in formulating critical pedagogy, an educational theory whose object is to conscientise learners to transform the learning environment and relations of power in the struggle for a socialist order (McLaren and Faramandpur, 2005:1).

> Freire focuses on the role of consciousness, critique and a utopian vision, the need to imagining a better future before it can be achieved, and the critical role of education for social justice and the vital necessity of leadership fully at one with the people should deepen practices of movements for social change (Gibon, 2009: 4).

The positions of Freire and Habermas illustrate that critical theory furthers the Enlightenment ideals. Its core concern is to develop more rational, enlightened social relations that are aimed at transforming the status quo towards more socially just futures.

Contemporary proponents of critical theory in the western world such as MacLaren and Kincheloe relentlessly pursue the progressive and emancipatory project initiated by the Enlightenment. They offer a reconceptualised interpretation of critical theory for the new millennium:

> Critical theory analyses competing power interests between groups and individuals within a society – identifying who gains and who loses in specific situations. Privileged groups, criticalists argue, often have an interest in supporting the status quo to protect their advantages; the dynamics of such efforts often become the central focus of critical research. Such studies revolve around issues of race, class, gender and sexuality (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2002:90).

Critical theory in addition to embracing the culture of critique creates a conducive intellectual environment for the flourishing of human freedom or agency.

This study makes use of an interpretative research paradigm which is in contrast to a traditional positivist paradigm. The particular element that the interpretative research

paradigm proposes to bring to the research process is the element of human agency which is marginalized by the positivist paradigm. In the positivist paradigm, human agency implies free will that is active in making sense of the social world. Agency refers to the capability of individuals to act independently and make their own free choices. In this tradition, human agency is seen as neutral individual freedom in a *laizess faire* market orientated socio-economic system of capitalism. The notion of human agency in the tradition of critical theory is re-conceptualised and has come to entail the promise that men and women can determine their own history and existence and they have in them the collective moral responsibility to advance emancipation from capitalist exploitation. It offers new hope for the oppressed masses living in the neo-liberal "utopia of endless exploitation" to use Bourdieu's assessment of the essence of neo-liberalism (Bourdieu 1998:1) This implies that the freedom in human agency from the perspective of Bourdieu has the potential of fostering counter neo-liberal strategies and bring about utopia of total human emancipation. In the same vein, the centrality of human agency in counteracting a neo-liberal policy environment is shared by critical scholars like Giroux (2003), and (1998), Mclaren and Kinecheloe (2005), Habermas (1974), Freire (2005) Heron (2008) and Mfumadi (2008). These views are summarised below. In the context of this study, reference will be made to elements an educational and policy environment that is conducive for the fostering collective human agency that is likely to counteract the neo-liberal policy environment.

- At institutional level, the purpose of educating the youth for critical empowerment rather than subjugation (Giroux, Maclaren and Kinecheloe, and Freire,)

- The centrality of teaching critical thinking as a constitutive feature of the struggle for self-emancipation and social change (Giroux 2003: 28).

- The fostering of the practice of self-reflection and self-criticism is essential (Giroux 1998:35)

- The development of collective critical consciousness. (Freier2005 , Mfumadi, 2008:,Waghid 2008)

- The development of critical pedagogy. (Cooper , Hill and Ross 2009:216)

- The promotion of radical democracy through the theory of communicative action (Habermas 1974).

- The development of collective human agency based on non-western cultures that is interdependent, interconnected and deflates the individual (Heron 2008:82)

So in the tradition of critical theory, the struggle against neo-liberalism is not just waged by an individual constructed in the language of liberalism but by collective individuals informed by the culture of critique and the relentless quest for socially just socio-economic futures that facilitate utopia of human emancipation. In line with the type of social justice advanced in this study, human agency needs to be couched in the language of radical social justice for it to make a dent on neo-liberal educational and policy environment.

While utilising the broad framework of critical theory, I will also explore the applicability of this theory to analysing education in emerging new democracies such as South Africa. Since critical theory is a broad field, the first step with regards to this research is to indicate the limits of the scope of its usage. This project will not attempt to trace its historical origins in detail, nor its detailed intellectual history. It will only be used where it helps to illuminate the radical position of social justice as one of the projects of this study. Within critical theory, social justice, as used in this study, is in alignment with its (critical theory's) quest for the emancipation of humankind from the prominent injustices in society in the form of maldistribution and misrecognition caused by the traditional political, economic and cultural structures of modern society (Fraser, 2001:11).

According to Nel (1995:126), "critical theory has a double meaning: it refers to a theory that is critical of society, on the one hand, and on the other, a theory that is critical of past theories of society, or, what one would call 'traditional' theory". Scholars who identify themselves with critical theory are leftist in persuasion and perceive the oppositional stance of critical theory as offering much appeal in promoting the broad agenda of social justice such as equity, inclusion and redistribution of socio-economic benefits to all.

Critical theorists hold the position that past and current attempts at achieving social justice have failed even in the context that continues to celebrate capitalism as a key to social justice, and therefore propose a more radical position on the latter (McLaren, 2005:20). Critical pedagogues are concerned with the influences of educational knowledge that legitimate an unjust *status quo*, resulting in inequitable, undemocratic and oppressive institutions and social relations, and the persistent failure of reformist policies in addressing radical social justice (Burbules & Berk, 1999:46). The most commonly cited reason for the failure of past and current attempts at achieving social justice is the neo-liberal paradigm's project of modernisation and its notion of social consensus.

Critical theory challenges and seeks to change the neo-liberal paradigm which is deemed to be socially unjust and politically undemocratic. With reference to social justice, critical theory is associated with the radical position or the egalitarian paradigm of social justice. Critical theory's quest is for social justice; it therefore displays a close affinity to the latter's ideas such as the quest for utopia – a better life for everyone. It is particularly this position that has led to a number of criticisms being leveled at critical theory.

Torres and Morrow (2002) provide a succinct digest of the criticism of critical theory from a variety of theoretical positions.

> From the direction of positivist educational theory, it has been rejected as impractical, romantic, and without any empirical basis; (2) from the Marxist left, it has been condemned for idealism, subjectivism, and romanticism, a perspective most common in Latin America; (3) from the direction of a conservative hermeneutic and phenomenological approach, it has been received with ambivalence because of its "westernizing" politicization of education at the expense of the life world and tradition; (4) in the name of radical environmental critique, it has been charged with normative anthropomorphism; and (5) under the labels of postmodernist, post-structuralism, and postcolonial theory, it has been questioned for its modernist rationalist bias, normative universalism, conception of an autonomous subject, and lack of attention to questions of difference (Morrow and Torres, 2002 163 – 164).

Given the above criticism, this study is not dissuaded from defending the necessity of critical theory and its advancement of a social justice agenda, particularly in the current context and the growing hostility to issues of social justice. It is therefore prudent to highlight those aspects of critical theory that are common social justice concerns. Since this study does not claim to provide a fixed definition of social justice, the egalitarian paradigm will be defined in terms of conditions that are deemed as socially just. According to Feagin (2001):

> Social justice requires resource equity, fairness and respect for diversity as well as the eradication of existing forms of social oppression. Social justice entails a redistribution of resources from those who have unjustly gained them to those who justly deserve them. And it also means creating and ensuring the process of truly democratic participatory decision-making (p. 5).

These concerns also form part and parcel of the social justice agenda in the developing world and developed world contexts. In this context, an additional emphasis on the resuscitation of progressivism was exemplified by the 1960s civil rights movements, while in the developing world the emphasis falls on counteracting the negative impacts of neo-colonialism (Scrase, 1997: xi; Fillmore, 1997:121). Hence in essence, social justice conditions are those that promote the full participation of all groups in society, holding a vision of equal distribution of resources to all, the development and enhancement of self-worth and respect for others, and tolerance of diversity (Bell, 1997:3).

These conditions of social justice and the positions of critical educational researchers resonate with the agenda of critical theory: to make institutions into laboratories of freedom and democracy as a lived experience. The resonance lies in the dissatisfaction felt by critical theory researchers with the way the neo-liberal macro-economic policies deal with injustices and contradictions in society and the inability of neo-liberal informed strategies to challenge and transform these policies for the common good. This has emerged as a dilemma or a paradox for democratic governments because the market economy constitutes their driving force and it would be inappropriate for them to challenge their life-line. In this context, critical theory provides an enhancement of social justice because it has purposed to disrupt and challenge the status quo of modern

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democratic countries, particularly their macro socio-economic and political policies (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002:279).

In the educational arena, a socially just condition for critical theory promotes political emancipation. Critical theorists maintain that universities can become institutions where forms of knowledge, values and social relations are taught for the purpose of educating young people for critical empowerment rather than subjugation (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002: 280).

The key features of critical theory that promote transformation and social justice are:

- The interest in human emancipation;

- The zeal for radical change and social justice on a global scale;

- The establishment of positive humanism; and

- Making students critically maladaptive to globalisation and its impact on national and international destinies in favour of a humane social order (McLaren, 2001:108 – 120).

The main agenda of critical theory is that of change. Proponents of progressive pedagogy support this position because it is in harmony with their transformational agenda and stands a chance of promoting liberating educational experiences. However, the dilemma of critical theory lies in maintaining its credibility and existence in a world that is intolerant of its agenda. All hope is not lost, though, as proponents of progressive education continue to call for the renewal of social justice informed by critical theory, with transformative intellectuals playing a key role as pressure groups in influencing policy and research that will contribute to the creation of a socially just society (Muller, 1998207).

In addition to the above, other social justice conditions promote gender equity and non-sexism, thus creating favourable conditions for the recognition and celebration of women's contribution to socio-economic development in the long term (Weiler,

1993:223; Davies, 1997). Thus, it could be said that in modern democracies the egalitarian paradigm of social justice is accommodative of all the agents in society.

These entail:

- The participation of all members in making decisions that affect their lives;

- The recognition of diversity of culture that marks the post-modern world; and

- A conception of the social good, a commitment to the well-being of, and decent lives for all citizens (Weiler, 1993:224).

Implicit in the three aspects of social justice is the concept of *Ubuntu*: the humanness that illustrates the social justice condition is that of interrelatedness, interconnectedness and interdependence among humans, and the living and non-living creation (Goduka and Swandenar 2000:66-74).

In summary, the social justice condition informed by the egalitarian paradigm entails broad principles of democracy, humanism, critical pedagogy and an education for development. Although the scenarios depicted in these broad principles represent a challenge to the neo-liberal discourse that informs new democracies and the higher education scene, the proponents of social justice argue that while governments confront the inequities of the market system on the one hand, on the other hand the supporters of social justice need to continue to struggle for the realisation of the social justice agenda, informed by the principles mentioned above (Graig, 2002:670). The struggle for the egalitarian radical conception of social justice is not a simple one; it is complex and multifaceted and, therefore, requires methodologies that seek to understand its dynamics by focusing on the natural setting and the lived experiences of the participants, as critical theory does. When applied to educational research, critical theory advances a position that is critical of positivist notions of research and proposes a position that utilises an alternative research paradigm. The critical education researcher is concerned with how existing institutions can be interrogated to understand issues of power and institutional contradictions. His/her focus is on problems of social inequity and injustices produced through the practice of schooling (Popkewitz, 1999:3). The central task of this approach is the emancipation of people from positivist thoughts and

practices, and it fosters alternatives of naturalistic research practices. Its core is to illuminate the role of schools in perpetuating the established order and to convert them instead into instruments of social reform (Carr and Kemmis, 1986:129-13). In this light, critical theory possesses the power to facilitate social renewal and a redressing of the injustices of the past. In the same light as critical theory, critical research informed this study because it is a transformative "endeavor unembarrassed by the label 'political' and unafraid to consummate a relationship with emancipatory consciousness" (Kincheloe & McLaren 1998:264).

1.5   Methodology – The Methods of Inquiry Informed by Critical Theory

In line with the critical theory tradition that informs this study, a qualitative method of research was employed. This tradition of inquiry has been defined in a variety of ways but in order to establish some common conceptions this study utilises Creswell's definition:

> Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on a distinct methodological tradition of inquiry that explores a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants and conducts the study in a natural setting (Creswell, 1998: 15).

