Tenth Annual Julius Nyerere Memorial Lecture
presented by Saleem Badat in 2013

Biography of Dr Saleem Badat

Dr Saleem Badat is the vice-chancellor of Rhodes University
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Dr Badat holds a number of degrees, as well as a certificate in higher education and science policy from Boston University, and honorary doctorates from the universities of the Free State and York in England.
He is also the recipient of a number of academic awards and fellowships, including the Hubert Humphrey Fellowship.
In 1999, he was the first CEO of the Council on Higher Education, which advises the South African minister of education on higher education policy issues.
As an author, his most recent work is 'The Forgotten People: Political Banishment Under Apartheid'.

Higher Education, Transformation and Lifelong Learning

Saleem Badat

Vice-Chancellor's Mwalimu Julius Nyerere Annual Lecture on Lifelong Learning

University of Western Cape

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Introduction

The Acting Vice-Chancellor, Prof Bharuthram, the High Commissioner of the Republic of Tanzania, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Deans, academic and support staff and students, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen – good afternoon, molweni, goeie dag, dumelang, sanibonani.

Thank you for the great honour of delivering the 10th Vice-Chancellor's Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere Annual Lecture on Lifelong Learning. Two years ago, on the invitation of the outstanding African intellectual and scholar Issa Shivji, I had the privilege of participating in the Julius Nyerere Festival at the University of Dar es Salaam. Notwithstanding the contradictions and ambiguities and ultimately reversals of the socialist efforts of Tanzania under Nyerere, Mwalimu continues to be revered. This is not surprising; alongside Fanon, Cabral and Lumumba he is one of Africa's great anti-imperialist revolutionaries, Pan-Africanists and original postcolonial thinkers. Among African leaders, his thinking on education and its connection to human development and liberation is unsurpassed, with his contributions to adult education and lifelong learning paralleling those of another great educator, Paulo Freire. For Nyerere, "To live is to learn; and to learn is to try to live better" (Kassam, 1994:7). At the heart of any development – and he had a thick and rich conception of development rather than a thinned down version of development as economic growth – was the active participation of people, people taking charge of development and being fully involved in economic and political issues. He observed that: "People cannot be developed; they can only develop themselves' – through doing, 'by making (their) own decisions', by 'increasing (their) understanding', by 'increasing (their) knowledge and ability and by (their) own full participation – as an equal in the life of the community in which she/he lives" (cited in Man, 2002).

Nyerere turned many occasions into "teaching-learning situation(s)" and didactic engagements (Mulenga, 2010:468). His "concept of his role as national leader include(d) constant reassessment, learning and explanation, i.e. education in the broadest sense" (cited in Kassam, 1994:1). Post-independence, Tanzania was "something of a giant in-service seminar, with Nyerere in the professor's chair" (ibid.: 1). No wonder, then, that his approach earned him the title of Mwalimu (Teacher.)

I am mindful that I follow in the footsteps of illustrious previous speakers, each one a specialist in some or other domain of knowledge and human experience. In delivering this 10th Nyerere Lecture I therefore propose to approach Lifelong Learning in relation to the knowledge domain that I know best, namely higher education.

On receiving the Vice-Chancellor's invitation to deliver this lecture, one of the first thoughts that came to my mind was Marjorie Mbilinyi's reference to lifelong learning as "lifelong education for capitalist exploitation". I came across this barb in the early 1990s in the context of teaching a postgraduate course at UWC on Education and Development. These were the heady days of passionate engagement on the articulation of 'race' and class

(occasionally there was a genuflection to gender) - some saw the connection between 'race' and class but not the difference; others saw the difference between 'race' and class but not the connection; of engagement on the national democratic revolution and socialism, two-stage theory and permanent revolution, and, of course, people education for peoples power.

The committed advocates of lifelong learning may be discomforted by Mbilinyi's thesis of the connection between lifelong learning and capitalist exploitation. Yet, there is nothing exceptional in Mbilinyi's claim. As she argues, in the context of changing technology and production processes under capitalism, the advent of "recurrent education, on-the-job training or adult education" in the advanced capitalist countries was linked to adapting professionals and workers to these such changes and ensuring that they possessed new and different knowledge, expertise, skills and attitudes (Mbilinyi, 1979:1820). Still, there is no necessary or inevitable connection between lifelong learning and capitalist exploitation: as Mbilinyi recognises and indeed advocates, there can also be what she calls "lifelong education for socialist revolution and reconstruction" in a context of national liberation and anti-capitalist struggles (ibid.:1821).

In Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass*, Humpty Dumpty says "When I use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean, neither more nor less." "The question is," says Alice, "whether you *can* make words mean so many different things." "The question is," says Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master - that's all."[1] I have begun deliberately with Mbilinyi's contention not as provocation but to signal that like many other important terms, concepts and ideas – such as democracy, development, higher education and transformation – it is critical that we take neither the meaning of lifelong learning nor other key concepts as assumed. If lifelong learning, higher education and transformation are not to be weasel words, we must recognise that there they exist within the wider discourses, that there is contestation over both their meanings and the discourses within which they are embedded and that we have an intellectual responsibility to clarify our use of words, which also function as concepts and key ideas.

In this lecture I want to explore the connections between lifelong learning and higher education. I also want to explore lifelong learning in relation to that much over-used word 'transformation' – whether transformation of higher education, in higher education or through higher education. However, so as to not assume a common understanding of the meaning of higher education I wish to first set out my own understanding of the core purposes of higher education and universities and the roles that are associated with these purposes. Then, I want to set out what 'transformation' might mean with respect to higher education. Finally, I want to address the issue of the connections between lifelong learning and higher education. An exercise in (conceptual) critique if you like: self clarification and clarification with/of others as a basis for social action.

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[1] http://sabian.org/looking_glass6.php; accessed 20 October 2013

Purposes and roles

The former Principal of Edinburgh University, Lord Sutherland, writes that we need to define our identity in the changing and "new diverse world of higher education"; "the most essential task', he suggests, is to create "a sense of our own worth" by fashioning "our understanding of our identity" – our understanding of what it means to be a university (cited in Graham, 2005: 155). However, as the philosopher Gordon Graham notes, we "cannot have a satisfactory sense of (our) worth if (we have) no sense of what (our) purpose is" (Graham, 2005:158). How, then, do we create "a satisfactory sense of (our) worth"? In what purposes are we to root our "understanding of our identity" and what it means to be a university?

I take the first purpose of a university to be to *produce knowledge*, so that we can advance understanding of our natural and social worlds and enrich our accumulated scientific and cultural heritage. This means that universities "test the inherited knowledge of earlier generations", dismantle the mumbo jumbo that masquerades for knowledge, and "reinvigorate" knowledge and share findings with others (Boulton and Lucas, 2008:3). We undertake research into the most arcane and abstract issues and the "most theoretical and intractable uncertainties of knowledge"; at the same time we also strive to apply their discoveries for the benefit of humankind (ibid.,:3). We "operate on both the short and the long horizon": we grapple with urgent and "contemporary problems" and seek solutions to these; but we also explore issues and undertake enquiries "that may not appear immediately relevant to others, but have the proven potential to yield great future benefit" (ibid.:3).

I understand the second purpose of universities to be to *disseminate knowledge* and cultivate inquiring and critical minds. The goal is to ensure that students can think imaginatively, "effectively and critically"; can read different narratives; "achieve depth in some field of knowledge"; have a "critical appreciation of the ways in which we gain knowledge and understanding of the universe, of society, and of ourselves"; can critique and construct alternatives, and communicate cogently, orally and in writing (The Task Force on Higher Education and Society, 2000:84). Students should also have "some understanding of and experience in thinking systematically about moral and ethical problems" (ibid.,:84). At the same time, to paraphrase Martha Nussbaum, they (as do academics) need "the capacity for critical examination" of themselves and their 'traditions,' including intellectual traditions (2006:5). They need to see themselves "as human beings bound to all other human beings by ties of recognition and concern", which necessitates some knowledge and understanding of different societies and cultures (ibis.:6). Furthermore, they need "the ability to think" about the different experiences of other people, to become "intelligent reader(s)" of their lives, and "to understand the emotions and wishes and desires" of other people (ibid.:6-7).

