SALIM VALLY AND ENVER MOTALA

2. EMPLOYMENT, DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP AND EDUCATION

Considering Alternatives to Commodification in South Africa

Toward the end of 2011, four South African progressive research organisations with staff members steeped in the struggle against the erstwhile apartheid system's education policies formed a consortium called the Education Policy Consortium (EPC).[1] The EPC embarked on a five-year research project entitled 'Building a Progressive Network of Critical Research and Public Engagement: Towards a Democratic Post-Schooling Sector'. It was understood that research which has an orientation to the wider political economy examining the intersection of the labour market, education and training requires systematic analysis including its limits and possibilities in the context of national and global development. In effect our approach was to provide insights for longer term policies and strategies and institutional interventions to build an enduring platform both for the genuine transformation of the present system and for its sustainability over time. Our primary concern revolved around the pervasive problems of unemployment, inequality and poverty and its relationship to education and training in post-apartheid South Africa.

Members of the EPC contributed to a recent book on education, the economy and society (Vally & Motala, 2014) where we critique human capital theory and systematically challenge the simplistic claims related to the link between education, economic growth and employment. We refute the perspective that situates knowledge and skills in purely instrumental terms. We argue instead that the value and purpose of education is much broader – linked to a rich tradition of praxis based on social justice and democratic citizenship.

In this chapter we examine this alternative vision and discuss alternative approaches to work, democratic citizenship and education. There is an accumulated body of practical experience and conceptual thinking about what is entailed in the conception of a wide range of demonstrable alternatives to the conventional and dominant approaches defining the relationship between learning and work. In effect the approach we take is unconstrained by the idea that there can be no alternative to the prevailing forms of work based on the requirements of capitalist labour markets. Perspectives that are skeptical about these possibilities reside in the discourse of 'there can be no alternative'. We hope to show that the possibilities for reconstituting the relationship between education and training even within the present capitalist

M. A. Geo-JaJa & S. Majhanovich (Eds.), Effects of Globalization on Education Systems and Development, 23–36.

mode of production are hardly novel but have been deliberately muted by the authority of market based systems and their ideologies. We do not regard the power and reach of these systems as unassailable, permanent or as a 'natural' state of affairs immune from human agency. We understand that dystopia ridden social systems are considerably resistant to change and that a great deal of social agency is required for change to happen. The endurance of global corporate capital, despite its continuing cycles of 'boom and bust,' wreaks havoc on the lives of millions of human beings in societies everywhere. Yet this durability and the capacity for periodic regeneration continuously fails to resolve the deeper contradictions though it simultaneously provides the impetus for transforming such societies and their social relations at the same time.

Understanding the relationship between the global and local economy and its demands on education remains critical because of the powerful and pre-emptive grip these make on the very possibility of employment shaped by conceptions of 'relevant work' and an obeisance to the requirements of such work through education and training systems. Wage-labour, we now know, is increasingly becoming more and more characterized by the life of 'wagelessness' (Denning, 2010). It has the power of reconstructing the very conception of citizenship – since without work the benefits of citizenship seem to be out of reach for so many, through the globally exclusionary forms of gendered, racist and ecological ideas and practices that sustain them (Barchesi, 2011).

Denning's (2010) provocative approach is apt for much of the process by which 'wageless life' has emerged from the rich heritages of prior experience in rural based production in South Africa out of which the process of conquest created a class of migrant labour – hostage to the wage economy and dispossessed of the means of livelihood in the emerging edifice of the formal economy. In this sense unemployment was no less the effect of creating wage labour as the dominant norm of social life. It provided the historical and conceptual form by which employment appeared as the societal standard, obfuscating the reality of its origins in the process of dispossession. In this way we can conceptualize waged work, removed from its cyclical ebbs and flows (employment and unemployment), as 'wageless life' and as the historically specific form of life based on the emergent structures.