In exploring social or human problems, qualitative research yields data that is humanistic and subject centred, aiming at capturing the original meanings and experiences of the participants. It is a welcome alternative to survey-dominated traditional quantitative research (Easterby, Thorpe and Lowe, 2002:28-31). I have elected to use naturalistic methodology as an overarching technique in which I approached, analyzed and interpreted the data in an effort to gain understanding, knowledge and perspectives of the research participants. This methodology is in contrast with positivist methodology. A researcher using the positivist tradition strives to be a neutral gatherer and objective observer of purely mechanistic empirical data related to the subject during the research project. This is due to the fact that the positivist tradition sees the world as existing externally and objectively and thus that it can only be understood using objective, scientific methods (Boshier, 1999:11). This obsession with objectivity flows out of a rational or realist-objectivist orientation; the

researcher is supposed to approach the research with a value and bias-free epistemological framework (see Figure 1 by Paulston). This situation limits the manner in which knowledge can be formed, gathered and interpreted. In this tradition, the subjects speak for themselves and the researcher's job is simply to listen, observe and form knowledge, thus applying models of natural science to human behaviour. With regards to the creation of knowledge, positivist research is simply descriptive of observable phenomena, leading to the creation of theories which are testable and could be generalisable (Boshier, 1999:12).

Qualitative methodology generally, and critical theory specifically, allows the researcher to probe beneath the surface facts and asks why a phenomenon occurs; it proceeds further to advance the emancipation of the subject. Qualitative research views knowledge as socially constructed through the interaction of people with one another and the physical world.

According to Denzin and Lincoln,

> Qualitative research is situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretative, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representation, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretative, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative research may study things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (2003:4-5).

In the above quotation, the authors illustrate that qualitative researchers make no attempt to hide their biases, but make them explicit. In other words, objective observation is impossible. This implies that qualitative research is couched in the idealist-subjective orientation as illustrated by Paulston (1996) in Figure 1. The position of Denzin and Lincoln above also reveals that the qualitative researcher has at his or her disposal a variety of methodologies and tools to use in gathering data while taking into cognisance the meanings that participants bring into the research endeavour.

1.6 Qualitative Critical Research – Social Science for Emancipatory Change

In accordance with the theoretical framework that frames this study, critical qualitative research is employed. It is research that aspires, as its purpose of inquiry, to confront injustices in society. The assumption behind this position is that the knowledge that is developed in the research may serve as a first step towards addressing the injustices and different forms of oppression that are characteristic of modern capitalist society (Gail J, Gail M and Borg, 1999: 361).

The ontological roots of critical qualitative research are couched in the discourse of radical humanism. In this tradition, the assumptions about reality (ontology) and knowledge (epistemology) are informed by realist-subjective orientations as illustrated by Paulston (1996) in Figure 1 on page 21. This implies that the latter view reality as socially constructed, subjective and existing within the mind in the conscience of people (Boshier, 1999:9). Furthermore, knowledge or truth is shaped by ideological consideration and power relations. Those who are in power control and own the means of production of knowledge as well as determine what valid and legitimate knowledge is. The dominant forms of knowledge have been informed by positivist characteristics that are viewed by radical humanists as oppressive, limiting cognition and creating a false consciousness that inhibits emancipation from domination (Boshier, 1999:14). In this context, radical humanism seeks knowledge that would foster a critical consciousness together with the goal of transformation (Boshier, 1999:15). In this study, various scholars associated with radical humanism have been used to make a case for radical social justice. These include but are not limited to Freire (1997), McLaren (2005), Giroux (1987) and Habermas (1984). I have chosen to use critical theory as a primary epistemological methodology because it is eminently suited to this type of research due to its critical stance towards capitalism and the manner in which capitalism impacts on individual and collective life. Since the Enlightenment, critical theorists from Marx to Habermas have been critical of dogmatism and orthodoxy and have continued in this tradition and applied it in their critique of capitalism. Their objection to capitalism lies in the rise of socio-economic and political injustices, oppression and exploitation that continue unabated in the current century. They further contend that capitalism has a mesmerising effect on the individual and society at large so that these end up being unable to imagine an alternative to the status quo: that is, people are so

indoctrinated that they have come to be absorbed by the culture of complacency, characterised by a closed intellectual system. Policy makers and intellectuals seem to be contributing by merely perpetuating a system that is responsible for global injustice. This research is a humble step towards attempting to make capitalism humane through advancing radical social justice and finding social justice within capitalism. A socialist revolution in the terms of Marxism in altering the course of capitalism would be ideal, but it is not a possibility in the current epoch. So in this overwhelming context, the critical theory carries impressive credentials for reclaiming the enlightenment ideal of freedom from oppression and exploitation and promoting radical humanism.

Radical humanism's ontology and epistemology are in direct contrast to traditional positivist research as briefly explained above. To further illustrate these differences, Paulston's Map of theory (below) is useful.
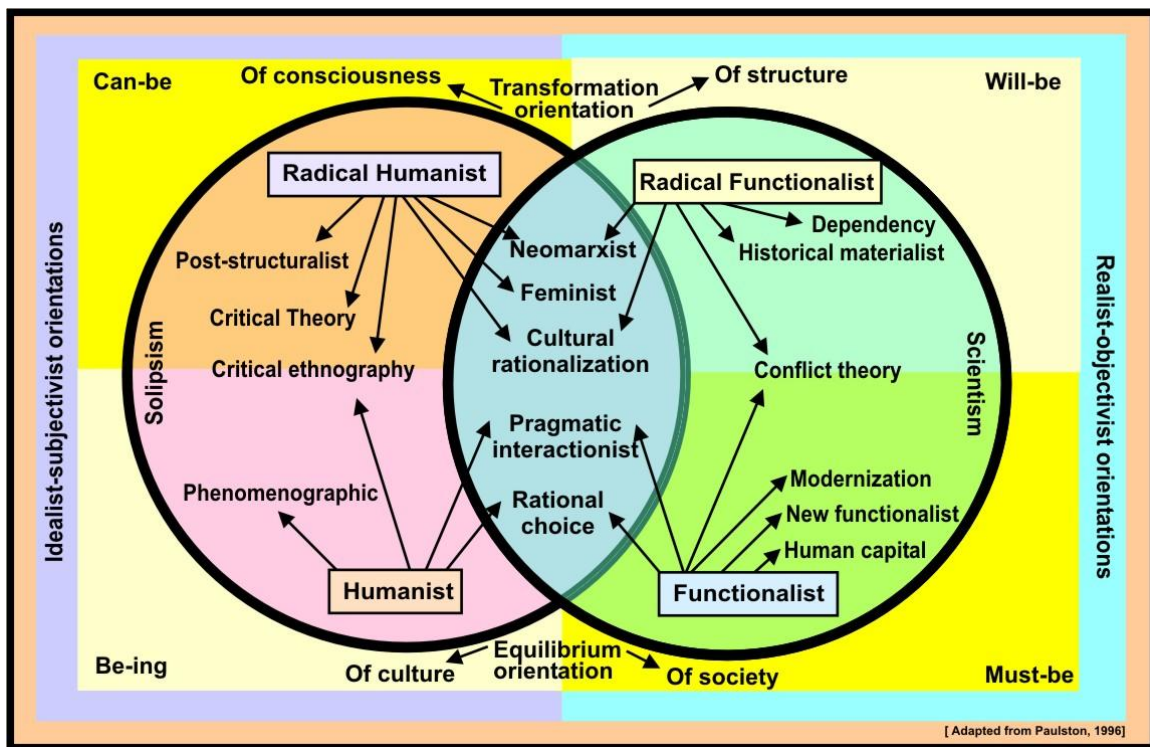
Figure 1.1 − Mapping the World of Concepts and Theories

Critical research is intended to yield transformative knowledge and be more open than previous methods to the possibility of social change. In this regard, it draws heavily on the powers of critical reasoning deployed in the Enlightenment and which have been

employed to overturn oppression and injustices (Willmott, 2008:1). In the pursuit and in the defence of the Enlightenment project, critical methodology or social science for emancipatory change is guided by the following interconnected themes: the critique of positivist science, the critique of technocracy, an emphasis upon communicative action and the critique of one-dimensionality and consumerism (Willmott, 2008:2). In critical research, a rosy view of science as neutral and objective and yielding objective knowledge is challenged because, instead of serving human emancipation, it serves the interests of scientific knowledge for dehumanising and destructive purposes (Willmott, ibid).

Critical research abhors technocracy and its degenerative moral stance with reference to role of non experts or ordinary members of the public. The public is disenfranchised, leading to some form of complacency on the part of the oppressed and the oppressors, that is, general acceptance of instrumental rationality and the status quo of modern capitalist exploitation. The constrained patterns of human imagination due to technocracy limit opportunities for confronting and changing unjust social systems (Clark, 2008, Willmot, 2008, and Gail, Gail, and Borg, 1999).

In order to counteract the negative impact of technocratic rationality, critical research is heavily influenced by Habermas' theory of communicative action which is the epitome of genuine democracy. Communicative action underscores democratic dialogue and the importance of socially constructed meaning and language that facilitates the freedom of humankind as the public interact to respond to the crisis of modern capitalist society (Willmot, 2008 and Clark, 2008:3).

> Communicative action is the one type of action that Habermas says uses all human ways of thinking, and language. This combination allows human beings to understand and agree with one another to make plans for common action. This coming together and agreeing; communicative action takes the place of revolution as the mode of change. According to Habermas, the move from capitalism to communism (if it occurs) will occur as a result of reason and communicative action (*Illuminations*, 2008:1).

Critique of one dimensionality and consumerism is also underscored as an important and related theme of critical research. In the current era of an advanced capitalist

society, due to its oppressive nature, the emancipatory possibilities inherent even in democracy are marginalised or obfuscated to the extent that most people have become passive unreflective consumers, even when this poses great danger to life on the planet (Willmott, 2008:3).

The institution that has been identified for this study is the University of Pretoria. This institution has been purposively selected because it has demonstrated a public commitment to social justice against the backdrop of a white-exclusive history; accommodates the largest number of black students in a residential South African university; has launched a number of specific projects to redress disadvantage in the broader student and staff bodies; and has been hailed in the public media as an institution with demonstrated responsiveness to the challenges of higher education policy.

This study is a collective case study of three projects or cases that are beacons of social justice. As mentioned, the cases selected for this study were the University of Pretoria Foundation Year Programme (UPFY), the Institute for Women's and Gender Studies (IWGS) and the Centre of the Study of AIDS (CSA). These three initiatives were selected because they represent the most prominent and visible responses of the University of Pretoria to the social justice claims of higher education policy. The case study tradition has been employed in this study because it seeks an in-depth and holistic description and interpretation of a problem or situation (Creswell, 1998:40). It has also been selected because it provides for clear boundaries. In the case of this study the case is bounded by time and place.

In accordance with the case study tradition used in this study, the research participants were selected purposefully instead of randomly. They consisted of decision makers, at management level, of the three centres as well as policy practitioners, lecturers and facilitators at the implementation level. The participants consisted of academics and non-academics employed by the University of Pretoria, with some form of experience in higher education and possessing a minimum of a first degree. The rationale for the purposeful sampling strategy chosen is that the study seeks to explain the impact of initiatives informed by social justice from the perspectives of policy implementers in the

context of higher education and not from those held by the receivers or beneficiaries of the initiatives. Furthermore, the nature of the participants in critical theory terms is that of public intellectuals who play a significant role in the implementation of higher education policy and the facilitation of knowledge production for the public good, since the University of Pretoria is a public institution. The promotion of the public good and the enhancement of radical social justice in the role and practice of the public intellectual as custodian of emancipatory knowledge and democracy constitute the hallmark of critical social science advances made by radical scholars (Giroux, 2006:68) An equally important rationale for the choice of the participants is informed by radical social justice advocates such as Gerwitz, in arguing that due to the contested nature of social justice, that which counts as justice in education can only be understood within specific contexts of interpretation and enactment (Gerwitz, 2006:70). In this regard, the aim is to contextualise the meaning and experiences of social justice. As noted, the study did not include the beneficiaries of the social justice initiatives because most of them consist of transient members of the community who would need a special focus research project of their own for their experiences to be documented honestly and adequately. The in-depth voice and experience of the participants was crucial in explaining the change and lack of change in the three centres towards the realisation of social justice imperatives in higher education.

