James Nyland
David Davies *Editors*

Curriculum Challenges for Universities

Agenda for Change

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Foreword

This volume is important because it brings into one place a set of concerns and debates about engagement and the wider university curriculum. The leading edge of critique, practice and change has been moving towards a more critical and reflexive account of how knowledge is created and transmitted. The knowledge society and the learning society are terms that have entered public awareness whilst at the same time forcing our attention towards the uses to which knowledge is put and raising the question of the social purposes of higher education. What is learned and taught and the way it is achieved in universities matters!

The outcomes of these concerns and debates have a global impact, and they are one aspect of educational change and scholarship in which critical thinking is the key to understanding and action. The chapters in the book have a focus on learning and knowledge but are intended to act as a thinking guide to those who have an interest in transforming higher education. They identify the need to go beyond an essentially abstract and academic subject and represent a struggle to understand and take steps beyond the limits imposed often unwittingly by modern educational institutions and systems. They represent an aspiration and opportunity to break free of the algorithm thinking which imposes uniformity on us all and to recognise the diversity of university engagement—which is truly a global issue. The combined emphasis on critical thinking and creativity in these chapters has a focus, and it is essentially that of the need for equity, social justice and 'community' as key values driving university engagement.

There is a recognition throughout the book of the variety and diversity of constituencies or communities that the modern university should serve and what can be called a variety of languages that it should speak. The celebration of diversity is frequently in conflict with the demands of uniformity and conformity, and this also is a theme explored in this volume. It will become clear to the reader that some communities are in more need than others in the search and struggle to support social justice and fairness as key values. If the social purposes of higher education, which it seems must be re-discovered in each generation, are to be aligned with the great

and engaging issues of our time then we must address the curriculum challenges for universities.

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Editors and Contributors

About the Editors

Prof. James Nyland is Associate Vice Chancellor at the Australian Catholic University in Brisbane, Queensland. He holds a doctorate in Education and has published research covering curriculum change, the nature of learning and the impact of modernity on educational opportunity. He is particularly interested in extending our knowledge and capacities in 'new learning' both in work and professional settings and in communities that are in transition and face challenges. He is the editor of the Australian journal, *Transform: Journal of Engaged Scholarship* and contributes to current educational debates and issues in regional and national publications.

Prof. David Davies is Professor Emeritus at the University of Derby, UK. He has published on access, widening participation and equalities over a long period. After researching and teaching in Germany, Professor Davies worked for the Open University in the UK and at the universities of Surrey, Cambridge and Derby. He pioneered further and higher education provision as well as research and the development of new doctoral degrees. He has edited three academic journals and is currently working on university engagement and the significance of literature for social analysis.

Contributors

Emer Davies (Clarke) was Principal of Merthyr Tydfil College in Wales following a career in further and adult education in Liverpool. Emer helped pioneer learning provision for ethnic minorities accessing higher education and the world of work. Emer directed the UK's Learning and Skills Councils in South Yorkshire and Cumbria. As director of Loweswater Research Associates, she has researched and published on community regeneration.

Richard Teare, Ph.D., D.Litt. is President and co-founder of the Global University for Lifelong Learning (GULL) which fosters learning for change and self-help in communities and the workplace. He has held professorships at four UK universities and authored and edited many books and journals. His work builds on traditional knowledge and culture in local and indigenous communities and offers an alternative curriculum based on self-reliance and sustainability to people who are often denied access to formal education.

Introduction: Setting the Scene

University engagement is a kaleidoscope. It extends far and wide and reaches into schools, colleges, industries, commerce, research and development and employment of almost every kind. Universities are ubiquitous throughout communities in every land. The sheer and simple presence of universities in public life is a fact of astounding proportions on a world scale. From time out of mind, where once there were few universities, reserved for the few there are now too many to count. For much of the world, this change has occurred within living memory. Yet there can be no recipe book that covers all aspects and dimensions of university life and its engagement with societies and communities. This topic is too large and complex for easy generalisations, yet one thing is abundantly clear: whereas once universities were a refuge from normal life, where young people, in particular, delayed their entry into work and 'real life' they are now engaging with the question of what their social purpose and function are in a fast-changing and uncertain world. Universities are everyone's business.

This volume brings together writings and reflections on aspects of university engagement and in particular its implications for the curriculum. The collection represents work done and reflection over an extended period, especially that concerned with the growth of mass higher education and whether this has yielded the expected growth of freedoms and choices. The first part of the book on critical thinking and engagement deals with the issue of mass, democratic participation in university learning in the context of globalisation which actually threatens democratic education (Shor, 1987). A wide range of issues and questions are seen as problematic for university life and learning including what drives knowledge acquisition in the digital age, what is the best content for critical thinking and what the university's future civic role might be? The challenges of reconstructing a university mission for the 21st century, the problematic nature of community engagement, developing local regional and metropolitan-wide provision simultaneously, achieving social justice through educational interventions and the role played by cultural knowledge for individuals are all issues considered here. The 'anchor' function of the engaged university with its emphasis on multi-tasking and operating in many 'markets' is contrasted with the primary role of the university as a public educator. The fact that

we are living in the digital world cannot be ignored and we have tried to bring into conjunction the cognitive concerns of learning skills in an age of information and surveillance capitalism which offers great challenges to the core values of liberal western democracy (Zuboff, 2019). We argue the case that there is in this century a crisis of knowledge which in some ways repeats that of the dawn of mass higher education in the last decades of the 20th century (Barnett & Griffin, 1997)—but with a new and entirely distinctive emphasis on the digital revolution in information and data generation and the presence of actual and potential threats to our planet and existence of natural and human-made catastrophes.

The second part of the book includes chapters on what it means to support scholarly freedom as part of a critical curriculum. Academic freedom, we argue, requires a 'disputing university' where argumentation and free debate are encouraged. The big and 'wicked' issues which shape our current concerns are listed as a framing device for those who might want to construct a new and more radically relevant curriculum that addresses such issues. As both a practical and intellectual response to the fact that where a person is born determines his or her life chance, we introduce an interview and an explication of the work of Richard Teare who offers a radical practitioner approach to higher education for those who are traditionally excluded from it. Self-help and self-reliance, action learning and shared knowledge for local transformations and community development are brought into the debate about a meaningful curriculum for life and work in some of the remotest and most deprived communities in the developing world and in the urban metropolitan centres (Teare, 2013).

The third part of the book focuses on contemporary issues that challenge our current life. It is clear that life and reality now have presented us with a possible future of catastrophes and this takes us beyond any choice we may make to disavow or ignore the evidence before our eyes. In the face of possible mass extinction of species, including our own, we are forced to act and to think our way to solutions. Whereas social justice, equity, peace and plenty were in short supply they did not in the past threaten our future existence. The apparently ever-worsening truths of what may be irreversible degradation of our planet cannot be ignored. This is clearly a matter for those who claim a mandate to teach those who learn in what must be an engaged university.

The value position of the collection is we hope transparent: in the developing 21st century we need universities that are engaged for a social purpose where learning can transform lives in a world of uncertainty and instability. We have said in the book that we are speaking not just about education but for education. We maintain that a university curriculum is needed where programmes of study, methods of learning and teaching, critical thinking and analysis, methods of assessment and frameworks of dialogue and critique are designed for specific sets of social purposes to meet the challenge of change which modernity inevitably brings. This challenge is ever more urgent and contested and suggests to us the crucial relevance of the issues raised in this book.

Change which is constantly upon us is an ever-present reality. A keynote argument throughout the book is that what we know to be a truism—that life constantly re-defines our social purposes and priorities for us—should therefore be a conscious source of knowledge. How we construct learning and teaching and research and how we carry forward the business of education in response and in anticipation of change is a curriculum matter. Our argument is that every curriculum, everything to do with learning and teaching, involves an ordering of knowledge. Every curriculum is a selection of knowledge that privileges a set of emphases; exclusions and inclusions are made, based on certain values whether these are made explicit or not. The question then is which values are in play? What emphases are being made? Whose exclusions are selected? Our argument is that our social purposes should shape our curriculum and that there is no escape from the difficult task of designing a curriculum for a specific set of social purposes. Examining and exploring an engaging curriculum for a progressive purpose is our aim. The focus in this book is on what we have referred to as the matter of curriculum. We are suggesting in fact that a common denominator is needed in higher education and that the core of this is a type of universal literacy. Such literacy involves an armoury of skills and ways of thinking which encourage and facilitate awareness of the great public issues. This means we must focus on both the substantive issues themselves, out there in the world beyond our heads and on the ways in which we conceptualise and think about and encourage learning itself. Where curriculum borders and boundaries prevent this we can learn to build alternatives. In this way, we can challenge and change the ideas with which we encounter that world. For how else can we tackle the big important subjects?

Key Threads Through Time and Places: What Universities Are Meant To Be

The key and continuing thread or theme throughout this volume are that the curriculum matters. That it matters in the context of university engagement is the departure point for each chapter with its separate yet connected issues and concerns. This thread through the book involves the paradox and dilemma of how university engagement can be properly conceptualised given its complexity and diversity. There is always a problem of speaking about ‘universities’ in general throughout the world when one knows that people’s experience is local and that specificity and contingency play a part in social explanation. The dilemma concerns the centrality of engagement in the modern purposes of higher education and whether this is really a third and unfunded mandate for universities.

Our view on this crucial matter is that the third mission perspective carries with it the danger of both dependency and marginalisation. The funding regimes for universities have yet to recognise in our view the centrality of the need for curriculum renewal in the face of existential crises such as climate catastrophe, microbial resistance, likely future health pandemics and global poverty and injustice. In the context

of the global configuration of higher education, it seems unlikely that the neoliberal frameworks within which universities exist and the importance attached to global rankings will yield the funding necessary for curriculum renewal as we suggest in the first part of the book. As long as university administrations can buy consent with allocations of 'soft money' rather than committing to funding core curriculum engagement there is a danger of dependency and insecurity for the programmes and staff who will do the work on engagement. Crucially for our argument, the practice of devising separate university programmes and engagement 'schemes' encourages the belief that the university's engagement mission can be delivered by a small group of dedicated people committed to good works with local communities on behalf of the whole institution. Frequently this leaves the central funding and authority structures unchanged and with innovation at the margins of university life. Critically, it rarely enables the central curriculum of a university to be challenged or changed. Change at an institutional level will depend upon the outcomes of struggles and advocacy for change. Our purpose is to help provide thinking and arguments which will switch the attention away from the commodifying of learning and the marketisation of degrees as products to be purchased in the marketplace towards the building of communities that have learning at their heart and a curriculum for agreed social purposes for an improved social result.

The second continuing thread we explore is to do with the diversity and multi-functionality of universities. David Watson a notable leader in progressive higher education outlined a schema that offers some clarity in the classification and analysis of a university's functions (Watson, 2014). Universities are meant to be all things to all people. They are conservative and radical, competitive and collegial, private and public, autonomous yet accountable, they are about excellence and equality, they are entrepreneurial and caring, traditional and innovative, they embody ceremony and tradition and yet are often iconoclastic. They have in modern times always had a civic and social role. In producing graduates who go to work, pay taxes, play a part in civic society and ensure we have a society and culture worth living in, universities are a focus for a better, more equal and more fulfilled social life. This is the essential and existential first-order characteristic of a university: it produces knowledge through its teachers, students and research so that life improves. Universities accordingly are improving institutions. In addition, they have an ethical function. They help define and deliver the right things to do, in the right way. The rest of the activities of a university, which are extensive and complicated including producing graduates in the right disciplines and numbers, developing professional and specific knowledge and research, being a local employer, being a local or national partner or stakeholder in enterprise(s), running subsidiary businesses, liaising with government and funding bodies and curating an environment and spaces—are second-order functions. These are the contractual rather than existential aspects of a university. Watson thought that universities needed to have a core concept of their own—which was that of stewardship for the intellectual and moral as well as the concrete assets of the university. Brink's work on the 'soul' of a university takes up this question of a university's civic engagement through what he calls its 'orthogonal axis'—which is a focus on what a university is 'good for' in tackling societal problems. This function is additional to

the way an institution addresses what it is 'good at', such as ranked discipline-based research (Brink, 2018).

Chris Brink brings a refreshingly critical viewpoint on the role of the university in society, not least because he has occupied high ranking university leadership roles on more than one continent. He argues that universities have a very special place in human social evolution—that concerned with the pursuit of reason, knowledge and truth. This is challenged, however, in the current era where we see multiple challenges to stability and rationality and a 'post-truth' world emerging in which academics have been complicit. He asks … 'how can we say we strive for knowledge when we disdain truth?' (Brink, 2018: xv).

That universities are 'good' at certain things can be demonstrated but that they are 'good for' something is more problematic, he argues. Good at research and even teaching is demonstrable whilst good for those who are neglected and dispossessed is something entirely different. '… just as the rich are stratospherically above the poor and the super-athletes are on another plane than the obese masses, the star academics float above an underclass of barely literate and largely innumerate people who, we now know are very angry.' (Brink, ibid: xv) The work of universities does not benefit everybody and as such their legitimacy is in question.

Brinks' central idea is that universities should pay attention to what they are actually for—or 'good for'. At the end of the day, the pursuit of knowledge must have a social purpose; it cannot be self-justifying. If universities are to be 'excellent' they must also be relevant to the pressing problems of the epoch and the needs of civil society. The pursuit of knowledge should be challenge-led. The challenges are the great social evils and existential threats to life on the planet we face globally and locally. Brinks is sceptical about the real efficacy of meritocracy which serves to create and justify inequalities rather than remove them. He is likewise scathing about the misuse of quantified data to rank universities in a supposed quality hierarchy. He concludes that authentic quality requires diversity, whereas our quality systems demand uniformity. He wants a system that allows a university to achieve **both the search for knowledge and truth and the equally relevant needs of an increasingly fractured world**.

The resonances of this perspective to our concerns with the matter of the university curriculum are clear. We have argued that universities are 'anchor institutions'; diverse and multifunctional which should be 'disputing' and democratic institutions whose social purposes are shaped by the defining problems of the day. We have suggested that a common denominator is a need for a critical curriculum—and we have borrowed from Hall (1983) the idea of a 'universal literacy' to frame this viewpoint. This is, we have suggested, a way of challenging the tendency to turn diversity into hierarchy and could accompany Brinks' view that matrix management structures could be used where engagement with civil society becomes an academic core function. In such cases, societal challenges require cross-disciplinary structures and appropriate funding so that 'orthogonal' systems with two equal dimensional axes are developed—the academic and the socially responsible.

Brinks supports the view that we need more than one dimension of diversity to succeed and his critical account of what we would prefer to call 'ideologies', of excellence and purpose succeeds in exposing the vagaries and distortions of rankings and false hierarchies of supposed excellence. A good university should have excellence in what it does **and** a societal purpose. This seems to us to be an entirely legitimate way of framing the context for questions about the nature of engaged scholarship and of an engaged curriculum. In this book, we have taken up the baton handed to us in respect of the role of a critical curriculum in university engagement. Whilst some are undeniably excellent at this the jury may be out for others. Our position argues that many are not good at the matter of a much needed universal critical literacy and a critical curriculum.

How we measure performance of the first order functions and why they exist is severely problematical. On the one hand, the first order functions are the university's reason for being. On the other hand, it is clear that community and business interests and activity may be existentially miles apart. It is this conundrum where market solutions may subvert the very core reason for a university's existence that defines the problem for the universities in general and provides us with a means of grasping why the connections between a university and its communities can fragment and dissolve. Stewardship in respect of its core and existential mission, which is to engage in the life of the community through the fulcrum of education and to enhance opportunities for a better life for the people it serves, is part of what we have drawn attention to as a continuing thread of concern. Following this line of thought, we have explored the idea that universities can be 'anchor' institutions within their communities (being not just *in* the place but being *of* the place), whilst at the same time being global players in the knowledge economy and helping reproduce some of the inequalities that a market-based economy generates (Goddard, 2018). That there is the potential for conflict and contention here is illustrated in the focus on the democratic and cultural aspects of university engagement in second part and the assertions that we are living in a toxic world that threatens our continued existence on the planet in the third part.

Engaged Scholarship—From Different to Unequal

We have already noted that universities are in the main far from being monocultural and in some cases, they are economic powerhouses regionally, nationally and internationally. This is the thread of diversity and complexity that underpins the stance taken on engagement by many universities. Many are locally or regionally significant and are crucial to local identity and sense of place that animates communities. They are not equal but different, constituting a system of social and cultural selection that facilitates mass access to university-level learning whilst preserving selective practices which themselves sustain privilege and hierarchy. They are keystone institutions that reflect the paradoxes and dilemmas of the wider society. On the one hand, the democratising forces of mass higher education have offered opportunities to generations of previously excluded people; on the other hand, class and elite privilege has

been confirmed, often by recourse to the false claims of meritocracy (Todd, 2021). In claiming to look anew at aspects of university engagement we have we think rightly stressed the centrality of difference and variety in university provision whilst at the same moment stressing the relevance and importance of the social determinations of the development of mass university systems and of their curriculums.

This is the rationale for the diverse spectrum of issues and themes dealt with in this book. It is a conjuncture of mission diversity and difference—entirely consistent with the different economies and geographies of place and people which have determined where universities have been built and what their mission is. Many have flourished and mission diversity is claimed by many as an asset that benefits the many, not just the privileged few. Yet in spite of these differences the emerging historical forces of change impact and shape the actions of all of them. The most pressing issues, including the dangers of extermination (the burning world and ecological crises we have referenced in the book), are faced in common and suggest a common destiny and common solutions. Our 'threads' through time and places which emphasise the diversity and complexity of university life are not just contingent formations where universities just happened to grow. They are complex and changing institutions that are shaped by the social environments in which they exist and which they shape themselves in return. The functioning of a university reflects this interaction as does the way in which each curriculum is shaped and formed and delivered to its learners. The chapters in this volume are, we hope, concrete expressions of real issues—especially of course to those studying and working in universities. We hope to have provided a sense of the different issues that animate 'university engagement' specifically but also to explore some of the social determinations of how knowledge and understanding become mapped onto our learning more widely and are shared across institutional differences. We hope to illuminate to some degree how the particular and the local are in conjunction with the wider and global themes of university engagement.

Two examples can serve to illustrate this point: first the question of ranking systems based on research assessments and second the workings of neoliberal management and financial frameworks which may serve to inhibit what we have suggested might be a more democratic and responsive type of university engagement.

Ranking Systems

Excellence and scholarship are associated with success in competitive university ranking systems. These are seen to drive reputational performance and then to secure positions in the hierarchies of 'league tables'. Continuing success generates higher student demand and increased support from funding bodies. Repeat funding and a 'virtuous cycle' of success can be maintained by judicious management. These strategies, however, rarely attempt to account for the moral and social aspects of university life, let alone the engagement with communities which can be extremely problematical. Our contention is that, for example, the idea that research excellence drives and shapes the fundamental purposes of a university and therefore can be

used to legitimise and valorise a strict hierarchy of scholarly excellence should be contested. There are several grounds for this challenge. It creates and sustains a near-monopoly of research capacity for those institutions which already possess research capital and expertise; it sponsors a self-referencing and ultimately self-serving network of peer assessments by those who have existing interests in the system; it excludes from fair competition those who are outside the golden circle; and it serves to confirm existing and well-established hierarchies in their putative superiority. This is compounded when we engage with the global and international rankings of universities that require capital and financial investments far beyond that available to the average university. Of course, there is no 'average' university since each one is specifically located in a specific place or places and each one has a separate mission or mandate. Each one is an expression of a difference yet there is a commonality amongst most if not all universities—they claim to be part of the modern knowledge economy and to be a force for good. Yet as this volume hopes to show there are competing narratives as to how this is achieved. The second example below concerns the role of finance and financial accountability within neoliberal conceptions of a market in education.