ALTERNATIVE AND SOCIALLY USEFUL FORMS OF WORK

If the phenomenon of unemployment is irreversible in and through extant social organization, we are obliged to examine forms of work that fall outside these conventional economic and normative categories and outside the framework of the prevailing consciousness. There is and has to be life outside these normative forms given the wide diversity of work that takes place in the interstices of capitalist production even though it is often wracked by contradictory forms. Work is integral to our collective being and needs to be wrested from the terrorizing grip of its present organization since:

> Paid jobs are only part of the picture. People also work to find and keep jobs and homes; to nurture others; to build communities; to access services; and more. Migrants and refugees work to sustain transnational families and build new lives. People work to establish and transform identities, protect privileges, and resist the indignities of marginalization. They work to make change. Children work, in the informal economy, as well as at home, in school, and in their communities. Many people have long worked in shadow economies; some have begun to create new kinds of local economies. And new technologies are producing novel forms of work that are only beginning to be understood. (Eastern Sociological Society, 2013)

Despite the alienating characteristics of capitalist labour that places almost insurmountable limits on personal development and the realization of one's potential, there remain 'glimmers of possibility in the conditions that capital's use of labour dictates'. Not all is 'doom and gloom' despite the socio-psychological problems generated by an era of neoliberal ideas where even the mild concessions of capitalist forms of knowledge have been reneged on in the name of austerity as Harvey (2015) argues. For him the very development of technological change would require 'a flexible, adaptable and to some degree educated labour force' (Ibid, p. 126) and the possibility of forms of family and gender relations which supersede the limits imposed by capitalism.

The question we have to ask is about how we conceptualize the difference between the forms of work that, on the one hand, are largely responses to the crisis of personal and community lives – subsistence and sub-subsistence and other forms of work – from the potentially more direct challenges responding to the alienating characteristics of capitalist production.

A whole range of socially organised forms of work – both as alternatives to formal wage-labour and in response to its marginalising effects have developed in a variety of contexts to provide meaningful avenues for livelihoods and social life. The concept of livelihood, about which much more has been written refers to attributes of work and work relationships that transcend the idea of a means to make a living and implies, definitionally, 'ways of living' which recognise socio-economic life and political, historical, geographic and other contextual factors affecting the options available for producing a living, and includes 'those labours and responsibilities associated with reproducing life' through other kinds of work (Von Kotze, 2009: 20). In such an approach it would bear reference to social institutions such as the family and community, gender relations and geographic attributes, cash and in-kind incomes to take into account the 'wider spatial context' that is implicated in such an approach to conceptualizing livelihood (Staples, 2007). These refer to avenues of work sometimes described as 'livelihoods at the margins' and could include activities which range from individual to collective responses to the failure of the market in producing useful forms of employment, through the formation of common wealth trusts, production, consumption and distribution cooperatives, solidaristic economies, climate change jobs not subject to 'greenwashing', occupied factories and communes amongst other forms of socio-economic and livelihood organisation. Each of these forms has specific characteristics although they together represent alternatives to the dominant capitalist modes of economic organization based on alienating and exploitative social relationships and unequal power.

While each of these can be described in some detail, that is not possible or necessary here. Suffice it to say that they represent important differentiating characteristics relative to conventional forms of commodified work. They represent moreover the emergence of literally hundreds (if not thousands) of small 'independent' and self-sustaining initiatives which relate to household and communities developing autonomous (and sometimes solidaristic) economies. Many of these are likely to be driven by women in communities characterised by absent-men seeking employment in the formal economy. Each of these remains fragile and many are embryonic, *and* can fail. Their sustainability is the critical issue and it raises important historical and conjunctural questions for all of those immersed in the social 'mobilization' of alternatives. In South Africa at this time a few of these initiatives have taken on the role of engaging the state in a strong sense.