1.7   Data Collection and Analysis

The process of data collection was extensive, drawing on multiple sources of information, as is characteristic of case study research (Creswell, 1998:62). Data for the first research question, 'What are the claims and expectations for social justice embedded in South Africa's new higher education policies?' consisted of the mission, vision and strategic plans of The University of Pretoria which were critically examined. Existing statistical data from the institution's database was studied in order to establish the participation rates of the previously disadvantaged members of the population. The focus fell on the three projects under study.

Data for the subsequent three research questions was collected by means of semi-structured interviews with project participants. The specific questions for the interview can be found in APPENDIX A. The interview was semi-structured and open ended,

designed to explore the nature of the three case study responses to access to higher education, gender and HIV/AIDS as social justice concerns. A one-on-one interview procedure was adopted and the sessions were conducted in the offices of the participants. Each interview session was recorded and later transcribed for analysis.

The interview questions used in this study are framed in the constructivist tradition which is in line with critical theory and the qualitative methodology used. The questions have been constructed with the epistemological assumption that knowledge is socially constructed by members of a given society interacting with each other. In this tradition, both the researcher and the research participants are actively constructing the social world and through interview, they can give authentic insights about their experiences on social justice issues in higher education. The interview questions were semi-structured and open ended and therefore allowed for the research participants to provide their own insights on the dynamics of social justice at the institution that is under study. The familiar setting (offices of the participants) and the open-ness of the interview questions also enabled the participants to talk about concerns of social justice in more detail and depth without feeling threatened. The interview sessions were generally conversational with the objective of understanding the participant's position on issues of social justice. In addition to this, the questions enabled the participants to critique existing practices and principles of social justice by enquiring about challenges and ways to address them from the perspectives of the participants. for example : *What challenges do you face as you implement concerns of social justice and can you share with me how you have addressed such challenges* In this manner, the research participants were involved in constructing knowledge and ideological critique with the purpose of transforming or changing the status quo. In this question, what is embedded is the requirement to reflect on the practices of social justice that are being marginalized to come with more innovative and transformative ways of elevating practices of social justice. Furthermore, in order to reinforce the possibility of contributing to transformation of practices, the participants were probed. For example the following question was asked with this aim in mind. "*Would you like to share with me any other concern on social justice that has not been raised?*

Since negotiating entry and establishing rapport are important features of all qualitative studies conducted in a public organisation, the aims of gaining access to the field and establishing rapport with the participants were pursued (Creswell, 1998:115). Approval from the University's Research Ethics Committee was sought and granted (See APPENDIX B – Research Ethics Clearance Certificate). In order to facilitate understanding, a summary of the research objectives was sent to each together with a informed consent form , which was signed by each of them (See APPENDIX C – Informed Consent Form). All the participants (APPENDIX D) were assured of full confidentiality and it was indicated to them that no harm would be inflicted on them, in compliance with the ethical codes of human science research.

The data analysis consisted of detailed readings of the transcribed interviews with the participants. This was carried out in order to familiarise the researcher with the data and to execute the initial coding and categorisation of the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994.) During this process *in vivo* and created codes were developed from the data, followed by the categorisation of the codes into themes that presented the different responses to the interview questions. The themes developed from the data gathered from each centre are listed below:

1.8   Themes from Data Analysis

In an attempt to provide more nuanced interpretations of the themes developed, role ordered and conceptually ordered matrices were created for each question (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In these matrices the vertical lines represent a digest of the facilitator's responses to each question while the horizontal line represents the themes and sub themes formulated for each query: for instance, the role ordered matrix developed for the response to the question: "What is your specific role in the broader mission of UPFY, IGWS or CSA?" In this matrix the vertical lines represent the facilitators while the horizontal line represents the three roles derived from reading the combined transcripts, namely learning facilitation, facilitation of the academic development and support of the students, and the administrative and support role.

Table 1.1 − Themes from data analysis

UPFY themes	IGWS themes	CSA themes
Implementation of access policy	Implementation of gender policy	Implementation of leadership in HIV/AIDS
Conceptualisation of access	Conceptualisation of gender	Conceptualisation of responses to HIV/AIDS - Human rights framework and social justice
Conceptualisation of social justice	Conceptualisation of social justice	Conceptualisation of social justice
Research	Research	Research
Role of project manager	Role of project manager	Role of project manager
Outcomes of project	Outcomes of project	Outcomes of project
Challenges facing UPFY	Challenges facing IGWS	Challenges facing CSA
Dealing with challenges	Dealing with challenges	Dealing with challenges
Other emergent factors: The uniqueness of UPFY	Other emergent factors: The potency of the oppositional voice	Other emergent factors: Critical policy engagement

The interpretation of data was informed by the critical research tradition and the position that all research involves an act of interpretation – the facts do not speak for themselves.

> The quest for understanding is a fundamental feature of human existence as encounter with the unfamiliar always demands the attempt to make meaning, to make sense. The same however, is also the case with the familiar. Indeed, as in the study of the commonly known texts, we come to find that sometimes the familiar may be seen as the strangest (Kincheloe and McLaren, 1998:97).

In the process of making meaning, the data was analysed and subjected to a level of scrutiny that exposed the explicit and implicit in the utterances of the research participants. Furthermore, as indicated the act of interpreting the data was heavily influenced by critical theory whereby the researcher brings in his or her personal subjectivity, which involves context, assumptions, understandings and concerns related to issues of social justice. This involves a form of intellectual give and take mutually undertaken by all the research participants that eventually leads to new understandings with the intention of ultimately leading to new research content. These constituted the co-creation of new research content by all the research participants, and represented not merely a well-defined linear process but a complex form of organised chaos entailing

back and forth movements connecting research questions and the literature review, interview data and findings.

1.9   Strategies to Ensure Rigour - Validation Strategies

An important aspect of ensuring validity in this research is to link the research to the purpose of critical theory. In this sense, critical theory purposes to critique existing socio-economic formations and advances ones that are more humane and socially justice (Morrow and Torres 2002). The methodology that is more suitable to this project is the qualitative interpretative paradigm that empowers research participants to construct knowledge about the social world. In this process, critical theory serves as both the research methodology and research content.

It has been stated that the research approach that is utilised in this study is a qualitative one and thus it employs paradigm specific strategies for the purpose of ensuring rigour and serving to establish the trustworthiness of the research. (Lincoln and Guba1985) and (Guba and Lincoln, 1994) have been cited in several research publications: they appear to be the most widely referred to and comprehensive social scientists who have constructed a very understandable analysis of what constitutes rigour in qualitative research. According to Guba and Lincoln, "credibility is an analog to internal validity, transferability is an analog to external validity, dependability is an analog to reliability and confirmability is an analog to objectivity" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:300), (Guba and Lincoln,1994:112)

As the research is embedded in real-life situations that study the lived experiences of the participants, an attempt has been made to document these through thick descriptions of the research setting and parameters of the study. The purpose was to take the reader into the setting and context of the study so the reader may understand the phenomenon being studied as experienced by the research participants. In the tradition of qualitative research that is informed by critical theory thick descriptions are central to making sense of social phenomenon because they illustrate the constructive and naturalistic epistemological stance of the two traditions. That is, knowledge is socially constructed.

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Furthermore, in the tradition of critical theory, thick descriptions are seen as more democratic and empowering because they privilege the subjects. This implies that the researches participants are empowered in the process of making meaning – those that are marginalised are privileged (Levistik and Tyson 2008:319). Related to the democratic feature of thick descriptions is the notion of providing context of the research problem so that it becomes more accessible to a wider readership

Furthermore, other strategies that were employed to ensure the credibility of the study were triangulation, and peer review (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:219). Through triangulation, I sought the corroboration of data from multiple sources. In other words, documentary evidence, interview records and policy review data were checked for consistency. Document analysis in the form of Annual reports and strategic documents from the three centres were studied to discover the level of corroboration with the interview data .triangulation is particularly useful because it adds a sense of richness to an inquiry as it shows that there are multiple realities in social life. It further provided valuable insights that cannot be gained from just interview data.

The approach that I adopted towards triangulation is the constructivist one which shares similar epistemological and ontological orientations with critical theory and qualitative research. For instance, triangulation confirms the position that knowledge is socially constructed and there multiple realities as there are multiple sources of data. These multiple sources of data enabled me to deepen and widen the comprehension of issues of social justice as they are enacted at the three centres understudy.

By means of peer review, informed colleagues from within the university environment were tasked to comment on emerging interpretations and findings. This process involved discussions of the interpretations and conclusions with colleagues in the higher education environment. Other peers were co- researchers who are involved in researching areas related to social justice issues in higher education namely the service learning in higher education and creativity and innovation in higher education. The two research areas are studied form the critical theory perspective using qualitative research methodology. These colleagues were useful in providing valuable insights and constructive criticism on social justice concern in higher education. The colleague

whose research field is in creativity and innovation in higher education adopted a sceptical stance which was valuable in helping me refine the interpretations of the findings. My Supervisor played a crucial role in challenging me to provide concrete and illustrative evidence for my interpretations and conclusions.

Confirmability refers to objectivity or the degree of neutrality and the extent to which the findings are shaped by the research participants rather than the bias or motivation of the researcher in conventional research (Lincoln and Guba 1985:55). Because a naturalistic inquiry involves participants making meaning, objectivity and neutrality are an illusion in this tradition. A great deal of subjectivity and intersubjectivity is involved in constructing meaning and as a result, the preferred concept is perspectival, implying the recognition of multiple realities in creating "a holistic picture" (Ibid). An audit trail is the most common strategy used to establish this measure. It shows that there is coherence from the goals, data, findings and conclusion of the study. Another measure of confirmability as a measure of validity in the tradition of critical qualitative research is directly related to its stated purpose of inquiry. In this regard, it has been stated in the previous sections that the purpose of the inquiry is the emancipation of humankind from systems of oppression. It follows that the validity of the study is determined by the extent to which it provides ways of counteracting the systems of oppression (Clark, nd: 4). the study is confirmable to the extent to which it makes explicit the multiple perspectives and inter subjectivities of the whole research process. In this regard, it has been stated unequivocally that this study advocates radical social justice.

1.10 Limitations

The hallmark of social research involves watching people live their lives, asking people about their experiences, using words to tell the stories. This process carries with it the limits of subjectivity. The writer is aware of the debate with regards to objectivity versus subjectivity in social science and holds a view similar to that of Silverman (1993) who avers that freedom subjectivity in social science is impossible. Since this study is a qualitative study using the case study approach, it does not make use of large samples and therefore the findings cannot be generalised.

An additional limitation of the study is inadequate participant validation or member checking. In the tradition of critical research, ideally, participants are to be sent the data to validate and make additional comments as a way of co-creating knowledge with the researcher. This step is pursued as a way of facilitating the process of empowering the participants to overcome the problems they encounter in the social world. However, this was not pursued to its logical conclusion and therefore has been identified as a limitation. In order to address this limitation, post-research presentations to the three centres are going to be scheduled and they are possible spin-offs of sharing and creating knowledge that is framed in the tradition of critical theory.

1.10.1 Post research activities as a means to reinforcing validity

The post research activity would be an attempt to share the research findings with the research participants and also an act of mutual empowerment through knowledge creation. What is envisaged in this venture is the following:

- Follow up presentation at the three centres studied

- Co-authoring of journal articles on emergent issues.

1.11 Conclusion

The study was designed to critically explain how the University of Pretoria has responded to the government's emphasis on social justice mandated through the three initiatives of UPFY, IGWS and CSA. This chapter has described the conceptual framework as critical theory and the research method of the study as qualitative. It has also been indicated that the case study approach has been employed for purposes of providing a nuanced and in-depth analysis of the University of Pretoria's response and non-response to the social justice mandate. It has also described in detail the elements of data gathering, analysis and strategies used to ensure rigour which were in compliance with the case study tradition of qualitative research tradition. The next chapter in this study reviews the literature regarding key aspects of social justice in general and with specific reference to higher education.

CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW AND SYNTHESIS ON SOCIAL JUSTICE

2.1   Introduction: Some Positions on Social Justice

Studies on higher education policy and research on social justice have been conducted mainly in isolation, while very little research has been carried out with regards to the relationship between higher education policy and social justice. Since the pre-1994 democratic discourses emphasised the need for social justice to inform government transformation agendas, it is essential that this link between higher education policies and social justice be further investigated to determine the extent to which social justice informs these policies. This review of literature seeks to highlight the key principles and nature of radical social justice by foregrounding major international debate and aims to arrive at an intersubjective understanding of what social justice is and how it should inform public policy. Furthermore, this review of literature will highlight reviews of the legislative and policy framework with respect to higher education. Lastly, it will also seek to establish the link between these policies and the aspirations of radical social justice and to show how these aspirations are adequately (or inadequately) addressed in the legislative and policy framework.

At this juncture it is opportune to discuss the three traditions of social justice and their position regarding broader political and socio-economic issues, in an attempt to evaluate a tradition that promises a more socially just global order and to illustrate that educational arrangements are inevitably a reflection of deeply embedded political and economic factors that are unique to a particular society. The three main traditions of social justice found in the western world are the conservative, liberal and the social democratic or socialist traditions (Rizvi, 1998:54; Starr, 1999:14). These three conceptions exist alongside each other in any one given era, with any of them gaining prominence depending on the ideological position of the political party in power or the State.

2.2   The Conservative Tradition of Social justice

The conservative and liberal traditions of social justice are pro-capitalist and would support the discourse of human capital informed by neo-liberal discourse in education.

However, their position regarding social justice education differs. The conservative tradition is conformist and promotes meritocracy – "some will succeed at the expense of others" (Starr, 1999; Rizvi, 1998). In other words, in the conservative tradition, social justice is served when people take responsibility for their own lives and are rewarded according to their contribution to society, even if the consequence is a more unequal distribution of income or wealth. The Conservative Party in Britain and the Republican Party in the USA espouse some of the elements of the first mentioned tradition. Its modern variation is found in the economic policies of the conservative parties in the Western world. Its economic policy has come to mean freeing the markets from government constraints. This position originated with classical economists and advocates of the enlightenment projects, such as Adam Smith (1723–1790) (1776) and Hayek (1899-1992) (1848) whose common belief was that government should follow a *laissez faire* economic policy (Hill, 2003:3). As far as the socio-economic aspects of society are concerned, the conservative tradition believes that *laissez faire* is of greatest merit. For its proponents, economic, and politico-social justice can be achieved by the efforts of an individual, with minimal state interference. In this tradition, social justice is viewed as the desire to render to everyone their due. For its upholders the driving force for a socially just society is individual self-interest and the motivation for profit operating under a *laissez faire* economy policy.

During the late latter half of the 20th century, Robert Nozick (1929 - 2002) can be seen as an embodiment of the conservative tradition in the field of political and moral philosophy. His theory regarding political and economic ethics is based on Libertarian ideals. His position on how we can and ought to live together is presented in his book *Anarchy State and Utopia* in which he advances the ideal of a free market and defends the minimal state. He is renowned for the "Entitlement Theory of Justice" in which he vindicates right-wing libertarianism and the advancement of individual rights of control over one's own mind, body, and life: a right to self-ownership. This position holds that what an individual possesses belongs to him or her and no one can take it away. For instance, he believes that it is unjust for individuals to be taxed for purposes of redistribution to the poor. The purpose of such a belief is to merely protect self ownership (Otsuka, 2005: 15, Feser, 2005: 20). Self ownership as the main principle of Nozick's position is also reflected in his concerns with equality and justice; he views it

as immoral and unjust to equalise resources and opportunity. This position is similar to the argument of social Darwinism that nature abhors equality but favours competition; hence the principle of the survival of the fittest. Inequality is in the balance and is beneficial to society (Vallentyne, 2002:2).

The conservative tradition and its ideals, particularly libertarianism, would not be palatable to socialist minded thinkers because they appear to protect the status quo of an unjust distribution of socio economic resources. Nozick's approach can be directly contrasted to the approach of John Rawls as far as his minimalist state position is concerned.

2.3   The Liberal Tradition of Social Justice

The liberal tradition is reformist and promotes egalitarianism – "justice as fairness" – all will succeed. Its point of convergence with the conservative tradition lies in the belief that social justice can be attained within the existing capitalist socio- economic framework. However, it differs from the conservative tradition with regards to its position on the State's interference. This tradition is in favour of the role of the State to protect society and regulate markets for the promotion of egalitarian principles, while the conservative tradition favours a weak state (Rizvi, 1998; Starr, 1999). The liberal tradition's modern variation is found in the liberal-centrist polces of the Democratic Party in America and the Labour Party in Britain. The type of state this tradition supports is a social democratic or welfare state. In this tradition, social justice would require redistribution to those who lack the basic socio-economic amenities and the role of the state in ensuring this (Gale, 2000:268).

The roots of the liberal tradition of social justice are found in the moral and political philosophy of 17th century theorists and the ideals of the Enlightenment. John Locke (1632-1704) is one of the seminal thinkers of the liberal tradition. His influence is still present in modern liberalism in its various forms, particularly the notion of social justice as liberty and equality. With reference to liberty, Locke advanced some of the most developed ideas about liberty with regards to two states of liberty – "the natural liberty and "liberty in society" (Tuckness, 2005:1; Schwartz, 2007:2).

According to Locke, people possess natural or original rights given to them by God and the Law of Nature. In particular, people enjoy the right to life, health, liberty and possessions and no one is entitled to interfere with these rights. These are the individual rights as they came to be reflected in the universal declaration of human rights – the Bill of Rights. These rights also display strong linkages with social justice, particularly its liberal tradition. John Locke was also famous in philosophy as a rational empiricist. In this regard, most of his work is characterised by opposition to authoritarianism and a strong belief in the use of reason – free and autonomous inquiry in order to grasp the truth (Uzgalis, 2007:1). Locke's empiricist stance and advocacy for natural liberty have exerted an impact on modern day philosophy and the notion of human rights, particularly social justice as an embodiment of human rights.

Locke's rationalism also exerted an influence on other enlightenment philosophers, such as Kant (1724 – 1804) who was a central figure in the philosophy of the Enlightenment. He defines enlightenment as the maxim of always thinking for oneself (Uzgalis, 2007:21). A commentator on Kant's theory advances the view that:

> Kant wrote his social and political philosophy in order to champion the Enlightenment in general and the idea of freedom in particular. His work came within both the natural law and the social contract traditions. Kant held that every rational being had both an innate right to freedom and a duty to enter into a civil condition governed by a social contract in order to realize and preserve that freedom (Uzgalis, 2007:1).

Kant's account of social justice is embodied in his theory of freedom and equality. Equally important is Kant's account of rationality and theory of knowledge which advances the notion that, through reason, mankind can find truth and just solutions to problems caused by dogmatism and authoritarianism (Uzgalis, 2007:20). While Locke and Kant may be regarded as the embodiment of the liberal tradition of social justice, the 20th century ushered in yet another liberal social scientist and philosopher who equally championed freedom and equality with almost similar tones to theirs, as found in the ideals of John Rawls (1921-2002).

Rawls' central idea in most of his works is justice as fairness. He argues that two fundamental principles of justice designed to protect our political liberties and social

opportunities should be affirmed. In the theory of justice his main point is encapsulated in the quote below.

> The first principle: each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty for all. Second principle: social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both: (a) to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged, consistent with the just savings principles, and (b) attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity, All social primary goods – liberty and opportunity, income and wealth, and the bases of self–respect – are to be distributed equally unless an unequal distribution of any of these goods is to the advantage of the least favoured (Rawls, 1971: 302-3).

According to Rawls, the above principles of justice would be agreed upon by people who are under a hypothetical veil of ignorance assuming the original position. In this position, the people would establish an egalitarian-liberal system as the fairest ideal of justice (Kellner, 2005:5 and Stephens, 1994:15). The promise of Rawls' justice as fairness is the creation of a more open society based on social justice. The context in which Rawls devised his theory of justice was heavily reliant on positivist philosophers who derived their moral principles from some form of utilitarianism. Rawls published a theory of justice in order to revive the tradition of political thinking based on a foundation of moral argument and a critique of crude utilitarianism. Rawls' main positions held that a person possesses dignity and worth that social structures should not be permitted to violate. He has been hailed as one of the most influential and enduring moral philosophers of the twentieth and twenty first centuries (Nussbaum, 2001:1). Liberal equality is often associated with him. His theory of justice is based on the principles of liberty and democracy and equality.

Commentators on the first two traditions, Rizvi (1998) and Starr (1999), classify them under the modernisation paradigm and neo-liberal philosophy. The education reform policies informed by the said paradigm advance the human capital position on education, viewed as an investment, and maintain that by distributing the same amount of a social good (education) to people of all classes, justice can be attained, and individuals will be able to utilise their education in an open market society (Whitty, 2000:93). The human capital paradigm emphasises that education enhances the

knowledge and skills of people. Human capital investments generate monetary and social returns.

The main thrust of the market argument with reference to social justice is its insistence that the markets and social justice are inexorably intertwined as part of the capitalist system. It entrenches individual rights – individuals are free to pursue their rational self-interests with limited State interference. This tradition bases its position on *prima facie* evidence that the more capitalist a culture, the greater are its freedom and prosperity and therefore social justice; less capitalism means more human misery and consequently this tradition is opposed to economic and social justice. Throughout history, this tradition recognises the gains derived from the division of labour, capital accumulation and the increasing standard of living, and the cornerstones of the profit motive as the promoters of a just society. Another common description of the proponents of the first and second social justice traditions is the New Right. According to Apple, this social movement consists of three social movements: the neo-liberal, the neo-conservative and religious fundamentalists. The New Right sentiments are found among professionals in the new middle class (Apple, 1993:11).

The New Right or the conservative alliance conception of social justice is informed by liberal and neo-liberal ideology. Their conception of social justice can be referred to as distributional justice that seeks to promote an egalitarian society based on the principles of human rights and capitalism. The conservative alliance reflects some of the French Revolution's principles of equality, liberty and fraternity which have become encapsulated in modern democracy. Ideally, a government should ensure more equitable and fairer access to resources, which should be evident in both theory and practice (Gerwitz, 1998:470). In other words, a socially just government should practice the ideology of egalitarianism by distributing socio-economic resources fairly and equally while being informed by the culture of human rights. In principle, the ideology of the conservative alliance appears to embody social justice because it appears to preach the message of equality and distribution, which appeals to the marginalised and poor. However, in practice, owing to the unequal nature of capitalism, the distributive element of liberal social justice has come to be translated into the distribution of unequal socio-economic relations, characteristic of capitalism.

The two traditions of the conservative alliance have dominated the Western socioeconomic and political scenario but they have not brought about much change because of the tension inherent in the pursuit of social justice in the modern world as a result of globalisation and the neo-liberal agenda. Instead, injustices continue to be the order of the day despite the advocacy of social justice. The persistent existence of injustices, from the perspective of leftist scholars, is attributed to the failures and debilitating nature of neo-liberalism.

The critiques of neo-liberalism contend that, globally, its policies are seen in:

- A loss of equity, economic and social justice.

- A loss of democracy and democratic accountability.

- A loss of critical thought within a culture of performativity (Hill, 2003:4).

According to Giroux (2004a), the conservative agenda and neo-liberalism exercise a strong hegemonic grip on societies across the world, evidenced in market fundamentalism. According to Apple, one of the most important objectives of the conservative alliance or the rightist agenda is to change people's commonsense, altering the basic meanings of the categories and key words they employ to understand the social and educational world and their place in it, so that the reality comes to portray the agenda of the conservative alliance as the ultimate truth or alternative (Apple, 2001: 195). While the new right movement finds this an ordinary historical progression, there are some social progressives who have accepted the neo-liberal agenda as common sense even though it is counter to the progressive agenda of democratic idealism and socially just futures (Giroux, 2004a:5). For Giroux, there is hope in the struggle against the pervasive force of neo-liberalism if democratic forces both local and global connect with intellectuals to destroy the conventional wisdom and myths of neo-liberalism with visions of a development informed by progressive democratic idealism (Giroux, 2004a:7).