The Free-Market Model of Education

In theory, the free market model of university funding and support and more general education provision, should create a diverse and competitive arena for institutions. Individuals should be able to choose freely which institutions they attend. Competitive prices would ensure an equitable distribution of places and opportunities for all those qualified to attend. Within this model, which became widely accepted by the second decade of the century in the advanced economies of the world, universities were able to set their own fee levels and attract students on the basis of their quality and sense of value for money and services to students. All had to function according to market incentives. However, as anyone with first-hand knowledge of education might have told them and even the smallest modicum of sociological knowledge that is not how the market in education works. Within a very short period of time effective but unacknowledged cartel agreements had emerged which unavowedly set the student fees for all universities at the highest level possible (now some £9000+, per year on average in the United Kingdom) with individual institutions discounting certain courses and offering financial incentives to certain kinds of students. Universities, however, do not just exist in a market for student choice. They live and die, as it were, in a reputational struggle for predominance where various indexes of performance are manipulated to best effect. The net result is various league tables which are taken by the general public as indicators of value and performance. Schools, parents, careers advisors, employers and the general public accept these contrived judgements as to what is best without fully knowing or perhaps also without caring about the real factors which lie behind the league table numbers, which by quantifying objective judgements of value, actually serve to legitimise already existing

and inevitable inequalities between institutions. In the league tables in the UK, for example, the approximately 166 universities and more than 400 providers of higher education do not, obviously, start on a level playing field either in terms of their financial viability or their reputational status.

The significance of this for university engagement lies in the comparators that are used to calculate and assess the value of education—which at the end of the day amounts to students, courses, learning experienced and degrees awarded and research contracts gained. If these are subsumed under a single model of financial efficiency where the benchmarks are universities with large-scale recruitment and marginal efficiencies with cost savings at scale, some universities could never have hoped to compete. They were never intended to compete in this way. If the market model of university education failed in almost every aspect (**it did not drive down costs for students**) it did facilitate the expansion of student numbers. However, the market in learning was not by any means exclusively responsible for this—rather, the disappearance of a viable labour market for 16–18 year olds in this period was the primary cause. For many young people, it was now university or nothing. At the same time as cohorts of young people were entering universities, adult students were disappearing from the universities and adult education providers. The funding models available to universities privileged full-time school leavers and later masters degree students over and above those of part-time adult returners who were now subject proportionately to the same fees regimes as full-time students. Many, many adult learners could not of course afford to take out loans to fund higher-level learning, even if their home circumstances and family lives allowed them the time and energy. The net result of this was to shift the age profile of universities downwards to young people and the neglect and disappearance of much adult and community education.

Is the Free Market Model Sustainable?

If universities in general and the non-elite universities, in particular, were subject to financial constraints it was also the case that considerable freedom was granted institutions to make their own way in the neoliberal marketplace for education.

The university system the world overdeveloped in a period when a consumer-based approach was in the ascendancy. Tuition fees were increasing and the importance of revenue streams meant all universities were becoming big businesses. The economic power of education meant that universities were a key contributor to the prosperity and futures of their host cities and towns. This was the context in which students began to be treated like consumers who were buying a product for sale by the university. Education could be viewed as a commodity. This had been happening for the previous two decades but accelerated as universities competed to attract the highest number of students and the income that comes with them as well as maximising revenue from other sources such as student residences. Governments let it be known that universities could become bankrupt as well as have the capacity to acquire other institutions through amalgamations. This had always gone on in some ways in the

past, but never before as part of the principle of a neoliberal, marketised education system.

The new system attached funding to student numbers. The more students recruited the more income for the university was generated. Universities had, of course, to compete as never before and some private colleges came into existence to take advantage of public money available for courses many of which had a low value and poor quality. Foreign students were particularly valuable since they paid even higher fees. Universities borrowed money to finance their operations and the sector's debt increased exponentially.

One result of this was the development of what is known as market conforming behaviour. For universities this meant raising revenue streams, maintaining credit ratings and committing to a continuous flow of students who bring in fees. Maximising student intakes is a key to this process and its counterpoint is raising league table ratings. At the same time, there is an imperative to lower costs that impact staffing expenditure and contracts which in turn has the effect of destabilising academic life which came to be measured and monitored in these managerialist terms. Risk taking and creativity were suppressed in such circumstances.

The metrics do not of course capture the full reality of what was going on. Larger and richer institutions, for example, are able to game the system. There is only a very imperfect market in higher education anyway as cultural and historical factors shape who goes where regardless of the ability to pay fees. The successful universities with high reputational value have traditionally produced elites for the advanced political economies and the marketised system was consistent with this function. At the end of the day, university leaders choose where to put resources and where the focus of development and effort shall be. The rules of this game favour conformity and conservativism and corporate uniformity. The events and developments that led to the free market model did not take place in a vacuum. They were part of an extended crisis of economic life most vividly seen in the dramas of the financial crisis of 2008–2009. There is always a shortage of income for universities and thus an actual or potential crisis is to be addressed or averted by those who have the power within an institution. Those who have authority in a university are those who have control of the political economy of the institution. Financial matters become paramount to the well-being of the institution and it is finance that determines what shall be regarded as the weak points in the system.

Challenges of curriculum renewal and problems of student recruitment are the responsibility of university management, yet when these are presented as financial and budgetary deficits and crises, cutting and closing and reorganising provision and people may be presented as the only and inevitable solution. Those who define the problem and frame the issues and present the arguments in general also propose the solutions. Once made these decisions seem unavoidable and correct. The logic of financial exigencies enables institutional senior management to make policies that may effectively sacrifice the well-being and interests of one part to the higher good and common interest. These are the framing issues for the anchor university and they help structure our understanding of the meaning of university engagement. Without addressing these matters we risk ignoring the very real material basis of what is

played out as educational and ideological contests over the nature of engagement itself.

Our argument is that we can better understand the role of university engagement when we acknowledge the struggles and sites of learning as part of a democratising process of change. Change, which can never be stable or entirely predictable by its very nature, is likely to be opposed by those with an interest in maintaining existing inequalities. This is why the debates about the 'learning university' and the crisis of university knowledge have underpinned critical thinking on the nature of university engagement and have an under-scored debate on the commercialisation and commodification of learning and university qualifications (Duke, 1992).

We have argued that the matter of the curriculum and the question of diversity and multi-functionality of the modern university are threads through time and geography. The curriculum evolves, inexorably, though 'glacially' at times it seems and higher education appears to face common problems the world over. Mass learning and teaching, occupational outcomes for graduates, the question of who pays for tuition, the security and futures of researchers and the pervasive impact of the digital world—all hold out both the promise of future rewards and the threat of anxiety and insecurity in a world whose future existence itself is in question.

What can be done about this, we argue, is to re-assess and engage with the specific curriculum challenges facing universities and we suggest four '**points of departure**' which condense and bring together evidence and reflections on the things that matter for university engagement. These are: the university as a public and civic educator in its role as anchor institution; the centrality and need for a universal critical curriculum; the value of crossing borders and boundaries in our thinking and practices; and the question of our future culture and identity in a world of change and disruption.

Points of Departure

The Multiple University

The term university is a misnomer and a better word to describe the diversity and multiplicity of functions that are embedded in a university's life would be—'multi-versity'. Universities in the modern world are truly many-sided things and are diverse in their functions and activities. They are so large in many cases and ubiquitous they may escape completely the need to appear to be coherent entities. Some of them have been around for so long and are so pervasively part of the national consciousness they appear to be coterminous with versions of life and culture itself. Oxford and Cambridge in England, Harvard and Yale and Stanford and MIT in the USA can appear as the apex or apotheosis even, of intellectual life and culture in the Anglo-sphere. This is perhaps only an appearance; a simulation of the reality of university life with ivory towers, ivy-covered walls and the manicured lawns, quads and cloisters of college life; an illusion of something established, elegant and desirable and

which connotes a rational, reflexive, rational, humane and improving institution. The reality, however, for most may be of concrete and glass and a buzzing, roaring, deafening confusion of noise, movement, development and perhaps impending chaos. Whichever version of university life we subscribe to, we must accept that universities are key links in a value chain that connects learning to nearly all aspects of modern life and they are key anchors of place since their practices root people and their learning in particular places and can play a key role in local development and economic growth and well-being (Bell, 2018).

Universities have come to stand in for and to represent progressive values and practices. They are seen to be the sites of fairness and good faith where individual talent is encouraged; they are relatively open in their recruitment practices, in their search for knowledge and in research and in general in their methods of teaching and sponsorship of learning. It was, as they say, not for nothing that Britain's pioneering experiment in higher education in the 1970s was called the Open University. As a late but welcomed part of the post-–World War Two social democratic settlement, it opened its doors to ALL who were prepared to study hard regardless of previous achievements or the lack of them; it was 'open' with regard to methods of learning and teaching and it pioneered televisual, telephonic and distance education long before the internet was thought of. Most significantly it was higher education at little or low cost for all of those who had a desire to learn but little financial capital to invest in a university degree. It sponsored part-time study, credit transfer and modular construction of degree programmes, all supported by student access to books, libraries and resources and superb student counselling and support. Its community was of course the notion of an open society that stretched beyond any national or regional boundary. Its engagement was of a whole institution to a population that necessarily defined itself as a learning community outside of conventional boundaries and therefore in need of a new student identity which it successfully created to overcome distance and isolation and to create commonality and shared learning experience.

It is worth noting that the growth of mass higher education in the latter decades of the 20th century and the first two decades of the 21st century both met and created a demand for university learning from the broad masses of the populations of many economically advanced societies. In the United Kingdom and Australia, for example, this took place contemporaneously with the expansion and embedding of a socially selective and highly stratified hierarchy of university institutions. League tables emerged based on competitive assessments of performance and this is accompanied by global ranking systems which take little or no account of the way university engagement fits with the neoliberal frameworks of funding and development. In spite of the great progressive movement forward as it were of mass higher education, universities have traditionally reproduced elites for these political economies. Without a challenge to such systems, we can expect to retain selective and unequal provision of higher education which we argue will not equip us to meet the challenge of change.

This book addresses the question of whether university engagement is or should be about how multi-layered university engagement, primarily as an anchor institution, is present in institutional life, including in the economy, in scientific and social

research, in social regeneration and in social and cultural life in general. Campuses are increasingly porous where entrepreneurial and public-sector partnerships are co-located along with not-for-profit partners brought in wherever appropriate. These multifarious campuses are invariably in city and metropolitan areas and seem to be capable of releasing new dynamics and energies which can sustain regional and local economies. Universities allow chains of value to be constructed and these are simultaneously chains of equivalence in which learning, scholarship, research and knowledge distribution mediate and create the conditions for successful economic and social life. It is simply now unimaginable that modernity could exist without universities, which when one reflects is an extraordinary statement since within living memory they were a minority interest at the peripheral apex of an education system designed to exclude the masses and privilege only an elite.

There are many models and examples of good practices in the management of universities (Bell, 2018, ibid, pp. 19 and 23). However, there are many examples of universities that have succeeded in alienating the communities which surround them. Town and gown conflicts in Oxford and Cambridge were historically notorious over centuries. The contents of this book reflect the modern realities of universities as multifunctional businesses which have core missions and functions to serve communities and communities of interest, some of which may be on the doorstep, some of which may be dispersed on a global basis. All of which is complicated by the availability of online and distance learning technologies and the opportunities and threats of the digital age. We have drawn on the work of Sharon Bell which illuminates the possibilities of universities situating themselves within communities and regions as anchor institutions (Bell, 2019). Whilst acknowledging that universities may be in the vanguard of the advancing knowledge economy and have in many places replaced the manufacturing economy of an earlier era, there can be little doubt that many key issues and wicked problems have not been addressed by this process and that the broad university curriculum has not yet successfully addressed the deep and abiding pockets of deprivation and intergenerational disadvantage which continue to bedevil our societies.

The positive connotations of anchoring universities in their communities also raise a number of interesting and contested ideas about the nature of ‘community’ itself. The work and writings of John Berger are referenced in this volume because he taught valuable lessons concerning the character and quality of community and gave us insights into ideas of how time and consciousness are perceived within specific types of community. Critical and reflective learning we believe requires us to acknowledge the problematical yet vitally significant character of ‘community’; of who belongs or does not belong in a society or community and why? The public good that universities claim to deliver as well as the ‘anchored’ knowledge in the political economy of a society or community must surely be defined to include the creation and maintenance of different ‘ways of being’ as an extension of what Berger taught us as ‘ways of seeing’ (Berger, 1972).

A Critical Curriculum

Curriculum matters—the part-title of this book—is both a departure point and a 'point of condensation' when we try to explore and question the key threads of concern we have indicated—the multi-functionality of the university as an anchor institution and the absence of what we have called a critical curriculum to address the big questions. Condensation is where we can attempt a summary or synopsis of thinking or even a judgement on an issue. The point of departure here addresses questions of the university curriculum as a form of prism; a lens through which we view the vital functions of a university in providing learning, teaching and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations. Our specific perspective involves the idea of a 'universal literacy', a concept owing much to pioneers in the field of adult education and critical pedagogy who thought that learning was the means of transforming both human consciousness and of the material and social environment which frequently conspired to prevent progress and social justice (Freire & Shor, 1987). This transmission of knowledge is a core and primary function of a university and it underpins the way in which the whole labour market functions and is reproduced to meet the requirements of a capitalist economy. The distribution of professional jobs and careers is both unequal and competitive and it occupies the consciousness and attention as well as the aspirations of the emerging generations and their parents and families. Universities play a vital role in this process by allocating qualifications and accreditations amongst aspiring populations. University knowledge is crucial here and is the basis of the need for critical literacy which could be embedded in all university curriculums.

University knowledge is of course the reason for the existence of universities—or at least it was before digital technology made the whole recorded world of information and data available to anyone with a mobile phone or computer and thus provided alternative possibilities. These possibilities, some of which appear as utopian and some of which are dystopian and disturbing, have yet to be taken up and universities still continue to function as the suppliers of qualifications and accredited learning. What they define as the proper and appropriate curriculum for their students continues to matter. The massive expansion of higher education in the last four decades has seen an explosion into the availability of knowledge and information—facilitated by the digital revolution and online access to learning resources and to universities themselves. Yet arguably there has been no comparable revolution in the curriculum itself. Some academic disciplines have shifted the boundaries between certain scientific subjects, especially in relation to some ecological subject matter where the issues of environmental breakdown and planetary crises have forced a more radical agenda into public consciousness. However, in general, the higher education curriculum for undergraduates and taught post-graduates has remained within its more-or-less fixed subject and disciplinary boundaries. In spite of the phenomenal growth of 'vocational' and professional degrees, most programmes of study in the humanities, the arts, the social sciences and in business studies have been glacially slow in challenging the limitations of their academic borders. The 'high end', elite subjects such

as medicine, veterinary studies, dentistry, maths and physical sciences have in general seen no need to question the role of academic specialisms.

The chapters in this book, however, raise substantive questions about the need for critical thinking in all the disciplines available to us and suggest the desirability of a type of universal literacy which would equip students and teachers with the means to critique and engage with the urgent issues of our time. A radical shift of pedagogical practice and thinking would be required to bring about such changes. This is not a matter of crude arts-science dichotomies, nor is it a question of devising a handy 'module' of study which can inject critical thinking for everyone into each separate study programme. Taken across the spectrum of issues in this book including the growth of mass learning, the idea of scholarly freedom, the social and civic role of universities, the intrusion of digital life into learning, the ecological and social challenges facing all educators, the changing role of identity and belonging in community life, the existence of indigenous knowledge and the need for critique and democratic renewal through engaged scholarship, we hope to bring something to bear on the reader's experience and help imagine and bring into existence a new and different curriculum.

The Value of Crossing Borders

Engaged universities are one way an open society expresses its fundamental freedoms. Though most often state funded, at least to a degree, they are not the creatures of government or the state, though how autonomous and independent they truly are is hotly debated. An open society has borders and boundaries and we believe that the value of crossing and challenging those self-defined boundaries can be best understood by acknowledging their significance (Scheffer, 2021). The borders we have signalled are those that both connect and separate universities to their hinterland. This may include narratives that overlook the 'public good' issues and privilege the entrepreneurial role. If this implies that engaged scholarship is subordinated to entrepreneurial and neoliberal frameworks of funding and support, then we are impelled to re-assert the foundational values of publically funded higher education. The concerns of the book should be viewed we believe in the light of both the realistic achievements and dangers of a globalised, neoliberal form of advanced capitalism and all of the freedoms and advances that have been brought with it and in the light of a threatened public domain where local communities can be displaced and diminished. In the context of the expanding metropolis and of the urbanization of the globe, universities may see themselves as a form of asset conglomeration where human capital is created and which can be transferred and leveraged at the behest of actual or financial capital. Local communities who may literally live on the doorstep can be lost to sight and rendered insignificant by such aggrandisements as universities outgrow their geographical and human locations.

A recurring point of departure of this book is that borders and boundaries can both give us security where we recognise where we belong and they can exclude

and diminish our lives and learning when used unfairly. Borders can be physical and geographical and they can exist in our heads and in our minds and imaginations. Borders certainly exist in and around the curriculum establishing and defending academic territory where owners often believe they have rights to protect. The narratives in these pages, we hope, are engaging in their own right and go beyond borders where necessary whilst asserting arguments about the issues and challenges that drive education and critical thinking in an era where this is needed. To achieve an engaged university and what Australians call 'a fair go' for many means going beyond the borders and boundaries and thinking differently.

A common thread of argument through diverse places, times and events described by university engagement concerns the need to learn and understand that learning itself cannot be confined within conventional boundaries. Whether we want to understand how social forces have shaped our cities and landscapes, or how creative and original thinking and stories can teach us about our own selves and feelings or how we must surely devise a curriculum that addresses the great challenges of climate change and planetary destruction, we must think beyond the boundaries set in our past and create new possibilities for the future. There can be no single narrative for this ambition and that was never the intention for this book. What is intended is to describe and reflect on experiences and social analyses which have been 'lived' and have an attachment to learning, studying and working lives within education. The meanings of these chapters are about how ideas are ultimately about how social connections, social relations and attachments are made and can become the basis of change and progress. When such experience is shared it creates more than the sum of the individual parts—it creates insight and understanding.

The chapters in the book make no claim to a strict chronology or to a single theory of education. Life after all is not experienced as a linear development. They do reflect, however, the concern with freedom and liberty and belonging and with the alienation and distancing felt by educators who are critical of the exploitation and waste of human potential. They also engage with the reality that the ideas we use to understand ourselves and the world we live in are themselves contested.

Learning beyond the conventional classroom is a theme in its own right and is intended to include a critique of the way in which the conventional curriculum is frequently constructed around the single academic discipline. Professional degrees, work-based learning and open learning in many of its guises are outlined here and the boundaries of possibility are explored. These borders still exist to be crossed by critical thinkers and open-minded teachers and learners. The borders that constrain us, however, are not just the conservative ones of academic and vocational life or even the physical barriers between countries and nations. They include our capacity to combat the threats to our continuing existence on the planet itself which now demand new and creative solutions to issues that know no boundaries and affect all who inhabit the earth.