I must confess that I am ambivalent whether community engagement is a core and third purpose of universities or one of the various roles of universities. For the purpose of this lecture we need not be detained by this ambivalence. Whether it is a core purpose or one of a number of roles, community engagement encompasses community outreach, student and

staff volunteer activities and 'service-learning'. Service-learning seeks to build on the core knowledge production and dissemination purposes of the university. It is "a 'curricular innovation' that is infused in the teaching and learning and research activities of the University" (Stanton 2008, 2). It seeks to build mutually respectful and beneficial partnerships with communities, and draws on research and teaching and learning to provide services to communities which also enhances the learning of student and staff and research and scholarship.

The social purposes of universities can be linked to at least five key roles of universities in contemporary society.

1. The first role is to produce graduates that possess values, knowledge, attitudes and skills acquired through thoughtfully designed and implemented formative and professional teaching and learning programmes that engage simultaneously with disciplinary, historical, ethical, cultural, economic and learning issues. In some cases, depending on the nature of the university, the task is not only to disseminate knowledge to students but to also induct them into the intricacies of the making of knowledge**.**
2. The second role is to undertake critical social and scientific inquiry and imaginative and rigorous scholarship – of discovery, integration, application and teaching - that serves diverse intellectual, economic and social goals and the greatest public good.
3. The third role of universities is to contribute to forging a critical and democratic citizenship. Vibrant and dynamic societies require graduates who are not just capable professionals, but also thoughtful intellectuals and critical citizens that respect and promote human rights. As the Vice Chancellor of the University of Western Cape has put it, we are also "tasked with the arduous formation of a critical, creative and compassionate citizenry" (HESA, 2006).
4. The fourth role of universities is to proactively engage with our societies at the intellectual and, more generally, cultural level. This requires universities to not just transmit knowledge to people in the wider society, but to have a two-way engagement with the wider society; a reflexive communication if you like.
5. The final role of universities is to actively engage with their wider contexts and societal conditions. Our universities must engage effectively with the economic and social challenges of our local, national, regional, continental and global contexts; with the tasks of economic development and the ability to compete globally; job creation and the elimination of unemployment and poverty; the effective delivery of social services and the threat of HIV/AIDS and other diseases. The challenges also encompass the imperatives of equity and redress; social justice; the democratisation of state and society, the building of a culture of human rights, and creating a vibrant civil society.

Transformation

Turning to transformation of, in and through higher education, transformation is one of those concepts and processes associated with change; but so are 'improvement', 'reform', 'reconstruction', and 'development'. Chisholm rightly argues that the use of these terms

“interchangeably has tended to empty them of specific significance” (2004:12). While such processes may be related, they differ with respect to the *intent* and *nature* of change. ‘Improvement’ tends to be associated with limited or minor changes in existing policy, organization or practice, and does not usually involve substantive changes in established policy, practice or organisation. ‘Reform’ generally refers to more substantial changes, but remains circumscribed within existing dominant social relations within higher education and the polity, economy and society. While reforms may be far-reaching and create the conditions for more radical changes, their intent is not to displace prevailing social relations as much as to reproduce these in new ways.

In so far as development is concerned, Wallerstein writes that in radical political movements ‘development’ was considered to have twin goals: “greater internal equality, that is, fundamental social (or socialist) transformation”, and ‘catching up’ with the privileged social classes or advanced capitalist countries (Wallerstein, 1991:115). These twin goals were seen as “parallel vectors, if not obverse sides of the same coin, (ibid.:116) However, historical experience he argues demonstrates that “social transformation and catching up are seriously different objectives. They are not necessarily correlative with each other. They may even be in contradiction with each other” (ibid.,:115-6). ‘Transformation’ has the aim of the *dissolution* of existing social relations and institutions, policies and practices, and creating radically new social arrangements. Of course, the processes of dissolution and creation may be uneven and vary in pace, and there may not be uniform rupture or total displacement of old structures, institutions and practices. In a nutshell, while ‘transformation’ signifies fundamental change, not all change is transformation.

The changing of demographics, numbers and proportions of students and staff, and pursuing and achieving ‘race’, gender and disability equity goals are important aspects of transformation. So too are blacks ‘catching up’ with whites in terms of pass rates, graduation rates and participation rates in higher education, and historically black universities ‘catching up’ with historically white universities with respect to facilities and the like. But transformation cannot be reduced merely to such issues - much, much more is entailed.