The neo-liberal tradition not only insists on opening up the markets, but also on opening up social services such as education and health to the rule of the markets so as to achieve the perceived social justices. With reference to education, it makes business

sense to open it up to the market in line with the vision of the knowledge economy of the 21st century (Rikowski, 2003:11). According to the neo-liberal paradigm, the common good that education should contribute should be regulated exclusively by the laws of the markets, free competition, private ownership, and profitability. In essence the definition of freedom is no longer democratic but private (Apple, 1993:30-31). It appears that from the neo-liberal perspective, for education to serve the social justice agenda it must conform to the language and aspirations of the markets and privatisation. However, certain social scientists view this marketisation of education in a negative light and as counter to the social justice agenda of equity and public good. For them marketisation destroys the stronghold of public good in education (Cookson, 1999:7; Apple, 1993:30-31; Giroux, 2004a:2-7). These proponents of progressive social justice argue that if society is to meet the challenge of neo-liberal globalisation and its onslaught on education, universities need to salvage and redefine themselves as beacons of public good, sites of critical learning and promoters of utopian democratic social justice (Giroux, 2004a:2).

Another variant of opposition to liberal social justice is evident in the ideas of Alasdair McIntyre (1929-). McIntyre is particularly opposed to the enlightenment project of modernity and liberalism, particularly atomistic individualism. McIntyre especially disputed Rawls' claims and the general liberal theory's universal pretensions and devaluation of community (Bell, 2008:2). As a communitarian, he argued that "the standards of justice must be found in forms of life and traditions of particular contexts and hence can vary from context to context" (Bell, 2008:2). For him genuine justice can be cultivated by drawing on the ideals of the Greek *polis* and Aristotle to arrive at the morality of small communities in which people work to fulfil their innately human purpose while resting the destructive forces of liberal capitalism (Clayton, 2006:1).

Social researchers and opponents of the conservative or rightist neo-liberal agenda comment that with the dawn of the 21st century, it has become even more difficult to differentiate between the conservative and the liberal traditions because of their undying belief in free market logic in all aspects of the economy. The common and mutual agenda of the conservative alliance and their pro-capitalist stance has made it imperative for leftist social researchers to come up with an alternative framework that is informed

by socialist ideology even if, at this moment in history, macro-political order does not allow it. Leftist social researchers call for an alternative to global capitalism and regard the role of transformative intellectuals housed in universities as very important to the anti-capitalist struggle.

2.4   The Radical Tradition of Social Justice

Continuities exist between the first two traditions of social justice and the third tradition in their calls for democracy and equal participation in socio-economic and political matters of the state. The third tradition, which is socialist, demonstrates elements of post-modernism in its outlook and has been identified by most social scientists as possessing the greatest potential to promote social justice (Starr, 1991:22). It is associated with leftist politics and is critical of conservatism and liberalism. According to this tradition, everyone is supposed to benefit equally from participating in the socio-economic activities and social institutions of a society (Starr, 1991:23); hence the move towards the redistribution of social wealth, other social amenities and a more equitable economic system. It is couched in the language of transformation and ideally would thrive under a socialist socio-economic order.

The language of a transformation of the capitalist socio-economic order associated with the third tradition causes it to possess a strong affinity to critical theory and the Frankfurt school of thought. While there are numerous social theorists associated with critical theory, of particular relevance to this project are Habermas and Freire because of their clear position on democracy and social justice. Habermas' position on social justice is heavily influenced by his belief that justice exists and reason or rationality can benefit society. His attachment to reason can be traced to his disillusionment with the irrationality of German Nazism and the repression and injustices that resulted from it (Stephens, 1994:3). As a result, he became an avowed critique of totalitarian fascism and advocator of an open, free society that upheld the principles of social justice and democracy. In this regard, his project could be interpreted as transforming human oppression into an expression of more humane and democratic values. He therefore found a philosophical home in the critical theory of the Frankfurt school. Habermas's strong affinity to the said theory was the common goal of opposing capitalism and

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proposing a more socially just socio-economic order based on egalitarian social democracy (Kellner, 2005:1).

Radical social justice concerns of equal and fair inclusion for Habermas are reflected in his theory of communicative action and the democratic public sphere (Stephens, 1994:5). The theory of communicative action aims to expand the scope and power of the "bourgeois" public sphere so that everyone is involved collectively so as to achieve more representative and socially just and rational solutions. Habermas supports benefits for the majority as opposed to the conservative view that the minority should benefit. He is often criticised by conservatives for destroying competition by increasing collective participation and decision making. So for Habermas, social justice lies in reasoned communication in a democratic public sphere. This is in line with the description of him as "trying to develop a historical materialist analysis which helps to bring about a society free from domination and repression or what he calls distorted communication" (Frankel and Habermas, 1974:41). Furthermore, Habermas as a Marxist and radical social scientist supports the advancement of research based on social justice:

> I see our research projects as an input into a social science which should be capable of a critical analysis of late capitalism with practical consequences ….this is a standing demand upon any Marxist that you must have a theoretical approach which is just (Frankel and Habermas, 1974:57).

The elements of radical social justice encapsulated in Habermas' work and research comprise the quest to emancipate society from the debilitating grip of capitalism by creating a just knowledge while critiquing late capitalism.

The concerns of Habermas to open up communication resonate with Paulo Freire's (1927 – 1997) concern with democratic dialogue as a tool to emancipate the oppressed against the debilitating effects of capitalism. Writing from the third world context, for Freire, education is a tool for liberating oppressed people from colonialism. He was critical of capitalism and the crises associated with societal modernisation such as abject oppression and injustices (Morrow and Torres, 2002:11; Glass, 2001:15). He exerted a strong influence on the critical education tradition in that he argued that education

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served to reproduce the interests of the ruling class and as a result it would take critical education to empower students and workers to resist capitalism and become active participants in a struggle for emancipation towards a socialist utopian vision (McLaren and Faramandpur, 2005: 53; Gibon, 2006:4). According to Freire, education for critical consciousness is closely related to the quest for transformation as found in radical social justice. In a third world context, closely similar to that of South Africa, Freire contends:

> The education our situation demanded would enable men and women to discuss courageously the problems of their context – and to intervene in that context, it would warn men and women of the dangers of the time and offer them the confidence and the strength to confront those dangers instead of surrendering their sense of self through submission to the decisions of others… that education could help men and women to assume an increasingly critical attitude towards the world in order to transform it (Freire, 1974:30).

Evident in Freire's assertions is the idea of transformation informed by a critical and contextualised analysis of society so as to lead to just futures. In support of Freire, this study advocates that the above sentiments and pedagogy of the oppressed are needed today as a matter of urgency in order for the majority to benefit, because of the onslaught on radical transformation and freedom by the current unjust discourse of neo-liberalism as explained in Chapter One.

The tone of the third tradition argues for transformation and majority benefits rather than minority ones. This implies that it supports the redistribution of socio-economic benefits. However, while the third tradition is an improvement on social justice informed by neo-liberalism, according to certain leftist scholars it does not fully promote genuine social justice as it is only limited to redistributing socio-economic resources to those that have been marginalised and excluded from the mainstream (Young, 2000). A progression from the third tradition is proposed by certain leftist feminist scholars. An improvement to the distributional dimension of social justice is found in what they term relational social justice. This type of social justice focuses on the nature of the relationships that structure society. These relationships include issues of power, at the micro-interpersonal and macro-socio-economic level, and how they are mediated. The said type concerns forms of social cooperation and distribution of power relations (Gerwitz, 1998:471). Relational justice incorporates the following conceptions

of social justice: justice as mutuality, justice as recognition and justice as freedom from oppressive relations (Ibid).

2.4.1 Justice as Mutuality

Justice as mutuality is an element of the relational dimension of social justice that is based on principles of communitarianism. In this conception of justice, all citizens are accorded equal treatment and benefits and, in turn, the relationships between them are mutually reciprocal for the purposes of promoting the common good (Gerwitz, 1998:473). Justice as mutuality also possesses the element of interdependence. This element is derived from a post-modern version of mutuality and is informed by affirmative post-modernism. Mutuality attempts to overcome the negativity of sceptical postmodernism with positive social action by attempting to balance difference, solidarity and commonality (Gerwitz, 1998:47). A view of justice as interdependence argues that promoting solidarity may make it possible for society to participate in collective resistance in the campaign for a socially just society (Graig, 2002:475).

Mutuality is an important part of affirmative postmodernism because its advocates are:

> …more politically optimistic, they support a wide range of new political and social movements and advocate pluralism and tolerance rather than partisan and dogmatic postures… The expression of affirmative post-modern politics in the third world takes the form of populist, fundamentalist, national post-modern movements. These organisations call for returning to the primitive, sacred and traditional society as well as rejecting first world ideologies, technologies and economics (Rosenau, 1992:24).

While affirmative post-modernism is more positive about the future, sceptical post-modernism is more nihilistic. This study concurs with the Marxist critique of scepticism in post modernity: "…It heralds the end of grand theories like Marxism and liberalism, scorning any notion of a united feminist challenge to patriarchy, of united anti-racist struggle, and of united working-class movements against capitalist exploitation and oppression. For postmodernists, the world is fragmented, history is ended, and all struggles are local and particularistic" (Hill, McLaren, Cole & Rikowski, 1999:9).

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The two versions of post-modernity help illuminate the current debates on socially just futures and continually occupy competing positions for advancing a socially just order. However, this study identifies more fully with some elements of affirmative post-modernism because it is more tolerant, accommodative and optimistic since it recognises the commonality of the human race.

2.4.2 Justice as Recognition

Justice as recognition is linked to the post-modern version of mutuality yet it draws heavily on feminist insights. Justice as recognition concentrates on the acknowledgement of others and otherness while avoiding practices of power and control over others. The principle of recognition promotes the struggles for social justice waged by a variety of groups such as those based on gender, race and ethnicity (Fraser, 1995:68). Practically, it involves listening to others before action is taken and engaging in a joint authorship of the narrative of society, while acknowledgement of their diversity is taken as a priority. At an interpersonal level, justice as recognition is inclusive, which is a positive aspect of social justice (Gerwitz, 1998:476)? Fraser further proposes two distinctions of recognitive justice – affirmative and transformative. Affirmative recognition corrects injustice without disturbing the underlying framework that generates injustices. Transformative recognition corrects injustices by restructuring the underlying framework that generates them (Fraser, 2001: 82). In other words, transformative recognition attempts to challenge the status quo in an almost similar tone to that of the project of critical theory in seeking for alternatives to the current framework of neo-liberalism.

Justice as recognition resonates with other radical scholars' conception of social justice owing to the element of inclusion and acknowledgment of "others" inherent in it. Other social scientists and theories that support the inclusive and redistributive nature of the third tradition have coined the term "recognitive justice", particularly in the diverse and plural context. According to Gale:

> … Recognitive justice (has an) expanded understanding of social justice
> that includes a positive regard for social difference and the centrality of
> socially democratic processes in working towards its achievement. Yet,
> in adhering to this position I want to avoid suggesting that material

conditions and distributive matters are unrelated to or are unimportant in defining and practicing social justice… (2001:267).

The positive aspect of recognitive justice is that in addition to its accommodative stance, it encourages the engagement of all, particularly the previously excluded, in social processes. However, it does not indicate the practicalities. Its position is similar to that of Gindin (2002: "speaking to the limited nature of social justice inherent in liberal capitalism". This implies foregrounding the social justice agenda even when history and the broader socio-economic framework are at odds with it. The challenge is how this should be accomplished. In the same vein, Whitty (2001:293) argues that in promoting the recognitive and inclusive aspects of social justice in education, policies need to deploy human capital as well as social capital. Social capital is a concept that is also used by the World Bank to refer to norms and networks that enable collective action which could be used in support of community development and social inclusion, processes which are crucial in the functioning of a democratic, inclusive and cohesive society (Forum Report, 2003:3). While the present study recognises the neo-liberal ideological leaning of the World Bank and that of its conception of social capital, its author chooses to use the concept of social capital to illustrate that the radical social justice position advances even the radicalisation of social capital to render it more inclusive in the widest and broadest possible sense. Inclusivity, social, economic and political, resonates with participation parity: a position that is advanced by the radical social justice proponents in their current scholarly journals such as the *Journal of Inclusive Education*: a more viable alternative to proposals informed by neo-liberalism (Waite, 1999 Hamilton, 2001; Sikes & Vincent, 1998; Alexiandou, 2002).