If education and learning and crossing borders is a way of engaging with the world, then there can be no more important subject for doing this than an expanded and critical ecology of learning. Arguments in the third part of the book, for example, consider our future world as the dark side of human achievement turns out to be a

threat to our existence. These threats such as mass poverty and starvation, rising global temperatures and levels of pollution, dispossession and displacement through war and aggression against minorities are in fact places of pain and often of suffering and yet must surely be places where we learn to be different. The destruction of the environment and earth's resources shows us a world that burns and is in need of urgent reform and change. Our cultural and social identity is in need of a viable ecological identity and we surely must end the war with the natural world that has fuelled our economies for generations. The series of global health pandemics and environmental catastrophes in the 21st century, impacting people across the world, signals a social deficit: people can no longer control their own futures. For some, it is easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the ending of the social and economic system which is destroying their world. For educationalists this means the ecological crisis is at the same time a crisis of the curriculum; a crisis of what and for whom is knowledge produced and in whose interests is it consumed? We currently have no 'universal literacy', that is, knowledge and skills which is adequate to the task facing us as the ecological crisis deepens. If ever we needed to go beyond the boundaries to learn what education should do, this is the paradigm case.

The chapter 'Ways of Knowing: Towards an Ecology of Learning' suggests in fact there is no easy answer, but it does propose the use of a critical curriculum and a starting point that asserts the ecological perspective. The geographical basis of people's lives is stressed as is the importance of place and spaces. Understanding our world and the cosmos of which it is part is surely a central focus for thinking about and struggling for a better future.

The Question of Our Future, Our Identity and Culture

A fourth point of departure illustrated throughout this volume is rooted in the contention that university engagement requires committed and action-oriented learning. Engagement is what we do ourselves, to ourselves with others to make a common cause for learning. University engagement cannot be done to others; it cannot be simply provided; it cannot be delivered the next day by a 24-hours-a-day delivery service and its curriculum cannot be found on street corners for free. A curriculum, we argue, has to be told by someone, it cannot tell itself; it always has to be articulated and communicated and it has to be worked on. Learning, if it has to have ontological significance, that is to say, if it impacts deeply to change the way we think and understand and then apply that knowledge to a social purpose or to understanding ourselves better, cannot be consumed as an object in the market place. A relationship is needed between those who construct a curriculum—normally teachers—and the object of their practice—the learners. This relationship may be contractual but it must be free enough of external obligations to allow the learner's own subjective experience and self to be an object in its own right, existing in and for itself. It must be capable of agency so that it shapes and forms its own intentions and expectations. The thinking subject must therefore be 'anchored' in its own

context and circumstance and we suggest in the book that these will be rooted in a belief in community because this is where meaningful relationships take place. That community itself is a contested and attenuated concept is part of the debate about the sources and meaning of identity in modernity (Jenkins, 2004).

If individuals learn in a community they are still indisputably social individuals and as such are socially situated. The abstractions and concepts we need to discuss such things as engagement and pedagogy and subjectivity should not blind us to the fact that learners exist as people with particular identifications with localised communities. Homogenising modernity has not replaced these, though it has shifted the possibilities and in some cases radically dislocated societies. There are definitive trends in modern mass higher education that deny the subjectivity and agency of individuals and which by inference deny the reality of the communal and social experience. Gigantic university campuses seeking economies of scale find difficulties in responding to the needs of individuals; the corporate giants of the digital world construct lifestyles and alternative realities for billions of consumers who are made passive consumers of things produced elsewhere. Internet addiction sucks the capacity for agency and activism out of the lives of many who can more easily imagine the end of the world than the ending of their dependency on a service provider. Meanwhile, human activities are heating the world's atmosphere creating an energy imbalance and a literal host of climate crises which are a perfect storm of threats to human existence in large parts of the planet. Health pandemics since the turn of the century have killed millions and threatened billions more and poverty and deprivation stalk the earth. Many millions of refugees are in search of a safe and secure home and a decent future whilst local and regional wars threaten to create even more anxiety and distress. This is a crisis of reality and also a crisis of attentionality; we may be blind to events that impact upon us but lie outside our conscious grasp (Crawford, 2015). We have not of course resolved these great issues but we hope to have raised questions in the minds of readers who might join us in the continuing struggle for understanding.

The question is how can the engaged university respond to the need for learning and education which addresses these issues? How can we affirm the rooted settlements where people live, work and have placeable identities as a living part of a multi-faceted anchored university? How can university knowledge become infused with other forms of knowing, including indigenous knowledge? The cultural and social role of the university will need to change if the social determinants of university life are to be translated into the lived contingencies of people's experiences. How people identify themselves and how they see themselves as belonging cannot be separated from how they experience their culture and community and that, we have suggested, is a university matter. Universities are in the knowledge business but they are also in the identity business and though no easy resolution of who belongs to what is possible they must surely engage with the problem of living with and acknowledging difference. Engaged universities must be open in their connections to communities and be open to the versions of identity they encounter and sponsor. We have argued that this is above all a curriculum matter that matters.

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Part I
Critical Thinking and Engagement

Chapter 1
Critical Thinking for an Engaged University

David Davies and James Nyland

1.1 The Problems

The idea of university engagement for the public good has been prominent in the discourses surrounding higher education in recent years. However, the reality is that universities compete with one another for places in a hierarchy of league tables. Higher education is now part of the hyper-capitalistic growth of mass production of goods and services involving mass distribution and consumption through consumer networks.

The university experience has become a commodity; it is largely monetised and can be bought by those who have the funds. Of course, it is also more than this and for many, it is the best if not the only way to a fulfilling life and well-paid work where qualifications and learning bring justified rewards. It represents the high-water mark for social democratic and meritocratic achievement. Mass higher education is the signal for a more equal and fair society.

However, the idea that mass participation, with up to 50% of an age cohort attending higher education, is a solution to the problems of modern society is at best naïve and at worst a delusion. The output of graduates does not compensate for the poor quality of jobs available for many and for the elitist assumptions that drive selection for the 'top' institutions and induction into the leading professions. A complex social class structure (Reay, 2013, 2015; Savage, 2015) requires a critically informed response, not a set of differentiated university league tables to justify a false concept of meritocracy.

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Globalisation, marketisation, monetisation and the growth of hyper-capitalism have all impacted modern universities. As mass higher education has developed, universities have become severely marginalised from their communities and their original purposes have been lost. For many, learning is a 'consumer good' and an opportunity for those who succeed in it to have the benefits that accrue to individuals. Meanwhile, the needs of communities and the social purposes of state-funded education are ignored and learning opportunities for ordinary and working-class people are diminished.

The learning and teaching we now have in conventional universities are not sufficiently engaged with the critical issues facing our society. Some of these issues are to do with belonging, community, identity, nationhood and culture rather than simply with the economic questions of stagnant wages, diminished social welfare, the growth of food banks and feelings of powerlessness. These are part of the 'subjective' and 'felt' aspects of understanding while the 'objective' aspects include poverty, exclusion, migration, war, terrorism, global climate change and environmental degradation.

At the personal level, for many people, learning and education, as well as politics, fail to address the big questions such as what makes a fair society, who belongs in a society or community and who gets left behind in a global world where older communities seem to be abandoned. Universities themselves have become semi-detached from the communities they claim to serve while simultaneously failing to develop a curriculum that addresses key problems. These issues raise questions that test our humanity and our politics and about the curriculum universities might offer to their students if we were to take a different starting point (Davies, 1995).

In looking at critical thinking for universities, this chapter will consider notions of community, identity and belonging and the contexts in which beliefs, values and actions are played out. These include the pervasive impact of digital technology and the internet and the impact of global mass migration. For those of us involved in learning and teaching, there has been a failure to identify and counter the stultifying effects of compliant rather than critical thinking around many of these issues.

The second part of the chapter will consider the issues that can be said to drive our search for relevant knowledge and offer three suggestions for themes on which we might build a critical curriculum.

There are problems, however, with the concept of engagement here. We are not sufficiently clear about the things with which we are supposed to be engaged, including the idea of 'community' itself. And yet universities think of themselves as being part of 'the community'. Many writers of great insight have commented on the problematical nature of community. Bauman (2001) was one such social scientist who noted the difficulties of maintaining the boundaries of community when members no longer share the 'sameness' of previous generations.

Communities are defined equally by their differences as by their commonalities. In a globalised world, it is possible to view questions of identity, nationalism, ethnicity, race and belonging through the prism of 'community' or any other concept that suggests belonging, such as religion. But it is equally clear that such categories are also potentially about exclusion. Universities are not usually 'engaged' with

communities that seek to exclude certain categories of people, except on the grounds of academic competence or 'lack of excellence' in achieving grades for admission to courses of study.

So how does a university engage with the reality of very different and sometimes opposed notions of community? It does this by declaration—that is to say, it declares a 'mission' to serve its community. Since there is no single community to serve, it will insist on serving concurrently all of the various and diverse communities in its hinterland. It serves all and therefore serves few. Thinking about which community we serve must be a critically evaluated view, not just a taken-for-granted, bland multicultural inclusion of every social group or category of people.

The realities are that we live in fragmented and heterogeneous places that are increasingly transnational in having many different ethnic groups, social classes, religions, cultures and races (Hall, 2017). We are often united only in wishing to stress our differences and distinctiveness from others—that is to say, we are united in stating that we are diverse. What such communities may share may be of the utmost worth and value, especially if social and cultural differences are contained and expressed in ways that do no harm to their opponents and respect everyone's rights to be different within the law. We may also be a community resting on a legalistic, contractual, respectful, formal, constitutional and civic basis; a set of agreements to respect our differences. But it may not be a community rooted in shared experience, values, expectations and feelings of common belonging and origin.

Does this matter? Well, yes, since it appears to be one of the driving forces of political dissent from the right and left. The political debates over the nature of 'community' often involve race, ethnicity and belonging and have permeated right through the responses by communities on a world scale to mass migration, refugees across the globe, economic scarcity and poverty, climate change and environmental destruction and of course, the devastation brought about by war, religious persecution and terrorism. These global events have changed massively the idea of community and of how one community might join or relate to another 'community'. Yet the issues that arise are rarely seen to be part of our engagement with the nature and content of higher education, neither do they impact most of the taught curricula of conventional universities.

If there is to be a university that is authentically open and critically engaged, it must address questions such as: For what kind of communities it is intended? How will its community of interest be defined? What kind of knowledge is appropriate for a different university? With luck or good guidance, a seeker may chance upon the work of Berger (1989, 1992, 2005) who noted and recorded in his inimical ways the persistence of a 'longing for community'. There exists a need for a challenge to the market-led systems so relationships in work, social life, communal life and social labour can be the basis for university engagement. This is the building of social capital to meet the needs of communities.

If we need to re-think the place of community for a university, we also must reassess our sense of our own personal and social identity. We might need to re-learn our identity. This may be painful because modern times and institutions are complex and separation and division can lead to forms of apartheid. In the United Kingdom,

we already have a fractured and separated—rather than shared—culture between many different ethnic and religious groups. A critical approach should surely insist on a shared and common interest and future while valuing diversity and difference. They are not easily reconciled concepts and perspectives.

Even where the community of the global elite and the community of the weak and deprived, bear little resemblance to each other, we can see that, no matter what the history of each group tells us, both are forced to share the same risk society. The very rich may live in 'extraterritoriality' (Bauman, 2001) outside the immediate reach of any given state, but they, too, will share the eventual fate of everyone else as climate change and global warming, pollution and global poverty impact everyone. Even the powerful cannot live without some shared sense of community and identity. One question that arises is how far the poor and deprived, who have few realistic choices, actually share the same notion of identity and culture as the very rich, who can choose to have mobility and context-free communication at the heart of their existence? Truly relevant and critical university education must surely put these concerns at the heart of the curriculum.

1.2 A Democratic Education Relevant to the Digital Age?

If we have problems with our conception of community and identity and we are uncertain about our histories, we may be equally uncertain about our relationship with the internet and the world of digital technology. Schools and universities were once thought of as being democratising institutions (Porter, 1999) but this idea has lost credibility in the face of the massive and persistent inequalities. Few commentators argue that education in itself will successfully challenge the great problems facing the world. Porter has argued that globalisation actually threatens to limit democratic education, notwithstanding the fact that increases in literacy are key to economic growth and social justice. What has been happening in recent years is in fact the marketisation and monetisation of learning and education, especially in the university sector. On the one hand, universities have become a massive presence in our economies and are a central part of social, cultural and economic life of any given nation. They help define what it is to be a 'cultured' nation and community. On the other hand, we can see that the great problems of our time do not figure as the central concerns of the curriculum.

Competitive advantage for national growth is, however, often cited as a key national objective. The question is: how far have we now neutralised our educational institutions as democratic and independent forces that can contribute to the needed transformations of the global economy and society? The issue of curriculum is at the heart of this question, since not for nothing is state educational policy and funding often geared towards economic success. Centralised control of what is taught and learned is common and the supposed autonomy and freedoms of universities are constantly under threat, especially where economic and social issues are unresolved.

It is in these circumstances that we encounter the importance of the 'horizon of relevance', by which we mean the way knowledge and understanding of our social and psychological environments is shaped and used. The ideas and processes by which we decide what is important or not are shaped by both the content of what we learn and the ways in which we learn.

For universities, the question then arises of whether we have a critical knowledge capable of identifying and engaging with the big issues. These issues have been referred to as 'the wicked issues' (Firth, 2017) and can be said to include—amongst others—poverty, climate change/global warming, air and marine pollution, the threat of regional wars and the sense of uncertainty over a global future that appears evermore fractured and alienated from young people in particular. Loss of belonging and loss of identity seems to be a global phenomenon and is intimately related to the kinds of knowledge we need of ourselves and our world as it evolves into a hyper-marketised, consumerised and global shopping mall.

For the argument here, the new technologies embracing, for example, automatisation, digitalisation, computerisation, robotisation, artificial intelligence and the networked society, come to represent knowledge that has almost literally exploded into availability. People the world over are internet driven: much everyday work, a great deal of leisure, entertainment and sport, much learning and knowledge transfer (Teare et al., 1998) and a great deal of social interaction including with music, now takes place only with the support and costs associated with digital communication technology. To a significant degree, the reality of life 'lived' has been replaced with the reality of life experienced and mediated by the internet. Like the consumer items we desire, life is available on the internet. It can be consumed by any individual and in almost any situation; alone in the bedroom; at the family dining table or living room; on a train or bus; in a public street or space; in the classroom; in the car; and in the deepest forest or most distant desert. It is easily transportable and no social act seems immune to its presence. It is ubiquitous. For many it represents an existential state, without which life, as it is known, has become impossible to conceive. There is therefore digital dependency of an unprecedented degree. The mediations of the computer and/or hand-held machine and its representations through the software and programs, separate out contact with the world. As Mathew Crawford has put it, such developments in the digitalisation of our lives "… collapse the basic axis of proximity and distance by which an embodied being orients in the world and draws a horizon of relevance around itself … (it is) … a design philosophy that severs the bonds between action and perception … our experiences are manufactured for us" (Crawford, 2015: 117). When we step out of the house to check the weather to see if we need an umbrella today, we do not look up to the sky to see which way the wind blows, how the clouds are forming and how the trees and birds are reacting to the changes in atmosphere, temperature and climate. We make no judgement as to whether the chimney pot will stand the test of the day's storm or whether the sun will bring our flowers into bloom. No—we check our hand-held device or smartphone to see what the delivered forecast tells us. Apparently, we cannot now know or learn these things from our own experience.

It is the digital horizon that, for many, sets the parameters of what can be experienced and how it can be consumed. The emphasis is often on the notion of consumption since much of the product of digitalisation and its modes of communication are bought and sold in a rigged and restricted market. The producers of the products, if not the actual experiences of consumers, are a small, self-elected group of mega-businesses, many located in California, who have managed to stake a successful claim to what is essentially a common form of wealth, that is, the data and information generated by the 'commons', meaning the ordinary social interaction of people who are communicating with one another. That such common and public space becomes the monopolised property of a private individual or company is worthy of note and comment in itself. That such companies can become wealthy beyond the dreams of avarice and far outweigh the aggregate stock market value of the largest production companies, for example, making vehicles or extracting mineral wealth, is breathtaking. The question arises: what are the implications of this sea-change in technological capacities for progressive education? The question forces our attention towards what should be the basis of our critical thinking.

1.3 What Should Drive Our Knowledge in the Digital Era?

1.3.1 The Need for a Social Identity

For those of us interested in learning and teaching as one of the most valued of human enterprises, this question raises what can only be termed as existential challenges. The nature of our society has changed significantly without our true consent being given. We have been slow to understand what has been happening and faced with the exciting new possibilities of the new communication technologies we have bought into the opportunities it seems to offer. We can now communicate instantaneously with more-or-less any individual, anywhere on the planet. We can now accumulate thousands of music tracks and videos on our hand-held devices. We can concurrently manage millions of financial transactions per minute—or is it per second? We can access the libraries of the world from our desktops and use the accumulated knowledge of at least two thousand years' worth of scholarship. All of this and more is available, yet we find a reality in which individuals spend much of their lives facing a screen, where the agenda is set by the screen and the scope and reach of action is determined by the screen. Those who access and purchase their experience on and through the screen may therefore lack true autonomy and personal freedom. Of course, few people do this exclusively. Nevertheless, the contention is that the horizon of relevance, of knowledge, of experience and of immersion is shaped by the actual technological apparatus itself, as well as the content that is being delivered. The individual must give up their autonomy to a significant degree in order to participate in this mass-communication exercise. The true costs of this are, as yet, unexplored and our understanding of it is only at its beginning.

There is scientific evidence that too much screen time can induce anxiety and low self-esteem and can damage children's attempts to develop meaningful relationships with others. The long-term effects of screen dependency and the kinds of narcissistic engagement it encourages with notions of the self remain to be investigated. There can be little doubt that, while developing screen identities, many individuals may be losing the capacity to successfully develop social and communal identities. Paradoxically the enhancement of an online identity may reinforce a loss of belonging to the real community as people internalise this form of oppression and make it their own. The internet makes it possible to engage with the self as a full-time occupation, whereas a social and 'real' engagement usually involves concessions to others and action within a social context of give and take. This is engagement with others and the issues that matter to all. This is engagement with the wider world and it is telling us something significant about our idea of what knowledge is about, especially when we appear to be losing it.

The loss of identity, the loss of belonging and the exclusion of many from a decent life referred to above has its counterpart in the way in which digital communications have helped create the possibility of engaging the self but without engaging the self in the wider issues. Lilla (2017) has remarked: "With the rise of identity consciousness, engagement in issue-based movements began to diminish somewhat and the conviction got rooted that the movements most meaningful to the self are, unsurprisingly, about the self.".

Over the past two decades or so, the notion of identity and the groups associated with it proliferated widely throughout academia and in the wider society. In broad sections of society, it became a mark of 'authenticity' to search for the true sense of self. For some, such as the widely respected sociologist Giddens (1991, 1992) the self became an existential project that individuals worked on as part of their attempt to live a full life.