For one, transformation entails meaningful equity of access, opportunity and success for people of working class and rural poor social origins and social inclusion and social justice in the domain of knowledge making and diffusion – to borrow from the late Wally Morrow “epistemological access” for black and working class and rural poor youth as “part of a wider project of democratising access to knowledge” (1993:3). This goes to the heart of higher education transformation in South Africa: to the question of “the very institution of the university itself and to the role it can play in a new democracy such as South Africa” (Boughey, 2008).

A second concern has to be to boldly and creatively engage with what Andre Du Toit calls the historical “legacies of intellectual colonisation and racialization” and, we can add, patriarchy (2000, 103). Du Toit argues “that the enemy” in the forms of colonial and racial discourses “has been within the gates all the time”, and that they are significant threats to the

flowering of ideas and scholarship (ibid.:103). He links these discourses to institutional culture and academic freedom: cultures characterised by colonial and racial discourses endanger "empowering intellectual discourse communities" and "ongoing transformation of the institutional culture" is therefore a "necessary condition of academic freedom" (ibid.). Transformation implies decolonizing deracialising, demasculanising and degendering our universities.

At the heart of transformation, then, is engaging with ontological and epistemological issues in all their complexity, and their implications for research, methodology, scholarship, learning and teaching curriculum and pedagogy. It means creating institutional cultures that genuinely respect and appreciate difference and diversity – whether class, gender, national, linguistic, religious, sexual orientation, epistemological or methodological in nature – and exploring and creating spaces for the flowering of epistemologies, ontologies, theories, methodologies, objects and questions other than those that have long been hegemonic in intellectual and scholarly thought and writing. For example Mahmood Mamdani (2011) argues that "the central question facing higher education in Africa today is what it means to teach the humanities and social sciences in the current historical context and, in particular, in the post-colonial African context". Moreover, what does it mean to teach "in a location where the dominant intellectual paradigms are products not of Africa's own experience but of a particular Western experience". A recent article, 'Scandal of beauty', by Stellenbosch academics argues in relation to the Western Cape that "its universities, it artists and its centres of higher learning could play a major intellectual and cultural role in uncrippling the region's imagination and creativity, providing the Cape with critical vocabularies and concepts to transcend insularity, provincialism and nostalgia for a shameful and costly past" (Mbembe at al, 2011). They suggest that "a first step in this direction would be to take the study of Africa more seriously than has been the case so far. Part of this process requires…thinking with the rest of South Africa and as an integral part of this country as well" (ibid.)

At a fundamental level, transformation is building, in the context of the fractures and fissures of our society, new and different kinds of social relationships; is acting and doing things in new and different ways; being open to making the 'natural' strange, and rethinking and changing how we *think* – about ourselves and others; about conventional wisdoms like quality and academic excellence; about core aspects of university life, and about our challenges, possibilities and constraints. It is about embracing ethical and constitutional imperatives that create the possibilities for developing the talents and potential of social groups and individuals that are all too frequently wasted and unrealized; about grasping that the creation of such opportunities widens the horizons of our own development as professionals, citizens and people, as well as of our universities. It is a commitment to an anti-racist, non-sexist, democratic and participatory institutional culture that upholds the dignity and human rights of all, fosters learning and the flowering of ideas, discourse and scholarship, and celebrates diversity as a wellspring of intellectual and institutional vitality. It is universities being imbued by the core values of commitment to the spirit of truth, academic freedom, social justice, and institutional autonomy with public accountability.

A transformed higher education "requires bold visions of internationalism, of alternative globalization, that transcend the edicts of market accountability and narrow commercial calculations and embrace the ethics of social accountability and an expansive humanism" (Zeleza, 2005:54-55). Like Paul Zeleza, I believe that 'we will have failed the future if we do not vigorously pursue the dreams of university education as an ennobling adventure for individuals (and) communities,… if we do not strive to create universities that produce ideas rather than peddle information, critical rationality rather than consumer rations, and knowledge that has lasting value' (ibid.:55).