Orientations to the state are affected as much by the global agenda of 'struggle' as by local context and this means that there are diverse approaches to this issue relating to the nature of the state, its historical evolution, conceptions of 'civil society organizations', and the political economy of globalisation. Indeed, formulaic approaches to the state remain unhelpful in this regard since there are no simple or general guidelines save for the recognition of the need to transform a failed system of social relations in which work is implicated, as dehumanizing and exploitative, and to build an alternative that promises forms of organization that have democratic possibilities for social change. Democratic states and their resources are without doubt critical to any social re-organization and democracy in the state is stimulated or retarded by synchronous social processes. Waiting for the state to democratize itself has no historical precedent. There is no alternative but to struggle for such democratisation by creating the spaces for engaged and active citizens to play the crucial role to play in this regard. Alternative approaches to the 'fundamental structures of power' need to be explored more fully because of the growing recognition of the power of such alternatives not beholden to conventional forms of organizing based on production processes in the main.

It is also clear that these emergent organizations are yet to develop their orientation to the practical issues of relating education to work more fully – even though they are engaged in the daily socialisation of work in practice and the application and enhancement of knowledge for development. In this sense theorising the role of education is as yet somewhat rudimentary though strongly reliant on past conceptions of Freirean approaches to adult learning, curriculum and pedagogy – emerging even more purposefully in some of the work done by members of the EPC in South Africa. In a sense the rapidity or slowness of these processes represent a failure not of the communities – but of 'educated elites' whose role can be to initiate, facilitate and foster the process of wider understanding and consciousness together with communities – as engaged intellectuals and socially responsible citizens who have the advantage of years of 'scholarly' learning and reflection.

Some of the weakness of locally based organizations can be attributed in part to the indifference of elites to their democratic responsibilities and the 'boycott' of the processes of autonomous local democratic development. This is perhaps the biggest failure of the role of universities and the institutions of learning more generally and less of the public bureaucracy, whose conceptions are limited by the immediacy of the need to reproduce social roles uncritically. In this regard there is in academia for instance a staid view about the concept of 'voice,' which is critical of it. Its critique relates to epistemological questions – i.e. questions about whether the knowledge obtained through the process of engagement is 'authentic'. In fact, the accusation leveled at engaged intellectual work is that they are driven much more by 'romantic' ideas than by 'rational' or intellectually defensible modes of 'knowledge production'. In this way, (and whatever the merits of that argument) the problematic of the role of intellectuals (and academics) in society is reduced to a debate about how knowledge is organized and developed – abandoning any reference to the underlying purposes in society. Questions about the integrity of sources and the accuracy of interpretations – and especially about the role of intellectuals in this are extremely important although such questions should be subsumed under the larger question of the obligations of intellectuals as engaged citizens – engaged in the difficult and sometimes 'messy' realm of public reasoning, activism and being.

The alternatives referred to above represent much more than the technique of survival used by marginalised communities. They present to us possibilities based on the production of socially necessary and useful goods and services – outside the forms of commodification that is at the heart of capitalist production and democratic social control and accountability based on a mixture of community and personal systems of ownership having relative independence from conventional market mechanisms and generative of a broader solidaristic economy. These exemplify ways of avoiding traditional capitalist pricing mechanisms in favour of new ideas about pricing, exchange, distribution and social reserve in the absence of the possibility for large-scale national planning; possibilities for the development of a system of agro-ecology as a viable solution to the need for food sovereignty freed from the structural inequalities and the prevailing arrangements of power; community based work in health and education, childcare and the care of the frail and aged; cooperative forms of production for school and public sector institutions offering nutrition based on localized work and community solidaristic economies; examples of municipal works projects requiring infrastructure construction, water reticulation, housing and related services and a wide range of 'development' initiatives to meet local need and properly understood as public work.

> Public work is the ability to move beyond seeing civic opportunity to actually working with others to create things of lasting social value, the essence of a free and democratic society. I would argue that public work is the defining outcome we are aiming for when we talk about civic education and community-engagement efforts. (Weinberg, 2013)

AND WHAT OF LEARNING?