The two dimensions of relational social justice as identified by Gerwitz (1998) display limitations. The concepts of communitarianism and interdependence held by those who advocate justice as mutuality ignore the injustices inherent within capitalism by conflating the interests of the capitalist and other groups. Another limitation of the two positions is their inability to inform the content and direction of collective social action for a more socially just world (Gerwitz, 1998:477). The limitations of these dimensions are addressed by the notion of justice as freedom from oppressive conditions.

2.4.3 Justice as Freedom from Five Faces of Oppression

Justice as freedom from oppression entails freedom from the following forms of oppression:

- Exploitation;

- Marginalisation;

- Violence;

- Powerlessness; and

- Cultural imperialism (Young, 1997, as cited in Gerwitz, 1998; Young, 2000:35).

Each of the five faces of oppression represents a form of injustice that a member of society might experience. Justice as freedom from the five faces of oppression envisages a society in which socio-economic justice is achieved through equal redistribution of the resources of society, humane treatment of all, equal recognition of the worth of all members of society, empowerment and celebration of diversity. Advocates of this radical and broad conception of justice assert that it encompasses the principles and practice of utopian egalitarianism, democracy and human rights. It seeks to promote socio-economic empowerment, political recognition and tolerance, and the inclusion and celebration of diversity through processes that counteract imperialism in any form (Gerwitz, 1998:477; Young, 2000: 48).

Young clearly posits a view of society divorced from social injustices and different forms of oppression and domination. Not only does it illuminate a global context, it can also be used to clarify the situation and lived experiences of the marginalised and disadvantaged in the South African context. Young is not alone in providing a deep analysis of oppression and domination and their consequences. In the South African context, Ramphele articulates a similar view by employing various dimensions of space as sources of marginalisation and domination, which therefore counteract the emancipatory possibilities of people (Ramphele, 1993:3-7). According to Ramphele, space is multi levelled; it consists of the physical, political-economic, ideological-intellectual and psychosocial. People who live in marginalised and poverty stricken

Table 2.1 − The 5 faces of oppression

Face of oppression	Description by Young
Exploitation	" the injustice of exploitation consists in social processes that bring about a transfer of energies from one group to another to produce unequal distributions, and in the ways in which social intuitions enable a few to accumulate while they constrain many more" (p.41)
Marginalisation	"… marginal are people who the system of labour cannot or will not use… the growing number of underclass of people permanently confined to lives of social marginality… A whole category of people expelled from useful participation in society and thus potentially subjected to severe material deprivation and extermination (p.41).
Powerlessness	"I have discussed several injustices associated with powerlessness: inhibitions in the development of one's capacities, lack of decision making power in one's working life, and exposure to disrespectful treatment because of the status one occupies. These injustices have distributional consequences, but are more fundamentally matters of the division of labour. The oppression of powerlessness brings into question the division of labour basic in all industrial societies" (p.44).
Cultural imperialism	"Cultural imperialism involves the paradox of experiencing oneself as invisible at the same time that one is marked out as different. The invisibility comes about when dominant groups fail to recognise the perspective embodied in their cultural expression as perspective. This then is the injustice of cultural imperialism: that the oppressed group's own experiences and interpretation of social life find little expression that touches the dominant culture, while that same culture imposes on the oppressed group its experiences and interpretation of social life" (p.46).
Violence	"Many groups suffer the oppression of systematic violence. Members of some groups live with the knowledge that they must fear random, unprovoked attacks on their person or property which have no motive but to damage, humiliate, or destroy the person… Violence is systemic because it is directed at members of a group because they are members of that group" (p.46).

settings, such as hostel dwellers, experience limited dimensions of space due to systemic oppression and exclusion. Ramphele explores the emancipatory possibilities that can be facilitated by dismantling systemic oppression and expanding and liberating the various dimensions of space (Ramphele, 1993). Applying this notion of space to a radical conception of social justice means that systemic structures which facilitate oppression and domination need to be dismantled. This would be in line with the radical conception of social justice adopted in the present study.

Young's conceptualisation of social justice and Ramphele's (1993) position on the various dimensions of space share common elements of emancipatory possibilities for individuals and societies in oppressive contexts and constitute a useful framework of an agenda for social justice. Young's model incorporates that which is good in liberal and post-modern conceptualisations of social justice but overcomes their limitations by being inclusive and non-reductionist while indicating how different groups face oppression (Gerwitz, 1998:482). Young's broad conceptualisation of social justice is constructive because it improves on a more restrictive liberal and conventional conceptualisation of social justice. It can be regarded as a useful starting point for theorising about social justice during the globalised, post-modern and post-colonial era because it reflects a more expansive and holistic synthesis of distributional and relational dimensions of social justice. Although it was originally used to explain injustices in the USA, this study argues that it is relevant for explaining the persistent injustices in the South African context during the 21st century.

2.4.4 Radical Social Justice Agenda for the 21st Century

The distributional and relational dimensions of social justice as identified by Gerwitz resonate with other elements of social justice informed by leftist discourse of the 21st century. Concepts such as socio-economic inclusion, and human development, radical democracy and transformative intellectuals emerge in the writings, on social justice, of radical scholars. The emphasis on social justice, inclusion and social capital accords with that of humane capitalism which, according to Brine (2001:139), is reliant on social inclusion and subsistence welfare support and is less aggressive. Consequently for him social capitalism would promote conditions conducive to social justice. Similarly, Walker (2003) argues that social justice pertains to human development, the advancement of the individual as well as collective solidarity – the one with the other (Walker, 2003: 168-169).

Applebaum (2001) adds another dimension to the debate on social justice by indicating that as a form of, and essential to, moral education, social justice needs to raise awareness of dominance. He suggests that for social justice to be genuine there must be a critical analysis of dominant beliefs, values and standards so that the supposedly "good intentions are exposed for what they promote and genuine socially just

alternatives are found" (Applebaum, 2001:55). This position is similar to the notion of the anti-capitalist terrain of social justice advanced by Gindin (2002). He proposes that a social justice situation comprises certain elements such as the radical democratisation of knowledge, where *technobureacracy* moves to *technodemocracy* and academics develop into *academocrats* (Gindin, 2002:8), which implies civil workers or workers who are democratic in outlook and practice and also implies that academics hold transformatory and democratic dispositions. In many ways this position echoes Giroux's notion of teachers as transformative intellectuals (1987:36). This position advanced by Giroux is also reminiscent of that held by Young on justice as freedom from oppressive situations, discussed above, since the main objective of transformative intellectuals is to liberate the oppressed masses by developing solutions to the injustices of the past.

Social justice and the transformative intellectuals that support it bring to light very appealing classroom dynamics, for example, that further illustrate the elements of radical social justice. The elements of these classroom dynamics include collaborative problem solving and critical reflective practice. These must be displayed by all, particularly teachers as intellectuals, while challenging the underlying assumptions of policy provision and practice (Lloyd, 2000: 149).

Gerwitz and Gibb (2002) support the above in maintaining that:

> Asking about socially just education practices requires policy sociology to combine action-oriented and critical perspectives. It demands a respect for practice and a willingness to see educational practices as sites of justice or merely injustice, to raise consciousness of the people in order to overcome ignorance and change their distorted social reality. It also requires sociologists to see their own educational practices as having a direct effect on the possibility of these conceptions being realized (Gewirtz and Gibb, 2002: 509).

This position also echoes the writing of Freire regarding the nurturing of critical consciousness in people so as to address the social reality; the way things are, in order to change them for the collective good (Freire, 1974:17). Freire's position also falls in line with critical theory as discussed in the conceptual framework (see chapter one). With reference to classroom dynamics, critical theory and critical pedagogues locate their oppositional role in nurturing critical consciousness, for the purpose of

transforming the whole of a society towards becoming a radically socially just one (Slee, 2001:174). Slee's sentiment echoes Giroux's language of possibility as regards radical scholars in critical theory and the pursuit of social justice (Giroux, 1987:218).

These suggestions of how to bring about social justice at educational institutions, using the discourse of inclusive education and critical theory, are also noble and progressive. These groups of social scientists are explicitly committed to social justice in education. However, their views are inadequate in that they do not also further continue to indicate how practically the social justice agenda can be realised.

Having looked at various traditions of social justice that exist in the world, I now turn to what other social theorists see as the way forward for the advancement of the social justice agenda. Social justice advocates a call upon all humanity to work towards a new global order that practises inclusive democracy in socio-economic affairs, while promoting sustainable development and environmental balance (Feagin, 2001:17). Feagin (2002) writes as a critical sociologist with an optimistic attitude towards advancing the goal of social justice. As is characteristic of the critical sociology tradition, he also adopts an inclusive stance by calling upon all humanity to advance the cause of social justice.

While other scholars lament the fall of the communist ideal and note that the theories that promised certain emancipatory effects do not produce them, they nevertheless relentlessly call for the reinvigoration of the public sphere, new forms of plural democracy and reconstructed critical educators or professionals (Muller, 1998:205). McLaren (2002) shares the same sentiments, in calling on critical educators to recognise the dangers of democratic education in adjusting students to the logic of the market. He further argues that democratic education should be challenged by a radical social justice that is optimistic about the future and informed by a radical positive humanism with its belief in the inherent ability of humankind to create a just social order (McLaren, 2002:1; Feagin, 2001:23). The inherent ability to create such an order is also found in liberal capitalism and other failed attempts such as the social democratic tradition (Cindin, 2002:3). In liberal capitalism and the social democratic tradition, social justice ideals are limited because they are expressed in the language of reform found in the

practices of a welfare state and the goals of democratic capitalism. The support of capitalism, common to both the traditions, continues to seriously undermine and marginalise the ideals of radical social justice. Consequently, with regards to this position, it appears that the possibility of the realisation of the social justice agenda is multi-faceted and plural, as discussed above. The challenge is how to make the ideal conceptions realistic, concrete and tangible so that they become the lived experience of everyone.

However, numerous frameworks do not perceive neo-liberalism, capitalism and socialism as the appropriate framework for social justice. One of them is the post-modernist tradition which promises limited room for social justice insofar as its characteristic of rejecting the metanarratives of modernisation is concerned. Post-modernism is vehemently opposed to tradition. Its foremost theorists range from Lyotard (1979) to Foucault (1980) among others. Their positions represent an accumulated disillusionment with the promises of the enlightenment project and modernisation. They employ terms such as "responsible anarchy", which implies acceptance of disorder. According to one of its prominent supporters, Atkinson, "responsible anarchy involves standing against the fantasies of grand narratives, recoverable pasts and predictable futures" (Atkinson, as cited in Cole: 2003: 447-448). Atkinson further states that "through acceptance of uncertainty, the acknowledgement of diversity and the refusal to see concepts such as justice, or society as fixed truths, post-modernism … is a powerful force for social change" (2003:473). The postmodernist discourse promises social justice by opposing what its advocates refer to as "metanarratives" such as capitalism, socialism and communism. In postmodernism, the focus on the local instead of the global masquerades as social justice. Furthermore, postmodernism seems to possess impressive credentials by appearing to elevate the status of the marginalised and downtrodden in society. The elevation of the marginalised human beings serves as a necessary catalyst for them to perceive that they have within themselves the capacity to stand against the grand narratives that have so far not fully promoted a socially just society. However, social justice in postmodernism is extremely limited as it does not deal with a holistic view of social justice as the third tradition does.