Finally, as Lis Lange argues, "because what needs to be transformed and the direction of that transformation are contextual, transformation has to be redefined historically. Thus, the very notion of transformation in South Africa entails keeping on asking about the subject, the object, the means and the motives of transformation in each area of society" (2013). She also usefully reminds us that "institutional transformation has as its structural limit the depth and direction of the transformation of society. This should not be taken as an excuse to stop change or to absolve universities from the need to push further. Rather, it is a reminder that in the big scheme of social change and social justice universities are but a very small part" (Lange, 2013). In a seminal 1978 article analysing the relationship between education and development and sub-titled 'From the age of innocence to the age of scepticism', Hans Weiler made much the same point:

> There is little evidence to suggest that education, even with a tremendous effort at reducing…its own internal disparities, is likely to have an appreciable impact on the achievement of greater distributive justice in the society at large, as long as that society is under the influence of a relatively intact alliance of economic wealth, social status and political power which is interested in preserving the status quo (1978:182).

The late Harold Wolpe and Elaine Unterhalter have similarly cautioned that

> education is accorded immense and unwarranted weight as a mechanism of…social transformation…In these approaches the extra-educational conditions which may either facilitate or block the effects of the educational system or which may simultaneously favour or inhibit them, are neglected. (1991:2-3).

While 'education *may* be a necessary condition for certain social processes,…it is not a sufficient condition, and hence cannot be analysed as an autonomous social force' (1991:3). The historian Bill Nasson expresss the role of education in social change in similar terms: 'education (is) an important participating force, but not…an arbitrating one' (cited in Chishom, 2004:13). Wolpe and Unterhalter argue that 'from the standpoint of the struggle for social transformation, the importance of this conclusion is that structures and processes of educational change must be linked to changes in other social conditions and institutions (1991:3) They also warned that 'the dangers inherent in separating the role of education from its articulation with other socio-economic and political structures have become more, not less acute' in post-1994 South Africa (1991:15).

> Development…is…a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy. Focusing on human freedoms contrasts with narrower views of development, such as identifying development with the growth of gross national product, or with the rise in personal incomes, or with industrialization, or with technological advance…(Sen, 1999:3).

In similar vein, Ronai seeing lifelong learning as facilitating

> the right of all people to question and analyze situations around them and afar, the right to imagine and create wider horizons for the human mind, the right to read one's own world and to write one's own history and that of his/her community, the right to have access to educational resources available in one's country and community, the right to develop individual and collective skills in democratic decision making and good citizenship, as well as the right to have and develop one's inner life and identity based on one's cultural heritage and global intercultural communication (2002:99).

Further, "the knowledge and adaptability and flexibility of skills acquired through life-long learning" is considered to "enable graduates in developing democracies to operate in diverse social settings and develop complex notions of identity and citizenship (CHE, 2000:27).

It seems to me that we can conceive of the connections between lifelong learning and higher education in at least four ways: higher education ***in*** lifelong learning; lifelong learning ***through*** higher education; lifelong learning ***in*** higher education, and higher education ***for*** lifelong learning.

First, to refer to *higher education* ***in*** *lifelong learning* is to recognise that higher education is an integral part of the continuum of lifelong learning and that it exists in a relationship with other sites, levels and forms of education. The 2000 'size and shape' report of the Council on Higher Education (CHE) emphasized that its proposals for a newer higher education landscape had to "seen as part of the process of constructing a seamless lifelong learning system that embraces schools, further education, higher education, workplace-based learning and non-formal learning. Such a system should provide ever greater levels of access to learning opportunities across a range of programmes and entry points in a way that forms the critical basis for social justice and economic revitalization" (CHE, 2000:12). Of course, any idea of *higher education* ***in*** *lifelong learning* must recognise the intricate challenges of articulation, permeability, mobility in relation to other levels and kinds of education.

Second, a commitment to lifelong learning necessarily entails a commitment to cultivating ***through*** *higher education* the academic literacies and critical inquiry capabilities of students so that they can function as lifelong learners during and beyond their sojourn in higher education. Education White Paper 3 of 1997, *A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education*, looked to higher education to "produce graduates with the skills and competencies that build the foundations for *lifelong learning*, including, critical, analytical, problem-solving and communication skills, as well as the ability to deal with change and diversity, in particular, the tolerance of different views and ideas" (DoE, 1997:1.27(9)). This

implies high quality undergraduate education; **a** failure to cultivate academic literacies and critical analytical capabilities is to fail both students and society. The 2000 CHE report insisted that graduates had to be "able to fulfil the requirements of the various professions and the labour market, to be life-long learners and able to function as critical, culturally enriched and tolerant citizens (CHE, 2000:14).