How these alternatives affect any orientation to the role, forms and purposes of education is a question which needs detailed exploration which is not possible here but it is possible to signal some of the implications for education and training systems. It should be clear that in the first place what these alternatives imply is a much broader view of the role of education than is contemplated by the dominant discourse which regards education as an instrument of the labour market or even as the foundations of a 'liberal' and democratic society. The important issue for us is that in addition to the broad and multifaceted purposes of education in enhancing ideas of social justice and citizenship, education should also orient itself to supporting the development of useful livelihoods and the production of socially necessary goods and services for the survival and growth of societies.

In this regard, Southern Africa has been the locus of a very important initiative that was overtaken by the rapid development of racial capitalism shutting out its potential as an alternative possibility for education. This alternative is worth re-examining as an approach to education and training under a set of relations not so intent on destroying social lives and marginalizing rural and urban poor communities. We refer here to Patrick van Rensburg's Report from Swaneng Hill which was an extremely useful experiment and practical example which could have far reaching consequences for the shape of the education and training system and has continued relevance even if conditions have changed quite considerably from the time of its writing (Van Rensburg, 1974).

The report describes in some detail the beginnings of the project, the many ideas that were developed towards the goal of relating education to productive work based on voluntaristic approaches as a 'real saving in costs', the relationship between education and social justice through access at a time when African governments were introducing policies for 'development,' and for education as a 'major tool of this modernisation' (Ibid, p. 19). It confirms the importance of recognizing the capabilities of students and teachers in the educational process as opposed to regarding their ideas and practices as marginal relative to the larger policy objective of modernisation; the creation of 'brigades' which formed the first significant structure for 'self-help; the inculcation of ideas of social justice through the curriculum 'amongst the educated minority,' making education 'less costly, less exclusive and available to greater numbers of people'; linking what was learnt with skills that were directly useful to projects that were socially relevant in the context of limited resources and which were reinforced by 'timetable discussions with the students about their society and the country's economy' (Ibid, p. 21).

The Report describes a 'development studies' course provided to students in some detail showing that it included sections of economic analysis, studies of pre-industrial societies and the agricultural revolution, the use of natural resources and the growth of innovation and scientific progress as well as the history of innovation preceding its appearance in Europe; politics and government and the role of ruling classes in 'the control of the surplus'; contrasting pre-industrial and industrial societies and the exploitation of women and children's labour in the processes of industrialisation, slavery and colonialism and the consequences of the process of industrialisation. Van Rensburg's approach to the curriculum was shaped by his view of the attributes brought to education by its learners and how these affected their ability to learn.

> Intelligence is clearly inherent and while initiative, the ability to discriminate and to reason, and original thought are bound up with it, all these qualities can be improved through education …Young people can probably be trained in reliability, self-discipline, self-confidence and organising ability. Integrity, moral courage and enthusiasm can possibly be inculcated: so too, possibly compassion – and through it – dedication and commitment and tolerance: qualities which make leadership at all levels sounder, wiser and more humane. Certainly the ability to communicate with others can be improved by education. (Ibid, p. 64)

Van Rensburg's assessment of the limitations of the Swaneng school refer in particular to the influence of problematic social values- 'the dominant ethos of society,' at variance with those of the school and their effects on conceptions of pay, voluntary work, certification, reward systems and the like. In his view the school constituted a 'pressure group' for altering policy; it spoke to a 'sub-culture' which even though it did not provide lucrative jobs was accepted by 'a fairly large section of the population … provided reasonable minimum wages can be earned through their agency,' while encouraging a new approach to employment and education (Ibid, p. 65).

After returning from exile to South Africa, van Rensburg developed and presented a course on 'Education with Production'(EwP) between 1992 to 1994 as part of a Bachelor of Education programme at the universities of Cape Town, Natal and the Western Cape; conducted a series of seminars on EwP with provincial education departments between 1995–1999 and initiated projects in Mpumalanga including the Betrams Development Brigade aimed at educating and training unemployed youth in constructing housing units and renovating derelict buildings (Van Rensburg, 2001). It's useful to quote van Rensburg at length about what he refers to as "unfinished business":

> A number of meetings have been held by FEP [Foundation for Education with Production] with MECs in Provinces to discuss projects related either to the EwP curriculum or Brigades, without progress. As FEP Director, I had a meeting with Heads of Departments of Education (HEDCOM), but it brought us no closer to follow-up action.
>
> Approaches to the Minister of Education, Prof Kader Asmal were answered, with what seemed like interest, but my request for a meeting with the Minister to discuss FEP projects was not accepted.