Another tradition that bears certain similarities with the postmodern tradition and is also opposed to neo-liberalism is the postcolonial tradition. Postcolonial discourse is of particular importance to Africa and the developing world because of its critique of western and new-imperialism as well as its mission to promote a more socially just society by going beyond critique and looking for more progressive alternatives to imperialism and colonialism (Tikly, 2004:150). Post colonialism is concerned with re-narrativisation that is displacing the story of capitalism, modernity and Eurocentricity and promoting non-western epistemologies and Afrocentricity (Tikly, 2004:193). The uniting concern of postmodernity and postcolonialism is the re-narrativisation and celebration of the marginalised epistemologies and ways of knowing such as the African perspective. It is in the process of re-narrativisation that the possibility of reconceptualising a more socially just world order lies. However, postcolonial theory does not totally embrace the propositions of postmodernity. This is evident in that while postmodernity is nihilistic and sees no hope in metanarratives, postcolonial theory attempts to seek answers in these metanarratives and other alternatives that promote critical thought and social transformation (Tikly, 2004:194).

Proponents of the radical tradition of social justice view postmodernism as being opposed to social justice since it promotes chaos and anarchy, which does not provide hope for the marginalised. According to Allman, the radical left "… take issue with its anti-foundationalism, its rejection of the metanarrative, and its denial of any totalising system of thought like Marxism or feminism. Basically (they) challenge its inability to make general statements about society" (Davies, 2001: 43). Allman, one of these radical left researchers, argues that "the approach to critical education that I advocate in my writings is an approach that is aimed at enabling people to engage in an appreciated experience of pro-alternative, counter hegemonic social relations. These are social relations within which people can learn to 'read' the world critically and glimpse humanity's possible futures beyond the horizons of capitalism" (2001:16).

According to Allman (2001), postmodernism cannot accommodate genuine social justice as conceptualised by the radical left. For Allman, that which is genuine educational reform, which also meets the ideals of social justice, is an approach that "… aims at enabling people to live the now by struggling to transform it into an affirmation

of humanisation, i.e. an affirmation of our faith in human beings' ability and need to 'make and recreate their own world'" (Freire, 1972:63, as cited in Allman, 2001:16). This position which is described as a critical utopia is more appropriate than the ludicrous utopia which arises out of the belief that the liberal democracy which informs capitalism promises social justice regardless of its contradiction (Allman, 2000:16). The critical utopian agenda that aims at promoting social justice is also shared by other radical left educators in the western world. This camp is one that is associated with neo-Marxism, which is the main challenger of the capitalist and neo-liberal agenda on social justice (Allman, 2000:17; Hill, 2003:24 & Cole 2004:488).

The quest for a critical utopia in which the communal human being is to replace a self-centred individualist is the main focus of radical scholars. Among the elements of such a utopia is the advancement of social justice by inflicting maximum damage to capitalism (McLaren, 2003:3). Another pertinent element is the re-introduction of Marx's theory of labour value and its orientation against capitalist exploitation (Ibid).This would be doing justice to the plight of the marginalised and the oppressed in society. Lebowitz, one of the forefront proponents of educational change informed by radical social justice, states that:

> …if you seek social justice, you are struggling, consciously or unconsciously against the logic of capitalism. And that implicit in your ideal of social justice is a different type of economic system, one which exists nowhere in the world at this time but which I hope, barring nuclear war or environmental disasters, will someday take shape (1988: 29).

In his most recent writings, Lebowitz has added that the struggle is not only for social justice but also against capitalism and the reproduction of wage-workers who perceive that capitalism is necessary for their survival (Lebowitz, 2004:7). Doing justice, for those within the grasp of capitalism, would entail the critical and important realisation that there is an alternative to capitalism worth struggling for. One process towards this realisation is a critical evaluation and reassessment of the inadequacies and failures of the 20th and 21st century (Lebowitz, 2004:8). This process should not merely end at evaluation and assessment, but continue to the reformulation of a more progressive

alternative that does justice to global human development. This would, in the words of other radical left educators, do maximum damage to capitalism (McLaren, 2004).

Social justice, according to Lebowitz, accommodates endogenous development because it allows and encourages a solidarity that stems from a focus on the interests of the community and human development rather than self-interest and capitalist development (Lebowitz, 2004:11). Consequently, according to proponents of the third tradition, real change for the marginalised will result with the overthrow of capitalism and the reinstatement of socialism.

Scholars of radical social justice declare that education is important for radical educational and social change. It is crucial, according to them, that in the educational arena, ways are created to bring about social change informed by radical social justice. Education possesses a considerable potential for change and they aver that education needs to create an arena where real global and local issues may be addressed. One of the forefront supporters of this kind of education is Rikowski. He suggests that the education of the future that would advance social justice consists of three moments: the first is that of a critique of capitalist society and education. The second is that of meeting human needs and education while the third comprises the realms of freedom and education (Rikowski, 2004: 566). The critique of capitalism involves the critique of all forms of inequality in capitalism: class inequality, sexism, racism, discrimination against different groups of people. In order for the critique to have a bearing on change in society, Rikowski argues that it must be linked to meeting human needs, which is the second phase. The third phase involves enabling the students and teachers to develop realms of freedom which entail possibilities for transcending capitalism and its oppressive institutions (Rikowski, 2004:567-569). Rikowski's (2004) education for the future, informed by Marxism, resonates with the concept of social justice education as advanced by leftist scholars, particularly with its focus on promoting education that is liberatory and contributes to transformation.

The radical left's call for equal participation and an end to all faces of oppression as identified by Young (1997) defines social justice as both a process and a goal for a

society that promotes mutual cooperation, socio-economic justice and physical and psychological safety for all its members.

> Our approach to social justice education begins with people's lived experiences and works to foster critical perspective and action directed towards social change… We take the position that people in both dominant and subordinated groups have a critical role to play in dismantling oppression and generating a vision for a more socially just future.'… As individuals and groups can only have partial visions. Coalitions can bring together multiple ways of understanding the world and oppressive structures within it (Adams, et al., 1997:14).

Social justice at a more practical level involves everyone in the particular society or group, both the benefactors and the oppressors. It requires individuals to know about themselves and others while acknowledging differences, embracing and engaging with diversity. In this entire process social justice involves the quest for alternatives to the status quo − that of the oppressiveness of neo-liberalism and capitalism. Radical scholars, particularly the feminists, have suggested a practical way for constructing institutions that promote social justice. The summary below offers an illustration of some practical activities that could enhance social justice in organisations.

- Engaging practically with difference and diversity;

- Practicing and promoting community activism for social justice;

- Promoting critical consciousness raising and awareness;

- Creating and nurturing change agents for a common progressive and democratic organisational culture; and

- Promoting the practice of employment equity (adapted from John Anner, 2000: 494-495).

The above digest depicts a tall order for creating socially just educational organisations. It can be viewed as a stepping point towards achieving what many have described as impossible. The observations of feminist radical scholars such as Young (1997), Fraser (1995) and Davies (1997) are useful in illuminating the possibility of achieving socially just educational futures. "The possible is embedded in the (im) possible. Through a shift

of attention, a shift of conscience and consciousness, not just in one mind but in the mind of a people, action unfolds, sometimes violently, making a new possibility" (Davies, 2005:12). Davies further echoes the sentiments of Rikowski (2004), Adams (1997) and other radical scholars in proposing that students need to be educated in a manner which enables them to critique the system of oppression and come up with new alternatives.

> We must give to our students a doubled gaze, to enable them to become critically literate, to become citizens at once capable of adapting and becoming appropriate within the contexts in which they find themselves and as responsible citizens capable of critique; citizens who can understand the constitutive work that discourse do and who can work creatively, imaginatively, politically, and with passion to break open the old where it is faulty and to envisage the new (Davies, 2005:13).

The above sentiments of creating new possibilities also echo radical left principles for achieving social and economic justice in education policy. According to Hill (2000), these principles are based on a democratic theoretical framework. This principle advocates that in order for education to advance the radical social justice agenda, governments must commit more funding to education and put an end to a competitive market ideology in education. The curriculum and policies must be informed by principles of egalitarianism and democracy and seek to transform the present capitalist system into a socialist one. The teachers and intellectuals must promote democracy and engage in critical pedagogy, with a commitment to social justice inside and outside the school (Hill, 2000:2).

On the whole, the sources that employ the language of the possibility of a progressive radical conception of social justice are informed by critical pedagogy and focus on the agenda of transforming educational policy and practice to make it more inclusive, participatory and emancipating. There are points of convergence between the literature from the West reviewed in this study and policy concerns in the South African context. This is evident in the struggle for radical social justice, the impact of globalisation, and the failure of the neo-liberal paradigm to address the education crisis and the ensuing injustices, as well as its inability to bring about a socially just socio-economic and

political order. The section that follows considers the South African concerns regarding social justice.

2.5   South Africa and Radical Social Justice

In South Africa, concerns with social justice, in line with the radical tradition, have always been high on the agenda of the anti-apartheid movement. The dawn of political independence and the dismantling of apartheid in the 1990s led to a re-emphasis on the social justice agenda in the government's attempts at nation building, reconciliation and addressing the injustices of the past.

Social justice became an integral part of the education and training agenda for post apartheid South Africa. The foundation of the social justice discourse can be traced to the anti-apartheid movements, culminating in the formation of the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) in the 1990s, a policy initiative informed by a progressive philosophy of education and reform. The apartheid government also proposed a policy framework: the Education Renewal Strategy (ERS), which also claimed to address the injustices of the past. There were major differences between the ERS and NEPI, both conceptually and politically. In the first instance, the NEPI framework could be seen as an attempt to democratise education policy formulation, whereas the ERS did not fundamentally address the question of social injustice and was essentially autocratic and informed by neo-liberalism's economic and technocratic rationality. Secondly, the NEPI researchers consisted of a wide range of people, spanning political leaders and academic practitioners, while the ERS derived its personnel from the state bureaucrats (Chetty et al., 1993). It could be said that the ERS policy options were in alignment with the conservative social justice positions as discussed in part one, while the NEPI policy options were more in alignment with the social democratic tradition.

The NEPI emerged as one of the dominant positions that proposed progressive policy options for South Africa. The guiding principles of NEPI were non-sexism, non-racialism, redress, democracy and a unitary education system (NEPI, 1992: 6-7). According to the NEPI proposals, the above principles require that any higher education institutions must at least ensure open access, wider consultation and participation with

all stakeholders, equal-opportunity employment policies and equal opportunities in admissions (NEPI, 1992:90).

On closer scrutiny, it could be said that during the agenda setting stage of policy development in South Africa, the policy options that embodied concerns with social justice, as advanced in this thesis, were those of the NEPI. All five guiding principles of the NEPI not only hold appeal for the mass democratic movement but also for progressive scholars internationally, in the quest for democracy and socially just futures. However, it should be noted that the proposals of the NEPI did not exist in a conflict-free political setting. They were strongly contested, further illustrating that the battle for progressive radical social justice is fraught with competition as well as struggles for recognition and a place in the centre.

Following the NEPI and ERS Proposals, the late 1990s saw the formulation of policy documents such as the White Paper on Education and Training of 1995, the Green Paper on Higher Education Transformation of 1996, the White Paper on Higher Education (3) and the Higher Education Act of 1997. All these policy documents signalled the country's commitment to transforming and reconstructing education in general, and higher education in particular, in line with the demands of the Reconstruction and Development Programme. Since the year 2000 a plethora of policy documents focusing on transforming and reconstructing higher education have been published. These included the Size and Shape Document – *Towards a New Higher Education Landscape – Meeting the Equity, Quality and Social Imperatives of South Africa in the 21st Century* (June 2000), the National Plan For Higher Education (February 2001) and the New Academic Plan for Programmes and Qualifications in Higher Education (January 2002).

The policy documents of the 1990s, especially the foundational 1995 White Paper on Education and Training, emerged as documents that carried over the proposals of the NEPI and the ERS. The 1995 White Paper locates education and training within the Reconstruction and Development macroeconomic policy. It is an attempt by the government to envision and realise the policy of open access to all in an integrated unitary system. The policy states: "the paramount task is to build a just and equitable system which provides good quality education and training to learners young and old

throughout the country" (Department of Education: White Paper, 1997:9). The specific values that drove the policy are those embodying the reconstruction and development of education and training. The policy is committed to education as a human right, open access, lifelong learning, and an integrated approach to education and training, equity, democratic governance, justice, respect for diversity and commitment to critical thought. Most of these values portray a commitment to redress and justice (Department of Education: White Paper, 1997: 9-12). In these foundational documents, concerns with social justice were explicit. Although the basic principles that guided these policy documents were progressive, overall macro-economic factors continued to be at odds with the progressive philosophy. This inconsistency consequently calls for a new approach to the advancement of the social justice agenda.