The 2012 Green Paper *for Post-School Education and Training*, however, notes that "despite the many advances and gains made since 1994", higher education is 'inadequate in quantity… and, in many but not all instances, quality', and that it continues "to produce and reproduce gender, class, racial and other inequalities with regard to access to educational opportunities and success" (DHET, 2012: x). The National Planning Commission notes that "despite the significant increases in enrolment a number of challenges remain" and that universities have not been "able to produce the number and quality of graduates demanded by the country" (NPC, 2011:16). Since "race remains a major determinant of graduation rates", this has "major implications for social mobility and…for overcoming the inequalities of apartheid" (ibid., 2011:16). The National Planning Commission argues that it is critical for universities to "develop capacity to provide quality undergraduate teaching" (NPC, 2012: 318).

There is also another kind of contribution to lifelong learning that can occur *through higher education*: universities as knowledge institutions serving as catalysts of public intellectual debate and proactively engaging with society at the intellectual and, more generally, cultural level. It is a matter of the involvement of universities in reflexive communication - not a simple transmission of an established body of knowledge to 'users' in the wider society, but an argumentative, critical and thoughtful engagement that shapes the very constitution of knowledge (Delanty, 2001:154). Such involvement has as its goals the intellectual and cultural development of citizens, and cultivating an engaged and critical citizenry. Its purpose is to seek to enlarge human freedom, and extend and deepen economic, political, social and cultural opportunities and rights, so that all may lead rich, productive and rewarding lives.

Third, the espousal of lifelong learning implies a commitment to ensuring that there are opportunities for eligible students, graduates, and people more generally to participate *in higher education* through convenient, flexible part-time study, continuing education, and possibly certain kinds of community engagement, whether the intent is further professional studies or other kinds of development activities. White Paper 3 conceived of a transformed higher education contributing to "the provision of lifelong learning opportunities" (ibid.: 1.20). Similarly, the CHE 'size and shape' looked to the higher education system "increasingly to create opportunities for continuing and lifelong learning (CHE, 2000:22). More specifically, higher education was seen as opening "its doors, in the spirit of lifelong learning, to workers and professionals in pursuit of multiskilling and reskilling, and adult learners whose access to higher education had been thwarted in the past" (DoE, 1997:2.2).

The 2001 National Plan for Higher Education reaffirmed the policy goals of recruiting "non-traditional students, i.e. workers, mature learners, in particular women, and the disabled"

(MoE, 2001:23). Concomitantly, it bemoaned that this was “largely…ignored by institutions”, and there was “little or no movement towards the development of programmes to attract such people “who were denied access to higher education in the past” (ibid: 23). Higher education was also considered to have "a crucial role to play in improving the quality of schooling, health care, welfare services and other public services at national, provincial and local levels”, with the recognition that this entailed “more active promotion of continuing education and the upgrading of professional knowledge and technical skills, and creating flexible opportunities for life-long learning for practicing education, health, social services and other public sector personnel” (CHE, 2000:28).

However, lest we become evangelical here, advocacy of lifelong learning does not imply every university providing part-time study, continuing education and the like. It depends, of course, on the mission of the university in a differentiated and diverse higher education system, as well as on issues of absorptive capacity, geography and other factors.

Finally, as far as *higher education for lifelong learning* is concerned there are two dimensions to this. One is that if lifelong learning is embraced as a principle then some contribution to one or other sites, levels and kinds of high quality education is implied on the part of universities, either directly or in the form of advocacy for lifelong learning. The direct contribution may be through the preparation of good quality educators for pre-schools, schools, further education and training colleges or other education and training institutions or/and forging developmental partnerships with these institution. Advocacy entails continuous campaigning for the idea that knowledge matters, for good quality formal education, equitable access to and opportunity in such education, and ample and diverse opportunities for good quality non-formal, informal and self-directed learning, especially at the post-school level.