> The Heads of Curriculum of nine Provinces agreed at a meeting in September 1988, attended by me as Director of FEP, to a follow-up one-day workshop to discuss the EwP curriculum. Not only was the workshop never held, but FEP never received any reply by telephone or letter to its reminders that such a meeting had been scheduled and our enquiries as to when it might be held.[2]
>
> Perhaps the most serious omission, however, relates to the failure to pursue the recommendation of the 1998 Jobs Summit about the Brigades. Here, I can only repeat what I was told by a highly placed official in the National Department of Education who would be critical to pursuing the recommendation, (and who worked in trade union education in the struggle), namely that "Brigades have not succeeded anywhere." (Ibid, pp. 129–130)

A clearly frustrated van Rensburg laments:

> Whereas in the past, liberation movements in Southern Africa had radical visions of broad socio-economic and political policy, and of education systems that would promote and serve them, today the various governments they gave rise to have almost all settled for the prevailing neo-liberal realities of a global free market…Most South Africans have tunnel vision about formal education and the capacity of matriculation to secure jobs. Many of its jobless fall prey to a burgeoning education industry, and to the diploma disease…In the course of its struggles, the ANC had looked with interest at alternatives in education and health and medical provisions. It would have looked at the potential of alternative technologies, alternatives in agriculture and alternative energy, especially in rural development, but also in housing and job-creation initiatives in towns and cities… South Africa seems now to hold alternatives in contempt, seeing them as beneath its dignity as an advanced industrialised country. (Ibid, pp. 130–131)

We are enjoined by these compelling views to be more fully conscious about the challenges to the dominant forms of production, consumption and distribution and their consequences for educational interventions which seek to introduce new approaches to learning, social consciousness and its systemic development. Not recognising some of the intractable challenges of such interventions would be naive and could have adverse consequences for any attempt at supplanting the power of what we have at present – the ideas of human capital development underpinned by global neo-liberal dogma. Supplanting the extraordinarily resistant contradictions between capital and alienated labour is not adequate unless the 'other contradictions' relating to the 'money form' and the 'private capacity to appropriate social wealth' are also dealt with (Harvey, 2015), and unless one accepts a long-term orientation to building an alternative- 'brick by-unyielding brick'. This means that it should be clear *ab initio* that attempts to create such alternatives such as through co-operatives, worker control and even the more recent expressions of solidaristic economies are likely to meet with limited success

> If the aim of these non-capitalistic forms of labour organization is still the production of exchange values, for example, and if the capacity for private persons to appropriate the social power of money remains unchecked, then the associated workers, the solidarity economies and the centrally planned production regimes ultimately either fail or become complicit in their own self-exploitation. The drive to establish the conditions for unalienated labour falls short. (Harvey, 2015, p. 66)

Hence the barriers that block any attempt to construct an alternative system should not be underestimated since innovations that are intended to counteract the power of conventional systems invariably face strong resistance. Moreover, questions about the scope of alternative interventions arise almost inevitably from the perspective of planners and bureaucrats dealing with large national systems. This question has also entered the vocabulary of some academics who seek to provide 'solutions' in place or providing analytically rigorous critique which might be of use to policy-makers and the answers they seek. Systemic transformation is not simply about large-scale planning or the wider and immediate replicability of particular interventions. It is much more about changes in the public consciousness, the ability to demonstrate the efficacy and social relevance of new approaches, their sustainability, the strategies that would be required to deal with resistance to change and the organisation of the public agency to engender and support the processes for change. This is dependent on the role of intellectuals for the critical evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of what is proposed as an alternative, foregoing the attractions of linear 'solutions' and discussions about the resource and other requirements or the appropriate 'policy interventions'. In effect a long-term orientation is required for any fundamental reorganisation to succeed.