The subsequent policy documents and policy-making bodies, namely the National Commission of Higher Education (NCHE), the Council on Higher Education (CHE), the National Plan on Higher Education (NPHE) and the New Academic Policy (NAP), brought additional elements of the social justice agenda to the policy scene. Most of them made reference to this agenda, implicitly or explicitly, and to varying degrees. The common aim of these policy documents is to transform higher education to meet the challenges of globalisation. The recurring points raised in these documents that are in alignment with the social justice agenda are: equity and redress, democratisation and development (White Paper, 1997: 11-13). The "Size and Shape" document echoes the White Paper in the following: meeting equity, redressing challenges and promoting critical intellectual debate, good citizenship, open access to all and the reinvigoration of the African continent Council on Higher Education- CHE,, 2002:24-28). The National Plan priorities were to increase the participation and representation of previously disadvantaged groups (Department of Education: New Academic Policy, 2002: 26-27).

Although concerns with social justice remain in the policy documents on higher education, the tone of the statements appears to be aligned with conceptions of social justice associated with neo-liberalism and its emphasis on developing higher education for the needs of the competitive global knowledge economy. Concerns with global competitiveness and the knowledge economy have been translated in terms of the corporatisation and commodification of higher education – a trend that is eroding social

justice concerns in higher education. Proponents of the radical social justice agenda, such as the progressive intellectual forces in the country (Muller, 1998; Vally, 2002; & Chisholm, 1998), lament the manner in which social justice is downplayed in policy due to the macro-economic regime under which the new government has placed itself. The developments in question are the replacement of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) by the Growth, Economic and Redistribution Strategy (GEAR). At the macro-level, progressive social scientists call for the re-insertion of the transformatory agenda of the RDP in addressing the impact of globalisation. Commenting on the change in the direction of post-apartheid education in South Africa (from RDP to GEAR), Kallaway et al. (1997) have this to say:

> Instead of the popular or socialist ethos of Peoples' Education and the implementation of the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI), the master narrative of educational reform has, to a large extent, been framed by the international neo-liberal guidelines from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Instead of the vision promoted by People's Education for People's Power, the defining concept of the new education has been rationalization, downsizing, line management, efficiency, equivalencies and outcomes-based education (1997:.1).

Writing in the mid 1990s, Chisholm and Fuller's (1996) critique of South African policy formulation and implementation indicates that the broad transformative agenda of the pre-1990 period was being narrowed down to promote the concerns of a market economy. Chisholm states that these alterations took place because of the broader direction of change globally and locally in South Africa, which was moving towards a more neo-liberal macro-economic policy. This development at macro level made it impossible for policy makers to propose a policy agenda that was at variance with the dominant trends (Chisholm, 1996:713). Although the macro policy development points to a direction opposed to the progressive social justice agenda, literature in the South African context continues to argue for the promotion of an atmosphere conducive to both the macro and micro level, as regards social justice education.

Scholars writing in the 2000s also share similar sentiments about the erosion of the transformative agenda that has the concerns of social justice in higher education at heart. According to Badat (2001:1), globalisation and other hegemonic practices and policies informed by neo-liberalism have exerted an impact on the extent to which

higher education can drive the agenda for social justice. In making this observation, he was commenting on inserting the principle of the common good into higher education, which is an element of social justice. Furthermore, Badat avers that for higher education to be more responsive to the public good and social justice issues there needs to be a courageous critical scholarship with a commitment to social justice and a humane society (Badat, 2001:5). In similar vein, Ntshoe (2002:9) argues that the specific aspects of globalisation that have impacted on the neutralisation of the progressive social justice agenda are the thinking of the new right, and neo-liberalism. Ntshoe's position is that, for the reversal of the neo-liberal negative impact on social justice, the neo-liberal agenda needs to be challenged. However, he does not indicate how it should be challenged or the specific strategies that could challenge it. Singh (2001) also shares the same sentiments as Badat and Ntshoe. According to Singh, for the above stated goals to be realised, social justice issues need to be made more explicit and real. She acknowledges that to pursue such an agenda will prove difficult but that through tenacious commitment to social justice and its clarification, it could be achieved (2001: 12).

Another study in South Africa views globalisation in a positive light: the author contends that restructuring higher education in the era of globalisation creates possibilities for communitarian liberalism, and adds that it may contribute towards deepening democracy at higher education institutions (Waghid, 2000:106). The specific elements of communitarian liberalism that are likely to promote democracy are identified as conversational justice and shared rational deliberation (Waghid, 2002:112). Implicit in this suggestion is an atmosphere fertile for the germination of the ideal of social justice. Thus, it needs to be explored further but with caution, lest attempts at promoting it relapse into neo-liberalism.

At the micro-level, the agenda for the promotion of social justice lies in the call for more participatory and democratic policy formulation and implementation – involving all social agents. De Clerq promotes this position in saying that policy documents separate policy formulation from implementation. In addition to this she observes that some of the policy authors possess a very poor understanding of educational dynamics on the ground (1996:144). According to her, policy stands a better chance of

implementation if it is subjected to a more vigorous and critical dialogue and pedagogical debate. In this manner all agents in the policy circle can contribute towards enhancing the education and training system in being more equitable and effective. Similarly, Unterhalter (1998:232) contends that, for policy to be more inclusive and gender sensitive, a different and more socially just form of analysis is needed. Carrim (1998:14) supports these sentiments in arguing that engagement with the concepts of inclusion and exclusion offers a potential towards the realisation of social justice.

Other micro-level issues have to do with the discourse that is most conducive for social justice in the current period of globalisation. According to Kraak (2001), this period was characterised by a highly contested policy environment leading to the emergence of three contesting discourses that have exerted an impact on policy formulation; the high-skill economic or rationalist discourse; a popular democratic discourse, and a residual stratification discourse. Each of these discourses treated social justice differently. The popular democratic discourse is more explicit on issues of social justice while the other two, the high-skill discourse and the stratification discourse, are more implicit in their conception of social justice, because they are market driven and, rather, influenced by conservatism and neo-liberal economic rationalism (Kraak, 2001: 23-24). It could be said that Kraak (2001) supports the popular democratic discourse in advancing the progressive agenda of social justice. In another paper, Ntshoe (2002) supports the position of Kraak above in calling for a re-emphasis on the shift to the fundamental issues of reconstruction and development, equity and redressing the historical imbalances of the past (Ntshoe, 2002:8).

Related to the popular democratic discourse is the concern of higher education policy makers in South Africa as to the place of indigenous knowledge systems (IKS). According to Odora-Hoppers (2001:73), concerns for and engagement with IKS by higher education institutions stand a greater chance of reconstructing knowledge production, challenging existing paradigms, epistemological foundations and existing academic practice. This will contribute towards enabling the higher education community to find a sustainable and inclusive formula for a way forward; a formula that is more responsive to transformation and progressive social justice (2001: 84).

Implicit in the sentiments of Odora-Hoppers (2001) is the call for a concern with social justice that is transformative and emancipatory, which implies that for South African higher education to play a responsive and transformatory role; its practitioners must then begin to challenge the neo-liberal paradigm that thrives on injustices. Also related to the concerns with respect to IKS is the debate regarding mode one and mode two knowledge and their impact on the role of a university. According to Waghid (2002:18), this debate needs to be framed within a complementary knowledge base that constitutes disciplinary or mode one knowledge, plus socially distributed or mode two knowledge. It could be said that socially constructed knowledge possesses inherent progressive social justice attributes. The task lying ahead of researchers is to work them out. However, Waghid does not provide details on how to achieve this.

2.6   Criticisms of Radical Social Justice

Radical social justice, referred to earlier as the third tradition, possesses a broader agenda in the South African context because of the historical legacy of the country and its specificity, for instance, the consideration of the forms of mode two knowledge as social justice issues. The breadth and scope of the agenda further illustrate the inclusive and accommodative stance of the radical conception of social justice. However, radical social justice has been criticised for being overly utopian (Starr, 1991:24). With reference to its position on education, it has also been criticised for adopting an inclusive emancipatory and political stance that would produce a cadre of social activists without adequate skills for the marketplace. Its proposal of full inclusion has also been criticised for lowering educational standards by burdening educators with students from disadvantaged educational backgrounds (Rochester, 2003:1). Another criticism of the radical position of social justice stems from the postmodernist scholars who accuse it of being a totalising meta-narrative that excludes other ways of knowing, particularly those of feminism (Burbules and Berk, 1999:57). Despite this criticism, this tradition stands a better chance of achieving a socially just education and training system because of its socialist and redistributive agenda as opposed to the restrictive and neo-liberal agenda of the other two traditions. The tenets of the radical position on social justice, such as participation parity in all societal institutions, far outweigh the issues of marketable skills, the lowering of standards and a totalising meta-narrative. Also neutralising this criticism are the broad and inclusive agenda of radical social

justice and the language of possibility to which Giroux (1987) alludes. In such justice, concepts such as justice as mutuality, recognition and justice as freedom from oppressive socio-economic, political and cultural relations, promise a vision for genuine social justice. Therefore, the challenge is to revitalise social belief in the alternatives to neo-liberal social justice, such as are to be found in the radical social justice agenda.

In the context of the narrowing of the policy agenda, the shifting of policy alliances and ambiguities, this study contends that the pursuit of social justice is critical. My argument after reviewing research concerned with social justice issues in South Africa is that the national policy documents appear to serve and legitimate the current socio economic context informed by neo-liberalism. In principle, the social justice agenda is expressed by the recurring focus on equity, redress and social responsiveness, democratic and inclusive education. This scenario tends to leave existing and traditional institutional practices intact. The question that arises is: How can institutional practices be made to support the social justice agenda? This study therefore seeks to extend the scope of existing literature on social justice education by providing a reconstructed, revitalised and relevant version. Additionally, the study will then look at those institutional practices that are conducive to social justice by addressing the desire for the clarification of the distinctive core elements of socially just conditions.

Furthermore, while evidence gleaned from the literature appears to indicate that history and the broader macro-economic framework of neo-liberalism stifle the concerns and practices of radical social justice, and that the essential structure of neo-liberalism remains integrated, new hope is to be found in the establishment or creation of the progressive voice and practices of dissent. These beacons of possibilities provide significant potential for the restructuring of the social justice agenda along progressive and democratic lines, which is an important consideration for the creation of a holistic and sensitive citizenry committed to a just world.

2.7 Conclusion

It is apparent that efforts have been made to integrate social justice into the legislative and policy framework in South Africa. It is, however, not clear whether this has been sufficiently addressed at the formulation level or even at an implementation level. This

study seeks to determine the extent to which radical social justice is sufficiently addressed at both levels.

Radical social justice is a concept employed to evaluate the distribution of benefits that result from major social institutions such as the schooling system and the health system. At its highest or ideal level, social justice promotes a utopian society. Consequently, this extreme utopian position has contributed to its marginalisation from the central debates that have been dominated by neo-liberalism. With reference to education, radical social justice is used to inform broad educational policies such as universal primary education and the move towards education for all, and furthermore, to inform the move towards massification with the emphasis on access, equity and the inculcation of a democratic culture – implying parity in participation in all areas of higher education. The fostering of equality as regards educational, socio-economic and political participation comprises the major tenet of oppositional critical theory, which essentially informs the theoretical framework of the study. The emphasis on radical social justice issues in higher education is in line with the traditional mandate of universities – to pursue teaching, research and service to the community. The chapter that follows represents a critical review of the extent to which South African higher education fulfills the mandate of social justice. This review is necessary because, as already observed, post-apartheid higher education policies and reforms, informed by social justice, are being marginalised by the overwhelming logic of neo-liberalism and the resultant marketisation and commodification of higher education.