While some extremely positive aspects of this development can be identified, such as the enhanced prominence of women and some black and ethnic minority groups within academic disciplines, it has also distorted the analysis of current issues and of some historical ones. Most significantly, the undue deference given to ideas of difference and identity has shown us that the key task is not to shape learning and the curriculum around the individual or the 'self', but rather around our engagement with the wider world. Lilla, in a critique of aspects of modern liberalism, suggests that academic trends give an "… intellectual patina to the narcissism that almost everything else in our society encourages". It produces what he calls the 'Facebook model of identity' through which individuals in their masses produce their own self as a homepage. It is the construction of a personal brand that can be linked and rated by others whenever one wishes. What it is not is perhaps more important than what it actually is. It is not a basis for engagement, commitment, live social interaction and the creation of common experience, which itself is a well-spring for thought and action. These things are the basis for social and communal solidarity, for belonging and social consciousness, not the ephemeral and insubstantial, not to say mediated and manipulated constructs used in a personal website. Intellectual critique

and politics can thus be about more than defining and affirming what one already is and may become and be about change through engagement, dialogue and action.

1.4 The Need for Critical Dialogue not Alliances of the Silent

If the liberal pedagogy of the recent past focussed on personal identity cannot provide a substantial basis for engagement and change, what can? If, for example, white, middle class males comprise and give expression to one form of knowledge (epistemology) and again as a simple example, black women to another and if validity is given to both, there is little or no ground for impartial judgement based on dialogue. Approved identities then shape discourse and opposed identities validate their own perspectives. Only those with an approved identity can speak on certain subjects. The rest must remain silent since they lack a true and authentic identity. Social and political life becomes the capacity to create alliances of the silent in which the pretence is made that we (the identitarians of the varied types) share our opposition to the oppressors who inhabit a sometimes majoritarian identity. The differences between identities are often suppressed within a supposedly 'liberal' notion of tolerance. We are told we should tolerate religious differences, for example and no single religion has a monopoly on the validity of faith. Such is the often-spoken message of the political class as well as the leaders of religious groups. All religions are said to be ultimately about peace. The challenges posed by religion in western societies are often 'dissolved' within common-sensical ideas of good and bad in all of them (religions) and one cannot condemn one without condemning them all (for example, if a relatively rare terrorist act has resulted in mass murder). It is a difficult position to argue, but it is a strong British tradition that the separation of church and state was important for freedom of speech, freedom of the press and other human rights, including defence against clerical intrusion into private and public life based on 'holy' texts (Murray, 2017: 136).

The generic question becomes: How is it possible to have a critical dialogue around potentially damaging and conflictual social and cultural diversity and how can it be sustained in societies that have struggled to integrate new people and cultures following mass migrations into their societies (Caldwell, 2010; Collier, 2014)? Furthermore, we need to recognise that this can take place with people belonging to communities that have sometimes self-segregated from the mainstream culture in a world that is unstable and uncertain and where identity is challenged. It is, for example, arguably separatism and separate development of religiously motivated fundamentalism that attracts those who are predisposed to violence (Murray, 2017).

In such circumstances, the challenge is to combat the polarisation of communities, to create a sense of inclusive identity within the nation state, to challenge fear, superstition and anger with rational and knowledge-based solutions and to look at the problems directly in the face and be militantly in favour of democracy and freedom

of speech and expression. Deeply conservative religious beliefs and its institutions present modern universities with a critical challenge. The response cannot be silence and acquiescence in the face of repressive social and religious values, practices and behaviour, neither can we ignore the continuing threat of racism and entrenched divisions in our social organisation and culture.

Critical thinking must, therefore, raise and address such issues. Individual pathologies such as terrorism are expressions of much more widely held and diffused beliefs and values. We must not demonise whole communities and groups, but we must not simply blame individual pathologies if we want to know the social and psychological causes of widespread and communal behaviour.

This means we must place at the centre of attention the things that are out there in our communities, such as the mass movement of labour, refugee and asylum creation in the third world and the poverty and displacement caused by war and poverty. It takes an argument and sound analysis to disentangle such complex matters and lest we forget, these things are not just 'out there'; they are in our heads and in our classrooms (or should be). What is at issue is the kind of pedagogy and learning we need for the future. This means for many an education that will widen horizons and stretch our idea of relevance beyond the 'liberal pedagogy' focussed on identity formation and its defence, which has served to undermine the idea of collective solidarity and incidentally has undermined the possibility of a 'scientific' and objective approach to the study of society. The idea of critical thinking takes on a deep resonance when put in this context. It represents a challenge for every university.

1.5 Critical Thinking: Content and Process

The idea of critical thinking is, of course, not new. The notion of critique has been central to certain types of social thinking for many generations and the idea that knowledge production and thinking itself was radical activity informed the 'critical theorists' of the Frankfurt School from the 1930s onwards through the disciplines of sociology, psychology and critical literacy. Habermas (1972) in particular sought to develop theories of knowledge that could be transformative in the social and intellectual struggles of post-World War II academic and political life. Marcuse (1964) sought to analyse and critique the psychological bases of mass behaviour within modern consumerist societies.

There are other 'schools' of critical thinking that take as their focus the need to 'improve' oneself as a person and sometimes as a scholar. The approach suggests that most of us are not all we could be and that we could be better if we practised what is called better thinking in everyday life (Elder and Elder, 2000: 40). There is no question that this practical and positivistic approach can yield benefits and that improvement in learning can come about as a result of adopting conscious learning habits such as not wasting time, defining a problem a day that must be solved, keeping an intellectual journal, dealing with one's ego issues, keeping in touch with one's emotions and analysing group influences on one's life.

All of these and other practical strategies may be used to improve performance. Yet critical thinking as we have outlined may not be like the improvement in playing basketball or in performing ballet better and in which a commitment to learn and to improve performance would be productive and worthy. Critical thinking is about more than whether I have reached my goals and purposes. It is about the transformative experiences needed to re-shape and redefine thinking and learning itself. It is not simply a set of practices and procedures, though such practices may be necessary features of critical learning and development. Critical thinking, our argument runs, has definable content. It is a type of thinking with concepts and objects of study that mark it out as more than a set of good practice procedures.

There is no doubt that critical thinking has a substantial 'hinterland' concerned with our understandings and conceptualisations of the mind, of human social consciousness, of theories of ideology and the structure and content of thought, reason and language. This level of abstraction, however, is not the focus of this paper. What is of concern here is how the notion of university engagement might require new forms of thinking and learning for its students and teachers if it is to literally have the knowledge needed for change to take place. We have argued so far that ideas and practices involved in understanding and using notions of community, belonging and identity in contemporary society mean we have to explore difficult and 'wicked' contexts such as globalisation, identity formation and digital economic and social movements. Some of these key concerns are intrinsically difficult and often politically contentious. Religion, ethnicity, race and migration are the stuff of actual and physical disagreement and discord the world over. They are literally life and death issues. However, silence and ignorance can yield no solution—that seems certain.

We suggest the solution to our problem might require the use of three different but related approaches to learning:

- First, **identification of a set of critical concepts** and ideas that are objectively and cognitively relevant and coherent and address the crucial issues of the day, which are 'out there in the world';
- Second, an emphasis on the processes of **critical learning as part of personal commitment** at the heart of intellectual enquiry; and
- Third, **a rational approach that is reflexively critical of its own origins and intentions and** can be a rigorous guide to action.

1.6 Concepts and Processes for Critical Thinking: An Outline Sketch

Cognitive abilities are, of course, generic and intrinsic to university-level study. They are conventionally defined in terms of developmental and processual activities such as knowledge acquisition, comprehension, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Bloom's taxonomy is still quoted in this regard, as is de Bono's notion of parallel styles of thinking, which contrast factual, intuitive, logical, positivistic and

creative approaches to thinking (Khalaily, 2017). Child development studies rooted in the works of Piaget (1954, 1972) Vygotsky (1986), Bruner (1983) and Erikson (1993) suggest strongly that cognitive skills are developed best within a framework of understanding that places the child and adolescent learner at the centre of attention and focuses on psycho-social processes, environments, culture and 'frameworks' or 'scaffolds' that help the learning process. Cognitive development is conceptualised as socially constructed and taken to be an emergent and developmental property of the social-psychological and cultural experiences of the person. Successful cognitive development also requires the acquisition of a range of personal attributes and the successful internalisation of a sense of self and identity that might be termed personal responsibility, or what Teare (2013) has called 'personal viability'. Learners also need to show 'metacognitive' capacities, which describe the ways in which individuals and groups are able to develop knowledge of their own thinking and cognitive processes. In addition, there are strong advocates of the need for emotional learning and intelligence (Gardner, 1983; Goleman, 1997) if individuals are to be rounded and more complete in their learning and behaviour.

The following indicative lists attempt to synthesise some of the many and varied tasks, activities and outcomes associated with critical learning and thinking. The lists are structured around two themes: processes that support learning for critical thinking; and outcomes of critical thinking techniques.

1.7 Processes of Learning for Critical Thinking: Indicative Capacities

- Absorbing information
- Linguistic mediation
- Verbalising knowledge
- Vocabulary/knowledge development
- Questioning
- Self-guidance and control
- Time management
- Independent thinking
- Improved independence and autonomy
- Diversity of views
- Reinforcement.

1.8 Outcomes and Actual Critical Thinking Techniques

- Comparing and contrasting ideas
- Distinguishing similarities/differences
- Establishing/testing hypotheses

- Clarifying beliefs and conclusion
- In-depth studies of key themes
- Formulation of solutions
- Independent thinking/dialogue
- Personal/emotional responsibility
- Intellectual courage.

What we have outlined above is only an illustrative set of learning processes and activities that would enable a learner to grapple with the key issues of context, which are out there in the world, as alluded to in the first part of this chapter. What we do not have is a list of specific and granular concepts, plucked as it were from the academic disciplines of higher learning and which can simply be applied in a learning environment. Unfortunately, no single academic subject, such as psychology, sociology, geography, cultural studies or philosophy, will yield for us a handy set of concepts to be applied to solving the problems we have outlined, nor do the learning and pedagogic disciplines offer such a panacea. All of the disciplines in some form(s) are needed to understand the modern dilemmas and problems. No single subject, or known and accepted combination, offers a solution.

However, the processes of critical thinking outlined above, in conjunction with methods of critical learning and research, might offer a way forward. Such methods of critical learning include the notion of learning through experience, action, interaction and reflection. The steps in this process might include:

- Identifying real-world problems, which will be empirical, complex and contentious;
- Setting up learning groups or teams with different expertise and 'knowledges';
- Initiating inquiry through curiosity, reflection and openness;
- Insisting on action and outcomes relevant to problem solutions;
- Testing the knowledge with those it is intended to help or address; and
- Personal commitment to learning and critical reflection on the status of knowledge about the objects of study.

These methods are themselves closely allied in practice to the acquisition of learning skills that can encompass questioning skills, problem-solving abilities, research skills and performance skills—all of which come within what we can call 'pedagogy'.

The type of learning that overtly acknowledges these features has long been called Lifelong Action Learning (Kearney & Todhunter, 2015) and is focussed by its adherents on learning from and for action so human potential can be unlocked (Zuber-Skerritt & Teare, 2013).

Does all this represent a viable basis for critical thinking? Is it possible to identify a single set of concepts or constructs that characterise thinking and which is 'critical' within the problematical definitions with which we began? The probable and truthful answer is—no! The granular and specific attributes of thinking in general and thinking in specific contexts are co-existent and concurrent with the processes necessary for successful learning. One cannot exist or even be successfully conceptualised without

the other. They are mutually and epistemologically contingent and interdependent. The things that thinking addresses and the manner in which they are organised are too great and diverse to be collapsed and synthesised within a single category. Of course, this is not to deny the immense value of clusters and thematised concepts that have helped our understanding of social life. To name but a very few: alienation and anomie; the existential self; self-consciousness; the horizon of relevance; achieving individuality; knowledge explosion; globalisation; the anthropocene age; blue-collar revolt; de-industrialisation; robotisation; climate change; poverty of aspirations; and value freedom. These are only random examples of synoptic concepts or clustered ideas and are not single concepts or ideas. Nevertheless, they represent a formulation of sorts for critical thinking rooted in conceptual matters, even when the distinctions between individual concepts and the process of learning are elided. Without concepts, there can be no critical thinking and the identification of the critical concepts remains a key task for those who believe learning and thinking should be for a social result.

1.9 Personal Commitment and Learning

The second approach to a critical curriculum suggests that acquiring knowledge of the world, including scientific discovery, is a 'personal' matter. This particular perspective is not concerned with the view that knowledge of the self or of one's own self is centre stage, however important that may be. Michael Polanyi, for example, thought science relied a great deal on tacit knowledge and that knowing was active comprehension of the things known and that this required skill and engagement (Polanyi, 1974). Tacit knowledge played a critical role in the development of expertise, as did the role of personal commitment. Immersion in a field of practice is required for scientific knowledge to be progressed. A sense of the self being 'situated' in a social context and environment and having a commitment to an external object or purpose in the world, is, therefore, necessary for critical thinking as we have defined it here. This view would also take in the significance of work-based and 'professional' learning espoused by Eraut (1994) and of voluminous work on adult learning. We can cite, for example, the inspiring contributions of Freire (1972); Shor (1980) and Watson and Taylor (1998) where the emphasis is on the emerging contexts of creative forms of knowledge and learning 'immersion' in problem solving within the wider sense of community and within universities themselves. Personal commitment and engagement pre-supposes that learners at any age or stage take some responsibility for their own learning and this is an element of critical thinking that demands self-directed and self-critical activity. Self-directed learning is present when "… the learner is characterised by responsibility for and critical awareness of, his or her own learning processes and outcomes, a high level of autonomy in performing learning activities and solving problems associated with the learning task …" (Higgs, 1993: 122).

Learning tasks and problem solving are not restricted to the academy or the classroom. Daily life, the experience of communities challenged with issues and the

struggles to survive and prosper, demonstrate the importance of values and community practices that are part of everyday life. These practices are pervasive and run deep for many people, enabling them to survive and overcome adversity. It is equally the case that dominant and collectivist traditions and values may be authoritarian, orthodox and intolerant and they may, in fact, contribute to the problems rather than helping overcome them. The application of knowledge—scientific or otherwise—is no guarantee change will come about or that learning opportunities widely shared will bring about desired outcomes. The extension of mass higher education in the West and in China can thus far hardly have said to have led to solutions to the big problems, wicked and otherwise, faced by the dominant liberal hyper-consumer forms of capitalism and which appear intent on wrecking the planetary environment, climate and ecology with its search for never-ending economic growth.

However, the active involvement of learners in the learning process and in self-actualising their own capacities for what Teare has called 'personal viability' (Teare, 2013) is surely a key to identifying the problems we experience and the likely route to solutions. Within this perspective, critical thinking takes place within a personal and social context. This can be within a family most typically, within a community and within a collective life of some sort involving others who share that culture and environment. The knowledge 'objects' for developing learning capacities are typically focused on the problems of daily life and existence. Notably, for many poor people, it's the struggle to feed, clothe and educate their families. Given the right circumstances and support, individuals can hope to acquire 'personal capital'; that is to say, the skills and ideas necessary to prosper in an uncertain and perhaps hostile environment. This is not an expression of the hyper-individualisation that we can see in some aspects of western culture. It is an illustration of how aspects of self-directed learning and critical thinking can be involved in educational change, which leads to an improved social result and even the development or enhancement of economic viability for poor people. Surely, this is capable of informing our understanding of engagement in higher education and beyond?

Thinking within a critical curriculum, therefore, directs us to the idea of self-discovery; a valuing of personal discovery and learning how to solve problems. It suggests learners should be encouraged to experiment and to engage with others while being self-reliant. Mutual learning and respect for others are allied to tolerance for differences. These capacities and abilities and the values they carry with them can be thought of as helping the development of a viable sense of self, especially for children and young people who are vulnerable at key stages of their social and emotional development. This can be especially problematic where traditional and conservative cultures face the challenges of modernism (Dwairy, 2006; Shamshoum, 2015).

Critical thinking engages with new forms of knowledge and is an encounter with a social environment that pre-supposes the development of a viable sense of self for each learner, by which we mean the learner should be, as Alan Rogers has argued, "… free in their own learning". (Rogers, 1986: 75). Critical thinking then confers a certain sort of power at an individual level; the individual becomes an epistemological subject and can define issues and problems that can be freely explored. This must

leave space for the idea that expert knowledge can be challenged by knowledgeable subjects who may possess few formal qualifications.

Critical thinking finds space and scope for life experience and existential dilemmas to enter the frame or horizon of learning. A learner with critical thinking skills will have the skills and the personal capacities to change their own situation, in so far as such change is objectively possible. Where such possibilities exist, cognitive, social, emotional and collaborative contexts will shape the nature and content of critical thinking. Where such possibilities do not, in fact, exist, it is surely the task of educationalists to create them or help to bring them into existence.

1.10 Reflexive Criticality

The third key to our understanding of critical thinking is a discourse that problematises our existing knowledge and allows us to talk openly about the issues facing us. There are questions that test our humanity and our democratic rights and may test the stability and relevance of our democratic institutions. Who belongs in a society, a community or a nation is a question with the potential for doing precisely this. Critical thinking will undoubtedly open up new possibilities while at the same moment challenging some of the sacralised beliefs and shibboleths of our society, such as the market-driven dash for growth fuelling our economies or the privileged treatment of religious believers.

Having outlined the objective issues, there is still the question of how we begin to develop a critical curriculum. Our answer surely has been about what kind of learning is needed and which skills are the critical ones. We have already argued that critical thinking is 'social knowledge' for action. It involves self-awareness and awareness of others. Cognitive knowledge is required plus skills to reclaim 'reality' and address the big issues. It is about environmental issues and challenges and is problem-focused for transformations. At least some of the types of propositional knowledge, for example, some of the discipline bound and conventional subject-based approaches, have to be transformed into knowledge for change and emancipation. This is the essence of critical thinking!

However, critical thinking must be reflexively critical—thus: "A critical theory is itself always part of the object–domain it describes." (Guess, 1981: 55) This means it has to be "reflectively acceptable" (ibid: 56) and thus can give an account of its own context of origin and an explanation of its use or applicability by those who use it. The engagement of the leader-teacher(s) and learners can be explicitly managed and developed on these grounds. This means that, if the transformation of learning required is to occur in real-life situations and problems, it would be rational for the learners and teachers to adopt critical thinking. As a reflexive intellectual act, it is thus capable of defending and explaining itself, its origins and to some degree, its meaning for those on whose behalf it claims to be knowledge.

Critical thinking has a special standing as a guide for action. The claim is users of critical thinking are able to shape their own interests and that this can be emancipatory.

Critical thinking is 'reflective' and gives a person a distinctive type of knowledge that is liberatory. However, it can never be dogma, since it is always subject to critique itself. We suggest then that critical thinking has to be about cognitive developments. However, it is also about 'reflective cognition' for learners, which suggests it is rational or would be rational (and beneficial) if such learning were to be encouraged and adopted.

One crucial aspect of critical thinking concerns the existence and challenges to authoritarianism and repressive aspects of a culture. The way self-reflection works is to make people aware of what shapes their actions and thinking. Such awareness is a pathway for the individual to be a cognitive subject who can criticise their own beliefs. "Human agents don't merely have and acquire beliefs, they also have ways of criticising and evaluating their own beliefs." (Guess ibid: 61) This is the start of becoming a person who is an 'epistemic subject'; that is to say, a learner who is able to evaluate beliefs and values and act on the results of thinking (Seidman, 1998: 340). It is also a re-statement that reason and critical knowledge can make a difference and is still the means for social advancement and social progress. Communicative contact is the key. For teachers, the implications are that we use knowledge within our practice and we build pedagogy around it as an expression of our authentic criticality and critical thinking. We suggest that this is an authentic task for any university but especially for an engaged university.