In this regard some issues augmenting the important propositions raised by van Rensburg need much more consideration than is possible here. Amongst these is the revitalization of civic education and civic learning as important to new conceptions of work and citizenship. It would imply the development of ideas about work as intrinsic to any conception of citizenship – develop the capabilities of "citizen teachers" or "citizen faculty members," and other similar socially conscious applications of work drawing on past experience; for example, exemplified in the work of the black consciousness movement and its activists and on the important experiences of 'education with production' in the Southern African region.

Furthermore, as Boyte (2013) has argued we need to develop the methodologies and practices of 'civic science' in which the role of 'citizen educators' is critical.

> The fate of democracy is inextricably tied to the work of educators, as well as to the meaning of citizenship and the practices of civic education. If we are to create a citizen-centred democracy—with citizens capable of tackling the mounting challenges of our time—we must revisit conventional ideas. We will have to reinvent citizenship as public work, for the sake of ourselves as educators, as well as for our students and for the democracy itself. (p. 1)

The relationship between work and learning must be regarded as emancipatory for both work and learning and not largely – as we think it is presently conceived in many places, as 'change oriented workplace learning' where, the conception of learning is central to the relationship with work but does not problematize the nature of workplace itself and the social relations or the relations of power it reproduces. We have to take further the argument made by Cooper and Walters (2009) that

> power relations are key to understanding learning/work processes, and that the global political economy and policy contexts have shaped social relations and impacted on learning processes, knowledge hierarchies, and educational policies and practices (p. xx)

by examining both the forms of learning and those of work that are key to the 'global political economy,' *simultaneously*. This means that, for example, worker's education can't be simply about the present forms of work and the validation of prior learning or lifelong learning but has to be about new socially determined forms of work related to new conceptions of production and realisation outside the framework of exploitative and oppressive systems. There is a great deal of experience based on the work of the many Freireans in South Africa and their work over the years including the history of such pedagogical development through organizations like the South African Committee for Higher Education (SACHED) (Coleman, 1989) and others in the past. We simply have to recall these ideas and the strategies developed with them. These included a 'pedagogy of contingency' responding to context and new discovery, taking into account conditionality, chaos and uncertainty in dealing with the dynamics of changing social relations. This will inevitably imply a careful look at the best methodologies of enquiry for promoting what might be called 'public and participatory' methodologies so that the issues, context and modes of participation in the research process are planned fully beyond their present limits. We know that there are real possibilities in this direction in the organizations which have grown autonomously as a consequence of the present social and political crisis. And as we are finding out there are many such organizations in our communities.

An orientation to the concepts of *work and education* avoiding the danger of becoming categories of accommodation to the multiple forms of their commodification is therefore of great contemporary value. Implicit in our definitions and analysis of these concepts is the prior question of 'what social system'? For example, we do not seek more and wider recognition of women's work and a validation of women's contribution to society, without asking the question about what kind of society we are talking about. Nor are the challenges to workplace learning simply about 'empowering' workers, within the framework of existing 'labour relations.' Put another way, we are interested to know how the specific form of work ('women's work' or other) leads to social ends that do not reproduce the forms of social power prevalent – even if the alternatives contemplated in the forms of work and learning are in an embryonic form opening the wider social possibilities for contesting the hegemony of its present forms. It means making capitalist relationships more explicit in our approaches to concepts like lifelong learning, etc., without treating its production systems as inevitable and normative, and re-examining concepts about lifelong learning relative to work and its contradictory applications. This requires an elucidation of the theoretical reappraisal of the work/learning relationship as presently conceptualized against the 'materiality' of capitalist social relations, that are gendered and racialized, eliciting new forms of social organization – and therefore of work in a new relationship to the acquisition of knowledge, practical know how and wisdom.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF OUR CRITIQUE

As we have argued, the prevailing global economic system has an extraordinarily dominant role in shaping social, political, cultural, environmental, and educational systems – because global corporate profit-seeking organizations exercise such an overpowering influence and reach in shaping their planetary interests even while they seek to universalise these interests through 'manufacturing consent.' This is true even after the 'great collapse' of 2008 when the most powerful capitalist states stepped into the breach to support some of the largest corporations on the globe.