A second aspect of *higher education for lifelong learning*, of higher education promoting a diversity of good quality lifelong learning, is through universities discharging their social purpose of producing knowledge and undertaking critical scholarship on lifelong learning: on the theory and practice of lifelong learning, its politics, sociology, history and geography, on the concepts of ‘lifelong learning’, ‘lifelong education’, ‘adult learning’, ‘adult education’, and ‘lifelong literacy’ and their connections with notions of the ‘knowledge economy’, ‘knowledge society’ and ‘knowledge democracy’. We are reminded that people use the terms ‘knowledge society’, ‘information society’ and ‘learning society’ “as if they were equivalent”, when they “happen to be very different things. You may have an information society that does not learn and this is what is happening to many of us. You may have a knowledge society that is not learning so reconceptualization is a major theoretical and political issue” (Torres, 2001:10).

Conclusion

To conclude, Rosa Maria Torres cautions that

> Lifelong learning is a catchy word, sexy, but making it happen is a highly complicated matter. It is important that we understand the requisites to make this happen. It is not only about expanding the supply of education throughout the life of people, it also has to do with comprehensiveness, it has to do with diversification, it has to do with articulation of various systems, and it has to do with transformation, with radical transformation of the current education…culture (Torres, 2002:10).

Pertinently, she adds that we must move “from a very simplistic notion of access to knowledge, to learning….It is not only access, it is also quality; access and quality have to go together…. We are saying it must be quality access” (ibid.:9). The CHE recognised over a decade ago that “giving effect to life-long learning will require concentrated effort, the development of flexible continuing and adult education programmes and support and resources for such work” (CHE, 2000:28).

Despite commitment to lifelong learning *in higher education*, in the context of possibly inadequate financial resources university leadership may face profound social and political dilemmas and need to make difficult and unenviable choices related to the nature, scope and extent of sustainable lifelong learning *in* the university. Institutional research and planning must highlight the fact that certain values, principles, purposes, goals and strategies related to goals may exist in a relationship of intractable tension in so far as a university may for good political and social reasons wish to pursue all of these *simultaneously*. The paradoxes and dilemmas have to be addressed creatively and policies and strategies have to be crafted that can satisfy multiple imperatives; can *balance* competing goals; and can enable the pursuit of equally desirable goals. Trade-offs have to be made deliberatively, consciously and transparently with respect to their implications for vision and goals. The trade-offs and choices that are made should also be communicated in ways that build understanding and secure support from important constituencies.

C. Wright Mills captures an especially significant challenge when he writes in his classic, *The Sociological Imagination*

> Freedom is not merely the chance to do as one pleases; neither is it merely the opportunity to choose between set alternatives. Freedom is, first of all, the chance to formulate the available choices, to argue over them - and then, the opportunity to choose. That is why freedom cannot exist without an enlarged role of human reason in human affairs. …(T)he social task of reason is to formulate choices, to enlarge the scope of human decisions in the making of history. The future of human affairs is not merely some set of variables to be predicted. The future is what is to be decided - within the limits, to be sure, of historical possibility. But this possibility is not fixed, in our time the limits seem very broad indeed.
>
> Beyond this, the problem of freedom is …how decisions about the future of human affairs are to be made and who is to make them. Organisationally, it is the problem of a just machinery of decision. Morally, it is the problem of political responsibility.

> Intellectually, it is the problem of what are now the possible futures of human affairs (1959:174)

Higher education is accorded various and diverse roles. In the face of this, it could play contradictory roles. Its contributions could be simultaneously radical and transformative and reformist and conservative. That is to say, it could, at one and the same time, reproduce, maintain and conserve, as well as undermine, erode and transform social relations, institutions, policies and practices. For example, under certain circumstances higher education could play a vital role in disseminating anti-racist ideas, and help to erode racism, racialism and racial prejudice and build a non-racial culture. Yet, concomitantly, it could play no or little role in undermining patriarchy and sexism, homophobia and xenophobia. It could even contribute to prejudice and intolerance through its own institutional culture and practices. One reason for this, as Manuel Castells writes, is that universities do not stand outside of society; they are subject to "the conflicts and contradictions of society and therefore they will tend to express – and even to amplify – the ideological struggles present in all societies" (Castells, 2001: 212). The "real issue", he suggests is "to create institutions solid enough and dynamic enough to stand the tensions that will necessarily trigger the simultaneous performance of somewhat contradictory functions" (ibid.: 212).

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