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Chapter 2
The University's Social and Civic Role: Time for an Appraisal

James Nyland and David Davies

A Way Forward for an Engaged University?

Two aspects are considered in this article. First, the purpose or re-purposing of the university as a 'civic' institution with crucial connections to its local and regional communities and perhaps its 'value constituents' in the case of faith-based universities. Second, the crucial meaning of critical thinking and the curriculum in universities in its context of the question: what is the university really for? Both aspects we suggest, have implications for learning and teaching precisely in relation to social and civic engagement.

2.1 Aspect 1

2.1.1 The Civic Role and Community Engagement—Achieving Social Justice Through Education

There exists a long and renowned history of 'civic universities' in the Anglosphere (Collini, 2015; Watson & Taylor, 1998; Whyte, 2015) and they are often compared and contrasted with the 'ancient' universities, sometimes seen as the repositories of

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tradition with their rituals, old buildings, formal codes of dress and behaviour. These are unique cultures, very different from modern corporations, let alone globalised digital businesses. The ancient universities looked inwards both in their fortress-like medieval college buildings and in general with regard to the intellectual realm inside the walls (House, 1991: 45–46). Such universities evoke a picture of timelessness, tradition and age-old customs for faculty members, as well as the general public which contrasts markedly with the leading role they often play in world university rankings and in research right across the academic spectrum.

The civic universities were by contrast founded 'for the people' and with the belief that local industries and trade would benefit along with local and regional life and culture. Since the founding era of such universities at the turn of the twentieth century, universities have changed enormously. Many are in fact now mega corporations and some are truly global institutions in terms of research and teaching. Increasingly they are regulated and funded by the government and increasingly over recent times they have been monetised; subject to financial pressures to generate income and funds. This has changed how universities behave and how they view themselves and it forces consideration of just how the origins and defining purposes of such universities, alongside the many variants of 'modern' universities, are relevant to modern conditions (Hirst, 2015).

In the modern era, the civic role of the universities is not separable from the wider questions of engagement since the notion of the 'civic' has itself transmogrified partially into the difficult-to-define notion of 'the community'. That there was a wide belief in the original community-relevant purposes of the university cannot be denied, but the content and meaning of both universities and communities have shifted considerably. How can we define this relationship today? Furthermore, how can we define and develop a curriculum which will be directly relevant to the great and demanding questions and challenges of the day, which are existentially central to our future existence, such as climate change, global poverty and social exclusion? These are pressing issues, especially so since the universities have largely given up the task of delivering adult liberal education and extra-mural studies, which once claimed a significant social and civic mission on behalf of parent universities.

There persists, however, a fundamental human need for knowledge and a social and communal need for intellectual life for which universities are still uniquely equipped to respond. Professional scholarship must in these conditions look beyond the academy to an engagement that is truly modern. It must address the crucial issues and simultaneously educate the learners to be able to confront the difficult questions, rather than turning them into 'snowflakes' who are incapable of facing a threat to their unchallenged selves and ideas. The civic mission of universities is the locus for a critical and questioning curriculum relevant to the absolutely pressing concerns of the modern era. These in fact endanger the global community itself and represent an existential threat to the climate and environment of the planet, as well as to social stability and fairness which is needed to build trust and cooperation in a divisive world. The change required cannot be contemplated without the development of engaged thinking skills and talents, which it is surely the task of universities to produce.

2.1.2 Universities for Students or Citizens?

For many universities, it seems certain that the civic role is alive and well. In a recent influential study, it was reported that … "Many universities were able to articulate activities that clearly had an impact on the local area and people" (UPP 2018). Local people are often rightly proud of their local university and this is a worldwide phenomenon. On the other hand, there undoubtedly exists a well of ignorance about universities locally and otherwise and many people do not know what higher education does for local life and the community. Quite how a university should benefit society and community is a problem that has yet to be satisfactorily resolved at a strategic and coherent level.

Whilst it is difficult to establish categoric functions and activities for universities apropos their civic roles and responsibilities, it is clear that public funding and subsidies carry certain obligations and expectations. What is clear is that few universities have a strategic approach to the needs and population in their area regarding civic activity. Far from being a strategic 'third' activity complementing teaching and research, the civic purpose of universities is often unclear and often of only secondary importance in the hierarchy of functions headed by research and teaching fee-generating students.

There is a further yet related difficulty with the notion of civic purpose. What exactly does this mean? Whose purposes are legitimately acknowledged when a publicly funded and endowed, yet private and independent and autonomous institution declares its primary tasks as international excellence in research, scholarship and entrepreneurial development of its business studies faculty?

Given the charitable status of and civic origins of most universities, are we not entitled to ask for more to be achieved in the civic realm? Could there be greater support for government signalling the central significance of higher education for all in many communities which are literally dispossessed and poverty stricken, some of which are within a stone's throw of the often grand civic university campuses? Could there be local representation on university governing bodies and committees and could a shared and cooperative model is supported and a more radical model of learning be proposed? (Huxtable & Whitehead, 2018).

If a university is in some meaningful and strategic way to be part of its local and regional community, it must be willing to prioritise its relations with that locality. This means more than occupying a campus, more than being a custodian of buildings and artifacts and more than token gestures of support for local events and people. A genuine civic university should express its identity strategically through its core or discretionary activity, according to the UPP Foundation report (2018: 5) so that local people can be active in the university and the institution itself can ensure greater contiguity between civic activity and public priorities.

Of course, geography and location can play a decisive and formative role in just how civic a university can be. Issues such as the level and type of student fee charged can also shape perceptions of the university's role and raison-d'etre. Universities have come to be decisive shapers of local, regional and national cultures and economies

and have developed a responsive diversity in many cases. However, at the same time, we can note, following Bell (2018) and Davis (2018), that as far back as 1850 ideas for an Australian university showed a 'path dependency' which imposes homogeneity. The new universities increasingly resemble the old ones in Australia and elsewhere, notwithstanding 'valiant' attempts to redefine their role outside the traditional scholarly model of elite, selective institutions (Holmes, 2018). The desire to change and reshape universities is not new and a brief look at what has animated this desire for educational reform might yield useful insights for our future work.

2.1.3 Adult Learning and Education

For many citizens, in many different societies and cultures, the experience of university education or at least some university learning has been only available through university extension courses or extra-mural provision. Cambridge, Oxford and London universities were the pioneers amongst English universities to inaugurate such provision, though the American non-collegiate adult learning movement could claim an earlier mass movement affiliation to learning for a common culture and purpose (House ibid: 13–18).

By the last decade of the twentieth century, adult and continuing education was a truly mass higher education experience in the UK, in the USA and in some of the English-speaking countries around the globe. It was the extension studies departments that often developed new modes of teaching and learning, especially in attempts to bring into higher learning those people who had been denied such opportunities as young people. It was no accident that movers and shakers in the world of learning and scholarship such as Thompson (2013), Williams (1958), Hoggart (1960), Young (1958) and Hall (2018) were active participants in this aspect of widening participation at this conjuncture in modern history in the UK and beyond.

This moment in history was paralleled in a most paradoxical way by the growth of mass higher education and expansion precisely of civically aware new universities, which developed from the polytechnics and teacher training colleges which had a local and often focused relevance to the civic societies in which they were fostered. The English-speaking world globally was of course undergoing the transition to mass higher education and spectacularly so in Australia with its own distinctive cultures evolving in separate yet related developments.

Perhaps the most disappointing paradox is that in the past decade there has been a major decline in what previously was an integral part of civic university activity—adult education. In the UK, for example, non-degree courses have declined by 42% since 2012 for students aged over 30. What was once considered core activity and vital to a university's civic role and mission has effectively disappeared or been abolished. There may be two differing explanations for this; first that the introduction of student loans as opposed to grants and fee remissions with conditions on repayment for part-time adult learners has disincentivised potential students. This is likely to add to an evolving problem in the coming years as increasing numbers

of professional jobs are automated and where there will be an increasing need for re-training. It means that all kinds of relatively excluded and disadvantaged types of people, such as women returning to work after an absence from the labour market or adults returning to learn through access courses, cannot retrain unless they can pay fees upfront and support themselves from their own resources. The second reason for the decline in adult education may be because 'mainstream' university curricula and learning activities have in effect taken over the agenda and mission of the old 'extra-mural' departments and traditions of adult learning. There may be some truth in this contention in so far as universities may have co-opted flexible admissions policies, adopted second-chance elements within recruitment drives, re-fashioned long courses within modular and credit transfer schemes and generally adopted the new internet-led digital technologies within mainstream learning. Most, if not all, of the great innovations pioneered by the UK's Open University in the 1970s and 1980s, are to be seen in every civic university today (Davies, 1995). What has changed and is a loss, however, is the focus on the learner which for most civic universities remains the undergraduate late adolescent market and the post-graduate; these are fee-paying young adults, many of whom specialise in vocational and professional courses.

What has been substantially lost in the tradition of adult liberal education and learning which innovated throughout a long and honourable history of struggle to provide alternative routes and means of study to those who had been denied it (Fieldhouse, 1996; House, 1991; Kelly, 1971). What has continued to flourish in civic universities is 'continuing education', which is overwhelmingly technical and skill-based and the vast majority of people in higher education who are not traditional 18–20-year-olds are there to acquire skills and qualifications which relate to career and professional advancement. Such education and training is a vital necessity for modern economies and labour markets.

However, beyond its technical/rational content and its relevance to a professional role, important though that is, there is nothing intrinsic to the curriculum of such learning which is liberatory or transformational and in its worst excesses can lead to narrowly confining specialisation. On the other hand, adult liberal education, whilst also concerned with outcomes for individuals and perhaps even community change and improvement, was aware of the existence and needs of the wider society and community. There was what David House called a 'quest for a common culture'—a … 'hunger for wholeness in our culture' (House ibid: 18–19). The professionalisation and fragmentation of our education system have been accompanied by the growth of uncertainty and insecurity, not least for a significant number of graduates who do not get graduate jobs but enter the precariat of insecure work, or self-employment and the zero-hours culture of the gig economy.

The growth of mass popular culture, now burdened by the pervasiveness of digital oppression masquerading as free communication whilst dominating public attentionality through the myriad screen applications available to all, has changed beyond recognition of the status of our common culture. Gone are the attributes and skills of an urban culture 'of the people', identified and analysed in the 1950s by Richard Hoggart's influential study on the uses of literacy. He argued that we once had a thriving civil society that connected people to each other and to the system that is

society. As well as local government with real powers there were housing associations, co-operatives, worker's institutes, social clubs, sports clubs, bands, orchestras and choirs. Political parties brought people together regularly to discuss and debate the great issues of the day at a local level. Sunday schools and mechanics institutes provided learning opportunities in addition to the state schools. These have been replaced not just by a consumerist Hollywood-style mass popular culture and entertainment but also by the digitalised internet products which are now everywhere. Unfortunately, the continuing adult and liberal education tradition rooted in the universities extramural and outreach work has gone too and along with it much of the educationally progressive and 'improving' programmes of universities and colleges.

The civic role of the university then remains to be re-constructed. There is a continuing demand and need for people to be educated not only as specialists in professions or in skills as practitioners. There is a need for recognition that learning itself is productive and beneficial to individuals and to communities. There are growing numbers of people who are participating in learning which would once have been described as 'liberal learning'; these are lay intellectuals or what Gramsci (1971) called organic intellectuals who emerge within the struggles of ordinary people for a better life and future. Society needs an educated population that goes beyond vocational specialisations and the education of the scholarly elite. The continuing growth of the University of the Third Age, the popularity of generic Open University television programming and the uptake of MOOC (massive open online courses) worldwide, all show the forceful nature of learning needs. And all of these take place outside or beyond normal university provision and are testimony to the fact that people are motivated and spurred on by the challenges that surround them in life, no matter what stage of life they are at. They want to read a classic text or learn the language they found beyond them at school, they are interested in the poet they never had sufficient time for in their working life and they want to examine the social and political issues that surround them and that confront society. Many are desperate to help in the challenges to our planet that climate change is bringing; many wish to be part of the solution to global migration, displacement and poverty that threaten our social lives. Many want to challenge the pervasive inequality across nations and cultures which disfigures our current lives and threatens that of the new generations who will be dealing with it. It can be argued that adult learning within its liberal and critical traditions and fostered by civically-minded universities created access to intellectual life that would not have been possible for most people. In doing this, universities responded to a fundamental human need for knowledge and in going outside the walls, extramurally in the past, they contributed to social progress in a significant and unique way (Davies, 1997). In modernity, they must surely review current practice and think about how they might renew this mission and meet the new challenges—some of which can be described as existential, for the planet and for the human population.

This new challenge is part of intellectual life which is uniquely both part of and separate from conventional university provision. It requires a new look at the

curriculum; we believe it requires a critical curriculum that builds on the achievements of the past yet articulates really useful knowledge for the here and now and it requires a different form of engagement. Perhaps above all, it needs to review and renew its relationships with its value constituents—the people for whom it claims it exists. These are more often than not said to be the 'communities' in which and for which the university demonstrates its reason for being.

2.1.4 Community Engagement

There are many and varied definitions of 'community' and there are few universities in the world that does not in some way or another seek to relate to their 'community' or communities. There is thus the risk of using the term community in such varied circumstances that it becomes meaningless. However, we could do worse than to note Bauman's (2001) wry comment that community is a word that has a 'feel'; it is always a good thing! There is also an argument between community and individuality and autonomy; community may offer security but deny us freedom. There can be no perfect community but… 'The better may be an enemy of the good, but most certainly the 'perfect' is a mortal enemy of both'.

In Australian terms and contexts, we can refer to the community in respect of a set of defined concerns and values. At the risk of generalisation, there is a concern to address the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural character of the Australian people. This task has both a current and historical force as the history of the colonial period shows which may be said to be positive and negative. The place and role of the indigenous Aboriginal people of Australia are being continuously reassessed in the evolving context of a multi-racial/ethnic future. A community where an understanding is shared by all its members is sought and one in which a community of people remain united and bound together in spite of all separating factors. The community in Australia may not have reached its intended destination in this yet but it surely strives for this and it provides a context for university engagement.

The Australian First Peoples themselves embody a diverse set of cultures, languages and ethnic markers. The indigenous people exist in their own diversity and unity, but they also stand for the wider meaning of engagement because if it does not deliver for them then how can it do so for those who came after them? If engagement is about social justice, for example, then First Peoples are the paradigm case. How universities seek to resolve their own understanding of and relation to the key historical problem of post-colonial settlement becomes key to unlocking the role of universities in creating a more socially just and fairer society. We can learn from the United States that the legacy of slavery and the racialisation of social and civic life continues long after formal equal rights have been conceded and its effects cut deep over the succeeding generations. We cannot ignore this history; we cannot ignore the contemporary social, economic, ethnic and cultural divisions which bedevil our society in Australia. Like people of goodwill and intelligence everywhere we must grapple with our local expressions of what is a global situation. But Australia is a

continent; its universities and the knowledge economy represent perhaps the third greatest producer of national wealth; and the eyes of the world are frequently on Australia as the harbinger of a better post-colonial world. How university engagement and First Peoples evolve will be the illustrative case study the world will want to explore and learn from! All eyes are on us …

2.1.5 The Role of Cultural Knowledge

There are many ways to pose questions of community and culture and our intention here is to draw attention and recognition to a crucial element for the future of university engagement in Australia. This addresses the need to place First Peoples' homeland, language and culture centrally at the heart of educational experience. The solution to massively aggregated and complicated problems involving the history of colonial and later globalising forces of social and economic change cannot be brought to book in a single bound as it were. Yet there is, as Trudgen (2000) and Teare (2013, 2015, 2018) both in different but allied ways suggest, a way forward. The key is finding the means by which people can control their own lives. This is a question of knowledge and skills which can be acquired and where lost, re-acquired through a different kind of learning and education. It requires a multi-disciplinary approach that takes in the whole life of a community and one which stresses the innate value of social and emotional capital required for successful living in modernity as much as the economic capital which is thought to be generative of social welfare and prosperity.

This is in fact a type of critical understanding that requires potential students to engage with different and contrasting ways of life, ways of thinking and ways of being. This is a shared task and agenda for those from different ethnic and cultural origins who must share a common future crafted from an exploitative and invidious past.

Control through the medium of learning must be returned to the people and both the content of that learning and the processes and practices through which it is acquired need to be radically redefined. This is a vital element of the necessary social engagement of a university in its 'community hinterland'. It can no longer be allocated or demoted to the margins but needs to be a curriculum priority just as it is a social and human priority for any educator who values the health and welfare of the public and civic domain.

2.2 Aspect 2

2.2.1 The Meaning of Critical Thinking for the Higher Education Curriculum

If culture and community are deeply problematic, this does not mean we have simply abandoned our sense of what community might mean and how it might be relevant to learning. John Berger, the great writer and broadcaster on art and society, reminded us that community is one of the longings of our century (Berger, 2016). It retains a powerful charge and seems to offer a framework of meaning for modern life. But it is culture that connects us to the events 'out there'. There is no community outside of and beyond cultural forms and practices which make us what and who we are. Yes, there is an essential sense of self for most people and there are collective experiences and identities and some people feel alienated from the collective norms, values, practices and behaviour which we can observe and analyse around us. But it is in the relation of things that understanding emerges and culture through the various 'languages' it employs is the means of relating one thing to another. Without culture and cultural mediation, there can be no valid knowledge that can equip us with the power to change our thinking and consciousness and transform (if we so choose) our social and material lives and who knows our human 'spiritual' lives as well. It is in this spirit that we are asking in this paper—what is going on around us, where is the leading edge of change and how can we understand this as universities?

Complicated and connected answers risk confusion and diversion, however, so we have tried to summarise and bring into alignment a range of matters which we believe are connected. Our task initially is to describe the issues so as to isolate and highlight things that are in reality not isolated but part of a greater whole. These current and future issues are not the totality of problems faced by the human condition! However, we believe they are the issues facing universities as learning institutions and as innovators in learning. This perspective informs our sense of curriculum innovation and leads us to ask—what are the key learning issues that impact universities that wish to innovate for change? How can the universities re-think their approach to civic engagement (and entrepreneurship) so as to benefit the community in all its abundant variety but especially perhaps for dispossessed and marginalised communities? How can we conceptualise an engaged education which is culturally attuned to modernity and all its diversity and opportunities?

One such issue is that of how knowledge gained inside and outside the classroom can engage people and communities in new and meaningful ways. This has been called 'real knowledge' (Davies & Nyland, 2018; Nyland et al., 2017) and 'engaged education' (Hyman, 2017) and focuses on issues to do with learning and knowledge which meets the challenges of the times in schools, universities, workplaces, communities and life experience. It forces us to engage with the 'big issues', sometimes referred to as the 'wicked issues' (Firth, 2017)—and we signal some of these below.

2.2.2 Crisis, Poverty and the Future

After the global economic crash of 2008 many people imagined that change was bound to come and that an era had passed where poverty and great inequality could be ignored. The industrially advanced economies appeared to have seen the error of austerity economics and politics and what appeared to be a new wave of economic expansion seemed to be on the horizon. Yet in the third decade of the twenty-first century, we can still observe the fact that millions of people live in stark poverty and the differences of wealth and privilege between the poor and rich are ever stronger and more divisive. Climate change and planetary degradation affect all who live on the earth but impacts most severely on the poorest. Human extinction is a reality. The question facing educationalists is how does the curriculum of schools and universities address these matters?