Several implications flow from the foregoing critique. Policy makers, academic analysts, social commentators and all those concerned with 'transformation' need to explore more fully the relationship between the alternative livelihood, socio-economic, citizenship-based and cultural and solidaristic activities in which especially the most marginalized sections of society are engaged *together with* the learning that takes place in the alternative activities of such communities. Such an exploration would provide a stronger theoretical, practical and organisational basis for an alternative, more robust and meaningful curriculum – not determined by the requirements of capitalist labour markets but by the requirements of a democratizing society, seeking support for the self-generative activities of such communities towards the development of a conscious and engaged citizenry.

Furthermore, the implications for academics and others interested in the process of knowledge development that new areas and programmes of research must be developed arising from the growth of alternative educational systems, processes and actions. Other areas include, new and appropriate criteria for educational assessment, practical arrangements for a wider range of educational settings, and volunteer-based advanced learning, using both conventional and non-conventional pedagogies. Careful attention needs to be given to participatory processes in which communities are directly involved in research, curriculum and pedagogical planning.

Our approach suggests that educational phenomena must be examined from the perspective of a range of academic disciplines because we recognize the complexity of such inter-related phenomena even though it is often the case that one or other domain of knowledge can have a stronger role than others for critical analysis. For instance – while looking at in-classroom practice it is obvious that factors relating to how teachers teach and learners learn, the curriculum, text, language and their related issues have a large role to play. But this role too is circumscribed by the conditions which provide the socio-linguistic context that impacts on how learning takes place. So too for instance we know that nutrition is critically important in making learning possible and that its absence inhibits the process of acquiring knowledge since social issues like the background of learners is implicated in the health and education of a learner. Yet there is a wider set of considerations to be taken into account even here since as we have observed the issue of language (and culture, tradition and practice in the home) are as central to the construction of the process of learning and the pedagogical strategies implied in this.

We are also obliged therefore to avoid linearity – simple causalities – and to pay regard to the relationship between the complex interplay of the sociological, political (policy and political choice-related), economic, linguistic, cultural, economic and ecological issues which need to be brought into a framing analysis to understand complex social phenomena more fully. This would imply an analysis of the assumptions, concepts and categories useful for analysis. Greater support for research that transcends disciplinary limitations is necessary to examine such alternative approaches and much more needs to be done beyond an examination of the efficacy of the Post-School legislation and its implementation on the institutional structures, governance and management of Technical Vocational Education and Training, and the curriculum and qualifications appropriate to post-schooling. While these latter have importance for informing policy and institutional practice such research should not be hamstrung by the limitations of formal education systems and formal labour markets to the exclusion of all else. Progressive research should strive to situate its enquiry within a framework of alternative approaches to power and agency, both as means and ends to a society freed from the limitations of wage-relations, market-based ideologies and the cultural consciousness these produce. Such research could deepen our understanding of work as it has evolved historically towards its present form in the ubiquitous formal labour markets characterized by 'brokered', 'underutilized,' 'wasted', 'underemployed', alienating, marginalized, and forms of work in their gendered and racist incarnations in both the North and South, 'centre' and 'periphery,' in global regimes of production.

We need to examine even more deeply the uses of concepts familiar to the world of progressive education, like adult learning, lifelong learning, continuous learning, access, non-formal learning, inclusion and exclusion, and participatory learning, in relation to alternative social forms of work organisation. Inherent to such an approach is a better understanding of socio-linguistic requirements of educational systems drawing on ethnographic accounts of the life of the most socially marginalized. The latter accounts are useful to understand better the lives, experiences, knowledge, aspirations, political and social traditions and the struggles of the communities of the rural and working classes. These ethnographies provide a depth of qualitative understanding not given to survey based research even if these are augmented by group based enquiry and other similar methods. The advantage we see in ethnographic work is derived from the possibility of acquiring historical and contextual 'evidence' beyond the data available through more conventional forms of enquiry.