2.2.3 The Digital World and the Human Mind

The onset of digital technology and communications has been rapid and remorseless. Few people can or apparently wish to avoid the benefits of living in the information age. It is surely still a wondrous thing that each separate individual alive on the planet can be connected and seen via satellite telephones. Virtual realities have become the 'real' and lived realities; communications are almost instantaneous; working lives have been transformed for perhaps billions of people and the potential of this technology alongside the growth of artificial intelligence is only just being tapped. What remains to be decided is just how this transformation will be made part of our democratic life. The trends towards monopolisation and the lack of democratic accountability and control of these vast empires of communication are likely to remain with us as a problematical arena of social life.

2.2.4 Young People and an Uncertain Future

The rapid pace of social and economic change has profound implications for contemporary youth. Whereas once the universities educated an elite and most of the rest found gainful employment in expansive capitalism or in traditional agricultural work within settled and stable communities, today young people are increasingly part of the precariat. They have no stable and secure future in respect of work since work itself is rapidly shifted from place to place and whole industries can come into existence and then be demolished within easily the life of a single generation. Much modern work itself is soul-destroying and unskilled and only then available temporarily or on short-term contracts. University graduates are now faced with the fact that the

premium qualification is now the master's degree and even that does not guarantee appropriate and highly valued work which can last a professional lifetime.

2.2.5 Knowledge and Skills

The series of challenging issues raised here above make up a 'rolling crisis' which impacts across the world. For universities, the task is to develop knowledge and skills in a curriculum that is open to addressing the crisis issues which are central to learning and teaching. A critical and fundamental reform of what is taught and how is now a key issue. Knowledge is available everywhere; universities must apply it everywhere since there can be no national solution on a globalised planet.

2.2.6 Community and Curriculum

In spite of global life and communication people still live in and desire to be part of communities, sharing common identities, values and expectations in places they know and recognise as their own. Human talent and ability must continue to be developed in local places as part of communal experience. In this sense, the community can be the curriculum and universities are able to recognise this and create learning around and within a meaningful shared life. Universities can choose to do this.

The modern university is expected to be many different and contradictory things. It is expected to be an innovator in learning and knowledge; collegial in its dealings with its staff and its partners yet competitive in an increasingly marketised and monetised world; caring in its concern for people yet entrepreneurial in its business dealings; it is expected to be both a public institution and a private organisation and it is almost always both a local and an internationalised institution. This wide array of university roles and identities does not imply that it must be in any sense isolated from its community!

2.2.7 The University and Democratic Citizen-Members?

What then are universities and what are the characteristics that we value? At its heart, a university is a community, where academic citizenship can be seen to be central to the idea of membership. A university must surely sponsor recognition of rational and scientific enquiry as to the basis for learning, rather than the handed-down dogmas of orthodox belief and be a place where all belief systems are open to scrutiny, dialogue, questioning and critical discourse.

Universities are diverse institutions and to cope with a changing future universities will have to play a fully developed role in the emerging civil society; a society that

on a global scale is faced with a series of problems and issues such as those outlined above. Having indicated some of the directions to which we think universities appear to be heading, we can tentatively suggest that the community must be a focus for engagement and a university must play its part in improving amongst other things the environment, local education and health and community outcomes.

The new view of the university in its community will also need to embrace the fact that learning will have to be 'social', that is to say, it will be shared and will be for a progressive social purpose. That elite higher education systems have paid off for many cannot be denied. However, the next stage requires not merely a scaling up of existing provision but a wholesale re-thinking of learning for those billions of people who can view the benefits of advanced industrial society (via their hand-held devices and computers) but who cannot achieve them. Learning is of course not just a social activity, it is also an intensely personal activity. Change yourself and you change your situation is no mean epithet, especially when allied to a notion of a community since all individual action needs to find its appropriate object and community, as we have seen, is one of the longings of our century.

2.2.8 Learning for Engagement

We have suggested that the challenges and crises of our times are at the same time challenges for our civic lives. The public domain, what Americans refer to as the public square, is faced with unprecedented issues—from worldwide health pandemics to climate change and planetary and species survival. These are really big and existential issues and quite rightly we somehow expect our educational institutions to be part of the solution. Yet some of these challenges and threats are often severely marginal to our learning (Hyman, 2017). Our ambitions are limited in scope and reach and our creativity is strictly limited to the conventional subjects and methods of teaching and learning. We do not conceptualise our school and university curricula in terms of empowering literacy and numeracy which could build character and resilience in learners and which could equip them with the knowledge to challenge the reasons why the great and concerning issues of the day are marginal to their learning and lives.

An engaging curriculum would also be about the independence and autonomy of the individual; it would ensure that individual creativity was allied to craftsmanship and that intellectual achievement was applied to the practical and real world. The artificial distinctions between intellectual and skilled accomplishments should be abolished as both are needed and have complementary values in a world of self-imposed limitations. We live still in a society that uses education to select and sort out those considered fit for further education and those who are deemed fit for entry to work. In spite of the exponential growth of higher education in the advanced urban economies, there are millions if not billions of people who are excluded from acquiring the higher level skills and qualifications that denote success in a competitive

market for labour and work. We live in cultures and communities that tend to demote skill and promote professional and intellectual or 'cultural' achievements.

The relegation of skill to the second division of rank and status and its situation within an emerging and all-consuming digital environment presents us with an extra dimension of challenge. Michael Crawford (2015) has argued that the way in which a person uses skill to interact with his/her environment in the digital age has profound implications for our future and hence for how and what we learn. How the individual survives and prospers depends greatly upon the skill they acquire to navigate the communicative environment. To do so they must acquire 'attentionality', that is navigate and interrogate to their own advantage, the public attentional world of the internet. This means understanding that the external environment becomes part of the received and internalised world in which we live. The 'self' that is the individual is, at least in significant part, actually constituted by the new and evolving digital and virtual realities in which so many people are now immersed for so much of their waking lives. This differs of course from culture to culture and within cultures but the fact remains it is now a pervasive and ubiquitous trend in modern societies of all kinds. Its significance has yet to be fully grasped.

Skill is a key part of being in the digital world yet most people are unaware of the true dimensions of their immersion in it. We live in an age of social media where for many people 280 character tweets are their main source of information and knowledge of the world beyond their front door. Argument is replaced by unfounded opinion; knowledge and facts are replaced by ill-informed conjecture and prejudice. Increasing numbers of people reject judgements based on research and the evaluation of evidence. Traditional media are by-passed and increasingly bizarre conspiracy theories find a resonance in the public sphere. This is a disturbing phenomenon that shows contempt for science and reason. We are not taught a true understanding of what lies behind the pervasive internet of things, of virtual realities and of constructed experiences. Products are sold and exchanged and experiences generated without consciousness of their true origins and meaning; we learn and consume and interact in a virtual dimension with representations manufactured by someone else and created somewhere else. Individuals gain great skill in accessing these representations, but they become in the process skilled consumers, not producers. A reality that is essentially independent of the self is responsible for the inputs that generate and sustain a viable self. And yet we surely know that we must ourselves be involved in the making of ourselves and we must understand how that is done. Only critical and informed learning can hope to unmask the complications and obfuscations of a world of impressions, representations and mediations which if unchallenged could threaten all our futures.

2.2.9 Social Knowing and Skill

A critical learning curriculum would mean developing skills to interpret the social world and the desire and capacity to question the frameworks and representations

that are massively concentrated in our everyday social knowledge of the world. The modern 'media', amongst which we must count the sheer volume and power of the internet, define our problems and set the agenda of concern throughout society. The mediated experiences we access represent the world to us and they do this via the categories of thinking and the skill sets we have in our hands and heads and hearts! Skill becomes then embodied in our sense of who and what we are. There is then a need for a thinking and personalised notion of skill which gives us the capacity to be active and engaged in the real world. It needs to give us individual agency as a prerequisite for social knowledge in what is after all the collective social life of a society.

Skill in this viewpoint becomes a crucial enabling concept because instead of allowing our perceptions and experiences to be determined by and through the internet apps we employ, we can choose to develop skills that express an embodied perception for the social purposes we choose. This means that our knowledge and understanding can be enhanced through our actions, not just through mental or intellectual representations which are shaped by the virtual realities provided for us on the digital platforms. In this view, what we perceive, how we understand and how we use knowledge to change something is actually what we do. This is one of the philosophical underpinnings of action learning and according to Crawford is an antithesis of virtual reality; it suggests we can have a self that can be expanded through skill rather than just through mental or intellectual effort. Since we live highly mediated lives so we ourselves have been made biddable and 'pliable' to whomsoever has the power to make and shape the representations we consume via the internet and in parts of our public space. Representations are comprised of thoughts, language, symbols, images, narratives and the media themselves which make up the apps and software programmes we consume. Crawford argues… "representations collapse the basic axis of proximity and distance by which an embodied being (person) orients in the world and draws a horizon of relevance around itself". The horizon of potential seems to expand exponentially but the circle of action diminishes as each one of us becomes absorbed in the screen in front of us to the exclusion of all else. Even the most densely packed public places will now show the introverted individual wholly absorbed in a mediated self, fixated to the screen, narcissistically self-involved and unaware of the significance of the public domain. There is here both a deficit of attentionality to public social life and conventions and a form of mass psychological 'interpellation' by which the bonds between perception and action are separated.

The powerful media representations fall into patterns and frameworks which shape our perceptions; we literally carry them around in our heads. In this way, they reproduce our culture including the dominant relationships and the way these are seen and valued in society. They also carry with them a sense of 'commonsense', in which it may seem unreasonable to question commonly held values. An effort is needed to understand and grasp these different perceptions of how the world and its problems might be viewed. An engaged form of learning and a critical curriculum must therefore place individuals in a situation where a situation or a group of people or a set of relationships becomes problematic—because it is changing or being changed or where it is provoking a conflict. Problematic events and situations are frequently the

catalysts for change and they enable alternative forms of attentionality to emerge. Critical thinking and an engaged civic role for universities in this current age imply questioning situations that favour the existing disposition of things and reinforce the status quo. However, the status quo will no longer see us through the existential and environmental challenges we have outlined above. Universities need to re-engineer their curricula so as to equip students with critical thinking skills and they need to understand students' needs for alternative forms of skill that are commensurate with modern world (Barnett & Griffen, 1997).

The university's role then involves, we believe, participating in a struggle to define and represent the world so as to address the key issues and problems faced by much of humanity. Students need a different kind of knowledge and skills that allow them to be critical thinkers and actors; what are hidden needs brought to light.

2.2.10 Critical Thinking

If we are then to reclaim the 'real' as against the representations of it which mediate and distort our experience and understanding of the world, we need to develop our ideas of critical thinking which can help us overcome the limitations. Critical thinking in its context of education can be defined as rational and practical activity centred on decisions as to what one should do in complex situations. Critical thinkers are likely to be fair, objective and committed to accuracy and clarity (Ennis, 1996). Furthermore, they are likely to be able to think about thinking itself, also called metacognition. Critical thinking is also about the impact of ideas and understanding of 'self' and 'identity' since these constructs in different ways shape how an individual interacts with the wider community and society. As Jenkins (2004: 56) has argued, developmental psychology has shown that learners who are active in their own right require the work of others to achieve their potential. At the heart of learning, processes are the growth of a cognitive and social being who can cope with the challenges of everyday life. Personal identity and social identity are intertwined so that members of a group, for example, can be part of how individuals can change their definitions of themselves and bring about change in collective life. Such skill as this, for that, is what is required to actively engage with others in a conscious and aware manner, is not simply to be taken for granted. It has to be learned and taught and individuals learn by engaging in what Habermas (1972) called instrumental, interpretive and critical learning where the latter involves applying critical concepts and ideas so as to 'transform' the objects and subjects of study.

Critical thinking is thus about the things we need to think and do to change and transform any given reality into an improved one. It is not neutral thinking in the sense of a disembodied, objective and value-free judgemental process. Critical thinking is not a neutral activity; it is an engaging activity.

There is no specific and subject-based content for critical thinking. It does not reside in a single or cluster of academic disciplines, though the social sciences broadly speaking have done most to develop the notion. Although it is possible to list in a

granular fashion the attributes of a critical thinker (Khalaily, 2017) and these would include at a high level all of the performance skills to do with reading, understanding, memorising, verbalising, absorbing information, comparing, contrasting, clarifying, investigating and questioning, this would be to miss the true significance of critical thinking. This lies in "the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skilfully conceptualising, applying, analysing, synthesising and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action … These skills are highly valued in a democratic society" (Khalaily, 2017: 57).

There can be no such thing as a uniform and singular way of critical thinking. Thinking differently is a core value at the very heart of what we understand a university to be and it is essentially a promotion of diversity. It is at heart a democratic endeavour, though throughout history the freedom to think freely and to express dissenting views has been a hard fought battle that continues today in many parts of the globe. Engaged universities which recognise the contexts of the wicked issues and challenges we have referred to earlier usually want their learners to think deeply and to use their acquired knowledge to improve life and society; they usually want them to be able to distinguish truth from falsity; to appreciate the fact that beneficent values differ from harmful ones. Social justice has been a central concern to many influential thinkers on university matters and it remains central to the teaching of those who want a fairer social result from our educational systems (Newman, 2016). In a literal sense then our work task on the curriculum challenge facing us is to be critical.

2.3 In Conclusion

Two decades ago it was suggested and debated that there was a crisis of knowledge in the rapidly expanding mass higher education of the western world (Scott, 1997). Even if there was such a crisis, the author of the seminal volume on it was of the view that academics were competent enough to sort it out (Barnett, 1997): they had after all "epistemological anchorage".

Furthermore, our knowledge and understanding of the world are advancing. Disputes were said to exist but they did not get out of hand! Some two decades on we do not perhaps feel so sanguine about knowledge being so safe in the hands of academics. In the themes outlined above, we suggest an alternative yet complementary view, namely that new knowledge based around action learning and a critically endowed student is vital for the pressing concerns that 'the world outside our heads' is demonstrating to us on a daily basis. The modern encounter with the world demands conjunction of the pragmatic and pressing wicked issues and a way of knowing that is critical thinking for the current age.

Our view is that there are key themes and issues that need the academy to be a genuine forum for debate and dispute and to engage with the wider world. Universities must therefore incorporate an active dimension to their missions and strategies. The elements of this approach are we suggest: the re-shaping of the role of public educator so that public knowledge fits the emerging concerns as part of the mainstream university curriculum; the adoption of critical thinking strategies and programmes for all learners so that genuine knowledge can be created in practice; knowledge skills and what counts as knowledge itself needs to be revised especially in respect of marginalised and alienated communities; attentionality, reflection and awareness need to be placed more centrally in the learning experience of students and applied to the changing and threatening world of digital and surveillance capitalism; and we need to 'do' critical thinking and dialogue which transforms both what we study and the way we study. The object of learning which is the world out there, as well as the internal and imaginative life of individuals and groups and the learner as a thinking subject, need to be brought into conjunction. It is in the relation of both object and subject of study that our claim to critical thinking and understanding lies. The university as an open forum for debate and discourse has always to be re-constructed. Knowing the world is an achievement but changing it and demonstrating a capacity to engage is the real question to be asked. Knowing the real world cannot be done entirely within the university and neither should it. It has to be done by engagement.

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Chapter 3
The University as a Public Educator: Learning and Teaching for Engagement

James Nyland, David Davies, and Emer Davies

Introduction

The focus of this paper is on universities, primarily those in Australia, though it should be relevant for many others around the world especially those which have been part of the Anglo-American sphere of development. The topic of the paper is 'engagement', which is short-hand for how they relate to their communities and stakeholders. Our starting point is that universities are public educators with a 'duty' and mission to support and engage with their local and regional communities as well as often claiming national and international importance. This has been a contested territory for at least a generation in the context of a globalising world (Barnett, 1997; Seidman, 1998; Zuboff, 2019).

Our initial concerns may appear to be critical of what universities already do in respect of their involvement in the wider and deeper learning needs of the communities in which they are set. Yet it would be remiss to ignore the progressive and reforming types of learning and its formal recognition within some university programmes of study. Service learning is of major significance in conventional universities as is work-integrated and work-based learning.

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3.1 What of Work Integrated Learning (WIL) in the Universities?

The concept of linking higher education and industry through Work Integrated Learning has become embedded in government rhetoric and direction. For example, in 2020 the Australian Federal Government reported on its new National Priorities and Industry Linkage Fund (NPILF) to incentivise universities to engage with industry, notably through an increased level of WIL opportunities to further enhance their work-ready graduates. The NPILF was designed to guarantee new funding for universities, albeit it at a modest level, that could demonstrate increased collaboration with industry. This funding framework also aimed to increase support for lifelong learning, providing new opportunities for individuals in the Australian workforce to develop their learning and skills.

Under the new NPILF framework, universities were required to provide three-year plans consisting of metrics and case studies that reflect the government's priorities of work-integrated learning, STEM-skilled graduates (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) and industry partnerships. The NPILF was intended to operate on a three-year timeline and reporting cycle—with an initial pilot phase and full implementation over a five year period. The NPILF framework was intended to be fully implemented by the middle of the decade.

3.2 What of Service Learning in the Universities?

There are various forms of service learning such as volunteering, community service, field education and types of internship and they often involve various types of collaborative learning (Bruffee, 1995). In general and in summary, many universities in Australia sponsor service to the community which is recognised within academic credit and awards. There are undoubtedly genuine democratic and mutually beneficial relationships with community members when students undertake work-related tasks as part of their study programmes. Such programmes demand reflection and the application of a range of skills and attributes, including often the notion of citizenship responsibilities. Where boundaries are crossed or broken down, service learning is good for the morale of learners and it can enhance mutual solidarity and trust between social and ethnic groups which might otherwise remain locked within unhelpful stereotypes. Personal and professional development can be enhanced and the altruistic element of service learning is a powerful motivator for learning and for later professional life and work. A basis for a thorough critique of the conventional university curriculum in a sense already exists in the service learning concept.

3.3 The Australian Carnegie Community Engagement Classification Initiative

The Carnegie Community Engagement Classification allows universities worldwide to demonstrate their commitment to the communities they serve and to share good practices in the sector.

The definition of community engagement is the partnership of university knowledge and resources with those of the public and private sectors to enrich scholarship, research and creative activity; enhance curriculum, teaching and learning; prepare educated, engaged citizens; strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical societal issues; and contribute to the public good.

The classification framework represents best practices in the field and encourages continuous improvement through periodic re-classification. Over three hundred and sixty institutions in the US are classified as Carnegie Community Engaged Campuses. Australia is now part of this international program with more than half of its HE sector engaged in this international engagement benchmarking system either as original pilot members or observers.

The value of WIL, SL and collaborative international benchmarking systems such as the Carnegie Classification programme to Australian universities should not be ignored and attempts at reform and renewal of the curriculum must incorporate the key lessons and methods of successful initiatives in these areas. Our task is to take this further and to elaborate and deepen our understanding of the learning and teaching strategies for engagement into a generalised critical curriculum.

Our starting point is the approach taken by the Australian Government sponsored peak body *Engagement Australia* because it begins with a search for unity in diversity and stresses the importance of teaching, learning and social analysis (see Transform, 2017: No. 1, 5–8). Within these boundaries, our specific focus is on the university as a social institution in which learning and teaching is paramount activity. Yet what we find nearly everywhere is that learning and teaching is not the paramount activity for engagement. Engagement is primarily about university strategies for inclusion, for community involvement, for the best recruitment policies, for spelling outright thinking values, for access and widening participation, for delivering correct environmental policies and outcomes and for locking in its own graduates as future donors.

How then to advance the cause of learning and teaching for engagement? How might we spell out what is needed when the curriculum is in fact all of those things that influence and shape learning and teaching inside and beyond the classroom?

3.4 Critical Thinking for Engagement

There is a key question behind the engagement theme for those who live and profit from the academic life. What kind of knowledge is needed for critical thinking?

Habermas (1972, 1974, 2004) and others from the Frankfurt school (Jeffries, 2017) have pointed us in a significant direction. We can see the usefulness of conceptualising knowledge as being one of these types: as technical/rational and as critical/investigative and as creative/transformative thinking. In a technocratic world with massive economic imperatives, there must be an application of technical know-how of astounding complexity and variety. Common sense tells us modernity requires advanced technical knowledge and 'professionalism' and all that flows from this. The networked society, analysed, for example by Castells (1996, 1997), alerts us specifically to the need for critical and investigative knowledge of the fast-evolving information flows around the globe which shapes our economic and social existence. Creative and transformative knowledge is what motivates many to strive for a better and changed reality achieved through conscious commitment to the right values and to put right what is thought to be unjust or wrong. This is knowledge for action, though the links between thinking and acting are themselves part of the conundrum for which we need critical thinking itself.

There is, in addition, an embedded epistemological issue here! All knowledge and skills are not equal. Knowledge may be power but like power it is not distributed and shared equally. Neither is it generated equally and the differing types of knowledge equally valued or rewarded. Knowledge may be ubiquitous and everyone in a sense has access to their own version of it but it is at the same moment an industrial enterprise across the world and is used as an instrument for distributing the earth's resources. The most advanced and richest industrial societies have the most access and control of the scientific and knowledge base. They control research and development. They determine the direction and pace of global development. They shape our future and the prospects of the whole planet. The epistemological issue is: how can our societies be knowledge based and entrepreneurial whilst being in conformity with our values for a fairer and more socially just society?

What, then, are the central concerns and qualities of critical thinking in this context? What does the modern mind need to cope with in order to survive and thrive? Why does an engagement strategy for universities require a different approach to thinking and what are its qualities and characteristics? We have chosen to bring to this discussion the idea of thinking itself, of perception and the need to analytically reflect on experience and the relation of these processes to the world out there of work, of skill and the links between action and perception which have been so threatened by developments in the new technologies and digital industries. The work of Crawford (2015) offers some important insights into this issue.

3.5 Pay Attention! A Problem to Be Addressed

Crawford begins his exposition of how we might manage in the modern age by raising questions that are both cultural and epistemological. He asserts we must ask: what is it to be human and how do we encounter the world in the new digital age? Our experience is highly engineered and the way it is represented is mediated by the new

products of this age. There are deeply disturbing implications for education here and there is also a possibility of progress.

First and foremost we must pay attention! We live in an information economy (Castells, 1997) or even a surveillance economy (Zuboff, 2019) but in reality, what we have according to Crawford is an 'attentional economy'. All social and public space is invaded by products and experiences which can be marketised and monetised. This is not merely advertising appearing as an intrusion in our newspapers, on public hoardings, on TV and film or on the consumer products and spaces in public life, bad though this may be. All public and much private life may be available for advertising and messaging. However, the problem does not end there and advertising may only be the tip of the iceberg.

The deluge of information that comes at us every day via our electronic and digitalised media itself generates a need for ever more stimulation. Obsessive and addictive behaviour often results whereby individuals are spending their lives before a screen. We are distracted from any realities we make ourselves since the content is manufactured for us, elsewhere- beyond our heads and outside our experience. This content of experience is often irrelevant since we are paying attention to the sheer volume and diversity of information, not to its value. We are not able to ask what is of value because authoritative guidance once supplied by tradition, culture, religion and shared values has broken down. Our mental lives are fragmented by a false individualism that is susceptible to what is provided through technology. We seem to have autonomy and individual choice, but what we click on is heavily mass-produced for consumption under rules of commerce and profitability. And the content on offer is in no way our own content!

The questions then become: how can we control the crisis of attention? How can we resist the colonisation of our minds and lives especially if we want to avoid viewing the new technology as a social disaster or a panacea for our periodic global socio-economic crises? How can we reclaim what was once public space from the private retreat of individuals into their own cell phones and self-enclosed computers? Crawford writes: "People in such places stare at their phones or open a novel, sometimes precisely in order to tune out the piped-in chatter. A multiverse of private experiences is accessible after all. In this battle of attentional technologies, what is lost is the kind of public space that is required for a certain kind of sociability."

Attentionality is a resource that has been taken away from the public. It has been privatised and monetised. What was once held in common, as a shared resource, including the use of private, silent space (Crawford, ibid: 11), like the right to dark skies over our cities, has been lost because we did not understand it to be a resource. We did not truly understand that we owned it as a public good. Silence is now a luxury good to be purchased by the wealthy.

The issue for educational thinkers is that we have now taught ourselves to disregard the 'attentional commons'. What we owe others in public life and interaction—that is to say, attentionality and taking notice of them in our behaviour and intentions—we now lose to the attention we give to the portable and fixed technologies of communication and information exchange. We need only to think of the ubiquitous television

in public spaces and hand-held devices streaming the world's data banks and personal information and concurrent thoughts of billions of users.

3.6 Cognitive Concerns: Control Yourself

Are there cognitive solutions to this problem? The crisis of attention to which Crawford draws our thinking raises other crucial concerns. Those who succeed in developing the capacity to self-regulate themselves (usually through schooling) tend to be more successful in life than those who do not. Successful learning engages with the power to self-regulate our lives and choices. The less influence and control over our choices we have the more we are suggestible to the choices of others and the less free we are. We also need to note the importance of the desire some people have to prove themselves which can involve self-control, denial of things that give immediate gratification in favour of investing in future gains and the crucial need for self-affirmation, especially for learners who are brought up outside those conventional conventions and cultures which inexorably seem to lead to higher education (Wong, 2018). The point here is that we have not paid attention to the transfer of what Crawford calls the 'attentional commons' from our collective ownership to that of a wealthy elite. This is especially serious in the era of big data where our personal data is available to the apparently all-encompassing global big data companies. Our lives and minds are treated as a resource to be harvested by these companies for their burgeoning profits (Zuboff, 2019). This is a matter of personal privacy but at its root is the loss of capacity to pay attention to the things we choose ourselves. If attention is something each of us owns personally and if this, in turn, helps determine what is important to us, then the appropriation of our attention becomes a crucial matter for all of us! Crawford asks us to consider the driver talking on his cell phone whilst driving through a crowded urban district with a motorcyclist in the lane next to him. This is as dangerous as driving whilst legally drunk. Conversation via a machine impairs our ability to notice others and to register the things in the environment we need to notice. This is called attentional blindness and it can have, obviously, catastrophic results if a mass of automobile metal smashes into a human being at speed whilst the driver's attention is somewhere other than on driving safely and with respect and regard to others. How our attention is appropriated and used by others in public spaces is a matter of private and personal concern. How we learn about the ethics and morality of being in public is crucial to right thinking for each individual because private resources belonging to individuals are exchanged in public as part of our social relationships. It is these which bind us together or keep us apart.

3.7 Focus on What Matters

How can we in an age of insidious and spectacular distraction for the individual, retain our engagement and concentration on the things that really matter?

Beyond the individual, there is a social environment that really matters and this is a legitimate part of our engagement agenda. The environment experienced by the current generation of young people (learners) is highly engineered. It is 'provided' and delivered by machines and electronic systems with content conceived elsewhere and manufactured elsewhere (often in China). The attentional landscape is the product of someone else's labour and skill and the expression of someone else's intentions for us. It is more than a simple product, bought and consumed in the free market of products and ideas and experiences. Neither is it just a series of sensory inputs which impinge on our brains, though it certainly does this with hyper-stimulated internet programmes. It is of course all of these and more. This system clearly offers young people in particular roles, places, situations, experiences and affordances and in fact a possible immersion in norms and practices of behaviour and social interaction which shape their lives! Crawford is of the view: "One element of our predicament is that we engage less than we once did in everyday activities that *structure* our attention." (Crawford ibid: 23) The new digital 'realities' in fact relieve us of the burden of choice and reflection; they do our thinking and therefore choose for us. As a result, we become less than we might otherwise be.

3.8 Attention, Self and Skill

We have already alluded to the existence of critical thinking and action but now we need to indicate perhaps one or more possible solutions to the problems of the mind and the way we are encouraged to think and act which might inhibit our capacities as rational, thinking beings which we have outlined above. Attention, defined as the capacity to be joined to the world in which we live, should surely be available to us? And shouldn't this be within a sense of freedom and personal autonomy? If our complex environment constitutes our essential selves, rather than just acting upon this self, then how we manage *attention* is crucial. It is through knowledge and the application of knowledge, otherwise known as skill, that we can act on the world and change it to our advantage. It is through the use of a skill, including intellectual skills, that any given 'self' acts on the external world. But we might ask, what is the attentive self and what is the content of skill and skilful thinking? For Crawford, the key notion is that of agency because it is this that enables us to act on the external world, that is, the reality of existence, through the use of skilled practice. The encounter between the self as a socially constituted subject and the objective world 'outside our heads' is made possible through attentionality. We pay attention through skill and skill always trades upon the necessary relationship between structure and freedom. In learning skills and about skills we are learning something about human agency and human

practice; we are learning about the capacities we have and might not have to act on our environments and bring about change. Managing attention is thus a critical element of critical thinking.

3.9 Thinking and Being

We have so far stressed a connection between thinking and acting in and on, the world and of *being* in that same world. This is a key part of the 'solution' to the conundrum of what is a critical curriculum? What we are is as important as what we think and what we do is what we are. Critical thinking then is also about *being* something. Universities must play their part since the new systems of learning will be born most likely within the interstices of the old! New skills and competencies must be afforded so that Crawford's critique of attentionality can be met and so that Berger's (1972, 2016) sense of the importance of 'being' and making your environment yourself can be realised. This might mean using your life in a sense as a project for the improvement of the self in its real and existing social and community setting. What follows is an indication of the skills and competencies that might inform a renewed and critical curriculum. They go beyond the idea of subject expertise and indicate a spectrum of key abilities to which an engaged student in an engaged university might aspire.

3.10 Being in the Digital World

The original impulse was progressive—a dream to link everyone on the planet so that knowledge could be more easily shared. The potential for both liberation and oppression seems to be inherent in the digitalisation, automatisation and robotisation of industrial capacity and of our social life. The internet has undoubtedly transformed our lives, particularly the lives of our young people, students and those who will become our students. Their personal, social and work lives are lived to some extent in cyber-space. They make arrangements to meet, share their thoughts and images, share their likes and dislikes through screens. Although as students, they attend lectures and tutorials, even though their physical presence is not always strictly necessary, they do much of their learning on-line, submit their assessments on-line, receive results on-line, make job applications on-line and meet their future life-partners on-line. For many much of their day is spent in one way or another in front of a screen. Perhaps it is too early to know the impact on their brains/minds and consciousness of all of this screen-time. It is, however, worth considering whether they are critical in their thinking and engaged with the big issues of the day, which will impact their futures. Whilst on-line learning, reading and writing are immensely valuable, there is really no substitute for helping students to think critically and be able to pose and support

an argument/point of view through debate and discussion; through in fact a process of disputation and contestation.

The explosion of information available on the internet has produced a tsunami of entertainment which evokes Huxley's (2004, originally 1932) 'Brave New World' where science and technology were used to maximise pleasure. As a consequence, citizens lost the ability to think critically and autonomously whilst becoming addicted to passively consuming the products that dull their brains. Monbiot (2017) has suggested that contact with the 'tangible world' is lessening much faster than we perhaps appreciate. Some children, particularly as they move into their teenage years, are beginning to live virtual lives. How connected are they with the world around them as they retreat into a land of experiences through their headphones and screens? Next on the technology agenda are virtual reality worlds. In this world of virtual reality, how do you check what you are being told is correct. Recently, we have been fascinated/horrified by the discussions about 'fake news' or 'alternative facts' and casualness with the use of facts. When those users of the internet can use the Holocaust, Nazism and racism as a form of irony, we must be concerned. Unless you have 'solid'/real world experience how do you know what is right? Monbiot concludes: "This is about what it is to be human, what it is to lose that essential element of our existence: our contact with the real world. The political social and environmental consequences are currently beyond reckoning." It is surely our responsibility as educators to provide students with the skills to be able to critically respond to the digital age—all its benefits, its access to more information than we could have dreamt of, but to be aware of its other less attractive aspects. Is it too radical a step to suggest that universities re-shape their curriculum in light of these concerns?

3.11 Surveillance Capitalism—A New Era

If Crawford has alerted us to the ways in which individuals experience and can develop 'skilful' resistance to the dehumanising and mass psychological impact of the new communications technology, then Shoshana Zuboff (2019) has turned our attention to the collective and structural features of the new forms of social and economic life which are our present and future life in the digital age.

Her work 'The Age of Surveillance Capitalism' is a monumental study of the emergence of surveillance as a major means of behaviour modification and control of populations in highly undemocratic ways. It lays bare some of the key ideas, themes and dangers of globalisation.

Zuboff is concerned with what she calls information civilisation in an era where we have become dislocated from our traditions and 'homes'. Our home is of course a metaphor for the things we value and cherish; it denotes where we belong and is part of our community and is the place they cannot turn you away from when all else fails! It is also literally the place where much of the new commercial projects of the new age of surveillance capitalism are actually consumed and experienced. The internet of things is often located in the home which is a locus of consumer preference. This

digital future was supposed to yield progress where empowered individuals would be able to lead more full-filling lives. However, this has not occurred and Zuboff writes of "… the darkening of the digital dream and its rapid mutation into a voracious and utterly novel commercial project …" (Zuboff, 2019: 7).

Surveillance capitalism is the translation of human experience, captured and manufactured through the internet and the digital world, into behavioural data. Although some of this data is used to improve services to the 'consumer' and producers, the rest is, according to Zuboff, declared to be a proprietary behavioural surplus that is fed into machine intelligence and manufactured then into prediction results. This data can anticipate behaviour and can create what Zuboff calls "behavioural futures markets" (Zuboff: 8). The means of production and communication are ever more capable of shaping our behaviour and surveillance capitalism produces a new form of power called 'instrumentarianism' which implements someone else's agenda and values. The computational architecture of smart devices and the attentional control of public spaces, both real and virtual, become ever more pervasive. From the relatively benign features of harmless games to the pernicious exploitation of addictive gambling and from the buying of myriad consumer items via Amazon to the expropriation of surplus from Facebook profiles, we are locked into the continuous means of behavioural modification. This is the later analogue to the way in which earlier industrial capitalists drove the continuous intensification of the means of production and exchange.

At the core surveillance capitalism is a negative phenomenon since according to Zuboff it is self-referential and parasitic. She states: "Surveillance capitalism runs contrary to the early digital dream … Instead, it strips away the illusion that the networked form has some kind of indigenous moral content, that being 'connected' is somehow intrinsically pro-social, innately inclusive, or naturally tending toward the democratization of knowledge … instead of labour, surveillance capitalism feeds on every aspect of human's experience." (Zuboff: 9).

A key aspect of surveillance capitalism is of course that there is no reciprocity between the producers of its products and services and its consumers. Neither are the consumers the 'customers' of this system, rather they are the objects in a world that packages up their experience as a means to someone else's ends-very often the selling and merchandising of goods and services. The customers of surveillance capitalism are in fact the enterprises and companies that trade in the data that is mined and extracted from the public.

The implications for how we choose to live our lives are profound. Personal autonomy, social freedoms, a sense of communal and social equivalence and equity and some very real democratic rights are threatened. Instrumentarian power is not commensurate with many of the core values of Western liberal democracy. As Zuboff notes, the continued mobilisation of information capitalism can appear unstoppable, yet it engenders opposition and resistance.

The problem for educators is that surveillance capitalism disregards the boundaries of human experience by invading and extracting information and data which is essentially private and individual in origin. The extraction is a usurpation of individual rights for someone else's profit. At a somewhat later stage, the state and its

intelligence agencies may take an interest and further help the institutionalisation of the whole procedure. The whole process is unequal and asymmetrical with power and knowledge located in the hands and clouds of the gigantic internet companies. Zuboff characterises this as the "… privatisation of the *division of learning in society* …" and she suggests this is "… the critical axis of social order in the twenty-first century" (Zuboff: 19).

At the structural level, this situation is leading to mass psychological manipulation through forms of behaviour modification that are driven by consumerist trends and desires at the behest of companies who operate for profit and revenues in the market. This represents a serious challenge to a democratic order because human choice and human nature are being shaped and formed in this nexus. There is a destructive dynamic to the obsessions with social media from which for many there is no exit. Zuboff's work raises fundamental questions about the nature and workings of our evolving and increasingly globalised society and cultures, not least in terms of how democratic capitalism can continue to evolve in forms that are judged to be fair and appropriately equitable for the masses now excluded or marginalised from economic well-being. The questions raised for educators within universities are equally profound and they revolve around our theme of learning and teaching.

3.12 The Problems We Are Addressing: Learning and Teaching

The content of a learning programme or experience should produce engaged students who have a critical and questioning view of the world. Who could argue with this? Who could disagree that what we want for our students is what in the nineteenth century was called 'associative learning'- learning that asked the questions that mattered and made the connections between what we need and want to know? How we can understand and grasp the true meaning of what we must learn? Surely we need knowledge and a curriculum that lets us grasp the connections between things and gives us the chance to choose to change? This is really useful knowledge that few would deny is needed.

There are reasons, however, why educational institutions do not function in this way. Learning in universities has become excessively formalised. It is structured beyond reason; it is organised into severe hierarchies of value based within strict academic discipline boundaries and it is psychically cheap (Waller, 1932: 443). This was the case in previous generations and remains substantially so today. Accepting the given boundaries and restrictions on thinking means we don't have to spend our psychic energy in devising, maintaining and learning about 'freedom' or in the difficult task of choosing between competing and conflicting viewpoints. If only a generation ago it was possible to argue for the school as a democratising institution (Porter, 1999) then today it is seen as the mechanism for allocating the limited chances for success in a globalised competitive world. Access to 'good schools' is

the means to successful performance in the competition for life's chances; education is now a positional good to be bought and sold on the market. Universities have followed this same path in general to become a massively influential force in global economic and social life. In doing so it can be argued they have given up much of the potential they embodied for critical social change and reform. Global mass higher education is overwhelmingly a business, increasingly geared to distributing opportunities said to be meritocratically achieved by the winners in this competitive system. The system and its participants are often more concerned with creating and maintaining boundaries between the elites and the 'masses' than in widening participation for an authentic social purpose (Binder & Abel, 2019).

Still, what is the alternative you might ask? Universities still provide the place and the means for critique, for higher-level knowledge and research in all the academic domains and a refuge for unpopular opinions to be debated and contested. If this does not happen in universities where then? The answers to such questions as these may be found in the nature of academic and university life itself, which is to continuously ask the difficult questions, even about the validity and existential meaning of the university itself. Critical questioning through rational discourse and dialogue based on what Rawls (1976) called 'public reason' is the fundamental principle of university life. This is not always easy to defend and extend in the face of the mandates of specific moral and religious codes (Sandel, 2010). Neither is it easy to suggest the alternative in the face of the massive presence and availability of educational institutions throughout the globe. Education represents possibly the largest single human activity on the planet: there is no doubt we are a learning species (Gamble et al., 2014) even though learning outcomes are problematic.