Moreover, the alternatives we suggest relative to work and learning should be consistent with progressive ways of thinking about sustainable planetary ecology.

> The relentless privatization of nature and production … leaves little option – if human beings are to continue to advance – other than the socialization of nature and production. Only in this way can the conditions of life and human existence be safeguarded. Since work constitutes the basis of the human relation to nature, the socialization of nature can only be fully realized if accompanied by the socialization of production. (Foster, 1994, p. 142)

This relationship between production and nature too requires a deeper understanding of the possibilities for new forms of work based on cooperative, collective, democratic and other genuinely alternative forms of socially useful learning.

Ultimately our research and the work we do should enable us to explore the fuller possibilities that exist for the production of strong and purposeful research and practical ideas based on integrative science, engaged scholarship and social consciousness based on a broader intellectual perspective for committed educational activism inspiring public and democratic agency. We suggest that it is necessary to examine the form, content, methodologies, and praxis related to the idea of socially useful work as intrinsic to the relationship between education and training, work and society. This should be done neither solely as a response to corporate power, nor simply as a reform of the legacies of the apartheid state, but as a transformative of social life, livelihoods, citizenship and rights, predicated on a fundamentally different organization of social power and on the agency of those in society most affected by the present arrangement of social relations in the labour market and its associated forms of education and training. Most of all it requires us to demonstrate the possibilities, efficacy and socially just implications of such transformative approaches bearing reference to local and other experiences in the quest for work and learning as useful for the realisation of humanistic values. We can only hope that this provokes us all to think about the intellectual challenges for producing a radical and alternate consciousness, culture and society.

NOTES

1. The constituent organisations are the Centre for Education Policy Development; University of the Witwatersrand's Institute for Research into Education and Labour; University of Johannesburg's Centre for Education Rights and Transformation; University of Fort Hare's Nelson Mandela Institute and the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University's Centre for Integrated Post-School Education and Training.
2. Similarly, the Betrams Development Brigades has received no support, financial or technical, from either the Department of Education or of Labour, at either National or Provincial level. Visits were made by three persons from the Department of Education to the project, about which they were positive, but there was no follow-up action to any of the visits. An invitation to the Deputy Director General was refused.

REFERENCES

Barchesi, F. (2011). *Precarious liberation: Workers, the state, and contested social citizenship in post-apartheid South Africa*. New York, NY: SUNY Press.
Boyte, H. (2013). *Reinventing citizenship as public work.* Dayton, OH: Kettering Foundation.
Coleman, G. (1989). *A history of the South African Committee for Higher Education (SACHED) 1959–1987*. Durban: University of Natal.
Cooper, L., & Walters, S. (Eds.). (2009). *Learning/Work: Turning work and lifelong learning inside out* (pp. xx). Cape Town: HSRC Press.
Denning, M. (2010). Wageless life. *New Left Review*, (66), 79–97.
Eastern Sociological Society. (2013). Call for contributions: Invisible Work 2014 Conference.
Foster, J. B. (1994). *The vulnerable planet: A short economic history of the environment* (p. 142). New York, NY: Monthly Review Press.
Harvey, D. (2015). *Seventeen contradictions and the end of capitalism* (p. 126). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Staples, J. (2007). *Livelihoods at the margins*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press Inc.
Vally, S., & Motala, E. (2014). *Education, economy and society*. Pretoria: UNISA Press.
Van Rensburg, P. (1974). *Report from Swaneng Hill: Education and employment in an African country*. Uppsala, Sweden: Almqvist and Wiksell.

Salim Vally
Centre for Education Rights and Transformation
Faculty of Education
University of Johannesburg

Enver Motala
Nelson Mandela Institute
University of Fort Hare