This chapter suggests that the need for reform of engagement across a broad spectrum of university activity and thinking requires a reform of the curriculum itself. The transformations of learning and its institutions that we have seen over perhaps four decades have not been matched by commensurate changes in what is learned and how it is taught. Neither has it been matched by reformation of the 'objects' of learning and study, some of which include how we understand and study ourselves. For our present existence and the future of our children there can surely be no denying the significance of climate change and global warming; the life-threatening pollution of the air and the oceans upon which ultimately all life depends; the obscenity of poverty and early death of millions excluded from progress and affluence; the continuing impact of war and armaments production; and the impending conflagrations around population movement and migration.

These are the contexts and situations for which the current university curriculum is inadequate. These issues are not addressed centrally as a 'Leitmotiv', a guiding thread of concern and critique for all learners since all people are impacted by them. This is not to suggest that all academic disciplines and boundaries must be abandoned and all existing curricula are instantly transformed into an issues curriculum. The realities of the world out there exist and transformations may have to be gradual and as is frequently stated we want our brain surgeons to know a great deal about brain surgery and our pilots to know precisely how to fly the aeroplane we are using to get to our next destination. But it is not naive to ask that we renew the purposes of

the university and just what sort of knowledge we want it to develop. The radical growth and transformation of mass higher education itself and the explosive power of the internet have both occurred within the last generation without a corresponding change in our approach to learning. It is an issue whose time has come.

3.13 The Need for Renewal

He who says learning says school (Porter, 1999). We could say the same for universities and colleges in that they are massive, pervasive and ubiquitous bureaucratic institutions designed to 'school' the relevant population into conformity with what exists. Why is this? One answer must surely be that the curriculum and all it takes in terms of teaching, learning and the organisation of resources to implement the institutional missions of universities has ossified. Learning has coagulated into traditional academic disciplines with routinised methods of instruction, made all the more pernicious through computerisation. The masses are sorted and streamed through schools and universities devoted to hierarchies and league tables. Performance is devoutly desired and rewarded in a system that is a self-justifying moral order. This of course is financed from the taxes and sacrifices of the majority who cannot benefit from it other than at the margins. We have gone within two generations from aspiring to mass higher education as a transformative social movement to its institutionalisation as an industry of further and higher schooling for the masses. A competitive and supposedly meritocratic system must, by definition, produce a majority who 'fail' and do not climb the ladders of success since wealth and honour and prestige cannot be equally distributed in such a society. The profound social and political dissatisfaction with the effects of globalisation are refracted through an educational system distorted with the obsession with elite selection and promotion. Those left behind, especially in places ravaged by industrial decline and neglect, are prey to messages which blame those who are 'not like us', who are 'other' and different from those who belong in 'our community'. In an era of diasporic settlement migration and population shift (Collier, 2013), it is easy to see the lineaments of division and difference of disparate communities who end up living side by side but not together. Shared communities with common values and social practices which reach beyond the things that divide people may be desired, but they are hard to find in the circumstances of modern life. In few places has there been a curriculum designed to meet these challenges.

At another level, the institutions work to their own agenda. The people as functionaries of the system naturally run the institution for its own benefit. They become institutionalised, often with a relation of dominance and subordination rather than personal equality, between teacher and learner. Does the curriculum we have under review and for which we seek renewal allow the social and learning situations in which the personalities of students can achieve the full force of self-expression and critical sensibilities? It is not just a critical view of what is learned and taught that is needed but also our view on the nature of the critical learner and thinking student requires re-thinking.

The processes of personal development and the acquisition of knowledge, whether through conventional means or more radically via 'tacit 'knowledge (Polanyi, 1974) or radical immersion in lifelong learning challenges (Teare, 2013, 2018) take place simultaneously if they are to be successful. Conventional schooling including university life fails to engage the evolving complexity of personal growth and change with the externalised world of facts and issues. This is at the heart of the curriculum issue. Learning must adapt to life situations and the existential challenges of the time. Whatever the growing individual becomes as a person with reflexive capacities and self-awareness, s/he must encounter the actual situations in life. This should be the single most crucial principle in all learning programmes. Much of our learning, however, takes us out of the world, out of our environment and puts us in a closed and protected 'classroom' away from the reality of experience.

Perhaps learning within the institutions can correspond with the graded and progressive patterns of life outside? This was the search that drove many educationalists to reform what was learned and taught in conventional schools in the past (Waller, 1932, 1967; Shor, 1980; Porter, 1999). Schools and universities can attempt to reproduce the patterns and expectations of life itself including those of the economy (Dale et al., 1981) but the results are uncertain as a preparation for life, at least for many. And even of those who can be said to succeed in the race that is formal schooling we are entitled to ask, just how real is this success? (Apple, 1980; Benn, 2011). What is the price of success in educating for a society which is destroying the very basis for its continued existence? Mass higher education in many countries yields a graduation rate of over 50 per cent of each generation, but many are unable to find graduate jobs and careers. A generation ago a university education could be considered to be of roughly equal value, no matter which institution issued the diploma. No longer! The urge to differentiate and quantify the differential attainment levels has led to the obsessional ranking of institutions. These rankings provide the entry level requirements for professions and careers and thus act as both gateways for the successful and cut-off points for the remaining and 'failing' majority. When we add in the graded snobberies of some of the 'ancient' colleges and the long-standing debates and theories of cultural and social capital (Bourdieu, 1971; Reay, 2017) we have the recipe for social selection and exclusion rather than the widening participation and access agenda of an earlier generation (Davies, 1995, 1998). This is the context that mandates us to upgrade, renew and radically reform learning and teaching for engagement.

3.14 Learning and Teaching Strategies

Adapting to the increasing complexities of social life and work is a key challenge for the critical curriculum. The demands of work and of employers for skills and knowledge are fast changing. Automation and artificial intelligence and the internet have ensured built-in obsolescence for many, many jobs and careers. Whole industries

can come into existence and become extinct within a decade. Transfers of investment capital across invisible borders and mass labour migrations can radically and relatively quickly shift economic and social prospects for whole regions. What then is the curriculum for this?

Part of the answer we suggest is to renew and reconceptualise our view of what learning skills are and do. The acquisition of, for example, learning and study skills can help equalise some of the inequalities inherited by learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. Enhanced study skills can help build resilience and strengthen the academic habitus students need to succeed. The curriculum must have content that directs learning to the crucial issues, problems and concerns of the moment and of the impending future. It must also address the allied matter of how we can have viable persons who are to acquire this curriculum! One attempt at resolving this problem has been created by Teare (2013) who has pioneered the concept of personal viability and learning in what can appear to be some of the most challenging and often poorest environments in the world.

3.15 Learning Entrepreneurially and Personal Viability

Without entrepreneurs, there would be a great deal less innovation and creativity and so the suggestion here lies in the notion that individuals might be encouraged and sponsored to develop their own skills of survival and success as a form of personal growth and development. Teare's work (2013, 2018) over a long period of dedicated commitment to educational reform in favour of some of the most dispossessed people and that of Zuber-Skerritt and Teare (2013) have been seminal in developing such a perspective and yield up rich insights for universities which might seek a different way forward to instil entrepreneurship into their students and graduates. What does an engaged type of entrepreneurship look like when we focus on the excluded populations in subsistence communities, whether these are in developing countries or in the neglected areas of the inner cities in the industrialised West?

Teare's work cites communities that live in the shadow of major extractive industries and yet who do not benefit from the massive developments associated with such industries. Some of these are in Papua New Guinea. His concern is to outline and develop qualities of personal life and existence which are compatible with entrepreneurship and economic productivity. He refers to 'personal viability' as a mindset which people need if they are to achieve some economic independence and control over their own natural resources. This mindset involves knowledge of the business opportunities and the ways and means of applying that knowledge to generate an income. He is, however, at pains to point out that wealth cannot just be measured in terms of financial and capital accumulations. It has also included the holistic development of individuals, groups and communities and is reflected in the health and well-being of society.

What then are the qualities of personal viability? Teare argues that personal viability is training for life that facilitates micro-enterprise development. It is learning

that encourages people to make mistakes, to experiment and to study and learn from making mistakes. Learning is measured in such training not by examinations but by the growth in personal capacity that occurs. It requires energy, thought, courage and support in the form of coaching. Most significantly it draws on life experience and addresses the solving of problems by questioning, thinking and experimenting until a solution is found. The real-life context for this has been developing economies where village-based livelihood and informal economic activity and subsistence have been the norm. In many such communities, the emphasis for the future must be on income generation rather than formal wage employment. A range of conditions of course must be met to bring about economic transformation in such communities and it is not our intention to address these complex issues here. Rather we want only to point to the contention that sustainable development for marginalised communities may be possible only when people develop 'viability'. This means that they can change themselves and help to change others when they are engaged in learning which produces desired change and progress. A change in thinking and approach to life may be required. This is undoubtedly a major challenge to universities.

3.16 A Critical Curriculum for Universities in Practice

An engaged university must acknowledge the need for an engaging curriculum in both a cultural sense and in respect of its constituent communities. Our viewpoint on community and learning takes account of the fact that people live out their lives in a variety of contexts but some of these are paramount. There is, for example, the question of work which historically has shaped a good deal of the human enterprise. There is the question of place and neighbourhood allied to issues of belonging, identity, ethnicity, race, religion and nationality—all of which can have a bearing on how we understand and experience the notion of community. Essentially, we are arguing that the university must recognise this complexity and diversity if it is to successfully adapt to the learning needs of contemporary society. And yet there must also be an acknowledgement that each aspect of this complex reality requires understanding and analysis. This task is quite properly that of the university and represents intellectual challenge of a high order.

We can illustrate this point by reference to one aspect, that of work. Work is one of those cultural realities 'out there' which has fundamentally shifted in its organisation and nature so that it faces us with an existential challenge that is coterminously 'in here'. Once upon a time work for many people involved meaningful and life-fulfilling tasks. It laid out clear goals and tasks and it set time frames for achievements and life's transitions. It provided a meaningful context in communities and neighbourhoods which could validate and even valorise work and workers. This is not to deny the fact that much physical and manual work was hard labour and heavy lifting with often inadequate rewards and pay. Work in the past allowed some workers and groups to acquire and apply skills that were rewarding and deeply absorbing. Modern work, for many, involves a lack of engagement in the tasks and duties required. Free time

can be taken up with aimless pursuits such as day-time TV shopping, logging on to Facebook and endless text gazing. Carr (2015) has called this being sentenced to idleness where people are disengaged from an outward-looking focus and attention turns inwards. At its worst, this can lead to forms of narcissistic behaviour which are fuelled by the availability of internet infotainment.

The sense of engagement that meaningful and rewarding work gives can be achieved when we are acting on the world, intentionally and consciously. Yet the growth of technologically sophisticated systems involving computerisation and robotisation continues to obliterate jobs across the whole social class spectrum. The gains in wealth and productivity emanating from the new technologies are not going to the workers who produce and operate the machines but to the existing owners of the economic assets and capital (Blakeley, 2019; Mason, 2015; Picketty, 2014). The knowledge that can challenge and change this situation should be the concern of universities. What would this knowledge look like and what kind of curriculum would be involved?

A certain type of critical thinking is needed and this cannot be provided by the nearest software package. We need knowledge that is rooted in experience and embodied skills and which draws on deep understanding and creativity. The curriculum needs to be open to the idea that a continuously active mind and an active 'self' requires the challenge of engagement and that this requires appropriate scepticism as well as tolerance for diversity and dissent. Automated calculations using algorithms cannot substitute for critical judgements about social and professional purposes. Key values and commitments cannot be undermined by the needs of automated systems and so we must be consciously less dependent on the technologies of hand-held devices and apps. A key point here and for those who support and develop learning for and in the community is that the people, the community are not just a product of social reality but are producers of that reality.

We are suggesting then that universities support forms of learning and accreditation which are rooted in an action learning paradigm that has its roots in the need to transform learning opportunities and life chances for individuals and local and regional communities associated with the university. This might involve helping self-sustaining and self-directed processes in communities where people have learned themselves to analyse and solve their own problems. Individuals, groups and entire communities can be mobilised given the necessary support and resources (Teare, 2018).

3.17 Some Practical Steps

No single university/academic discipline or subject can yield up a handy set of concepts to be applied to the problems we have outlined (Davies & Nyland, 2014, 2018). We believe, however, that the process of critical thinking and research and lifelong action learning might offer a way forward. Some of the steps in this process of reform involve reformulating the role of the university in learning and teaching for

engagement and in the re-conceptualisation of the university as a public educator of critically thinking citizens. Building on the aspects considered in relation to critical thinking, the global- digitalisation themes and service community-based learning outlined above, some of the steps in curriculum planning for engagement in this process can be identified as follows:

- Identifying real-world problems which can be expected to be complex and involve contested knowledge;
- Establishing learning sets, groups and teams which can draw on the different 'discipline' approaches and knowledge and use knowledge for action and transformation;
- Starting inquiry using curiosity, problem solving, reflection and openness to critique as a basic and democratic form of learning and knowing;
- An insistence that learning and action for change and transformation go hand-in-hand and should be geared towards the solution of problems;
- Generating and testing knowledge solutions with those whom it affects;
- Personal commitment to learning and critical reflection on the status of knowledge about what is to be studied;
- A realisation that the monopolies held on knowledge creation and its distribution can no longer be maintained by conventional universities but must be re-thought in the new contexts;
- The unlocking of human potential through critical thinking and learning, especially for those who have not had learning opportunities or cannot afford them;
- A challenge to the conservative and traditional notions of the neutral and objective observer who is capable of exercising judgement from the 'outside'; and
- Adopting a learning methodology that supports mutuality and reciprocity and encourages and facilitates participants' visions for the future and views learners as active agents for positive change.

All of these processes and activities involve what was once called pedagogy and represent part of the viable basis for critical thinking and learning which needs to underpin university engagement.

3.18 In Conclusion

Whatever the future holds, the present demands that we as educators look at our real experience in the real world and this can only be done by knowing others in some direct and meaningful way and by sharing the thoughts and insights we gain as a result. Is this not the great challenge of change that the university as a public educator must meet in this generation?

To meet the challenge then we need to acknowledge that social practice in modern life is modified in the light of new information and knowledge which comes from an increasingly diverse range of sources. These include the social spheres as well as

the academic and employment fields. Family, community, education, government, internet, social media and infotainment all help comprise social processes which are institutionalised as part of social life and practice. They throw up both some of the great benefits of modernity and the great threats it poses. For universities, this means learning must be for an improved and democratic social result. The continuous production and incorporation of new knowledge and critical learning into institutional practice is the driving force of modernity and it must be applied to engagement for universities as much as to any of the essential social practices which sustain our lives.

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Chapter 4
A Crisis of Knowledge: Themes for an Engaged University Curriculum

David Davies and James Nyland

Introduction

We are at a new conjuncture in the crisis of knowledge. The phenomenal growth of the internet and the digital economy presents us with both unknown opportunities and threats to our lives and futures. There has been an explosion of knowledge and of opportunities to access some of that knowledge by everyone who can access a mobile phone or computer. This is, literally, a world population that is developing a 'universal' and apparently insatiable demand and desire for communication, information and entertainment. Yet the new forms of capitalism that are dependent upon and are expressed through the digital-techno world tend to destroy localism, threatening established ways of life, communities and cultures and social cohesion. There are even those who argue that we face a 'totalitarian' and accelerating form of social life under modern capitalism that can absorb and recuperate for its own purposes all forms of opposition and forces for positive and progressive change (Noys, 2014).

The university curriculum—if it can be said to exist as a body of thinking and analysis and as a critical process concerned with understanding and transforming the character of social life—must surely grapple with this problem.

Universities have traditionally demonstrated critical thinking but have failed to offer a curriculum that can engage with the modern crisis. Educators need to devise new approaches to really useful learning that address the new and ever rapidly

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changing circumstances in which the new forms of techno-capitalism are developing. A key to understanding and perhaps controlling this process is the role to be played by critical thinking and intellectual skills. The argument developed here is that the crisis of knowledge demands an epistemological transformation and universities have a major role to play in the necessary transformations of learning and thinking that will be required.

The challenge of change is also a challenge to authoritarianism and repression in the wider society. It must be possible for an individual to be cognitively aware of their own beliefs to think freely and critically. This is authentic critical thinking. Part of the university's role is to promote self-critical and reflexive thought and action. If this is not to be done within the universities, then where?

4.1 Global Change but Local Lives: The Need for a Critical University Curriculum

Modern life is rapidly changing as hyper-capitalism and globalisation continue to extend their grip on production and distribution of wealth, work and opportunity across the world. This raises vital questions about the types of education, learning, training and accreditation we must provide for our students.

We need as educators to consider alternative approaches. We need engagement with the communities we say we serve, but in reality, are absent from. A new and critical curriculum is needed for all university learners. Such a curriculum would address the following themes:

- The character of the communities in which we now live, including their demographics and cultures, is problematic. We live in a multi-cultural, multi-faith and multi-racial—but often disparate and divided—society. We need to grasp this reality in its complexity and make it part of our learning for all citizens. Mass migration and social transformation is part of all of our lives yet are not the main part of our curriculum. We need to explore how modern societies have created damaging and conflictual diversity as well as the potential for healthy diversity and social integration.
- There is a need to bring into a central position in the curriculum the 'wicked issues' of poverty and social exclusion, climate change and environmental degradation/pollution and loss of belonging and identity. A change of focus is required so we understand and counter the failure of neo-liberal marketised and monetised educational strategies. Schools and universities were once thought to be democratising institutions, but this idea has lost credibility in the face of massive and persistent inequalities. The challenge is to re-state our purposes and make them work for learning for a social result, not just an individualised outcome.
- The curriculum must address our relationship as teachers and learners with the internet and world of technology. We can no longer assume it is simply benign. Knowledge has exploded into availability but is consumerised. A mass psychology

of passivity has separated the bonds between action and perception as our experiences are manufactured for us by a small, self-elected group of mega businesses that exercise monopoly functions over our digital lives.

- There is, however, and importantly, the possibility of a critical curriculum with defined content and a set of conceptual frameworks. Critical thought useful for our purposes was developed by the members of the Frankfurt School and there is a hinterland of pedagogical innovators who put the learner at the centre of learning. There is existing sociology of knowledge and researchers who explore student-centred and experiential learning and a corpus of work on the social purposes of learning and critical thinking. There is the reality and possibility of cooperative learning and working that has transformed work and life for many in the past and continues to do so in the present and for the future. There is the possibility of a revitalised community engaged with learning and of evolving identities that can deliver the challenge of change as a democratic result.

4.2 The Problems We Are Addressing

What has made the environment harsher in recent times? There are myriad factors as possible contexts that suggest the questions we should ask of ourselves. We have chosen to cluster them into three aspects:

1. There are issues 'out there' in the world. Ethical globalised capitalism is problematic and is the source of public anxiety and precariousness (Collier, 2018). There persist what has been called the 'wicked issues' (Firth, 2017): global poverty, deprivation and dispossession, war and famine, climate change and ecological threat and the fears of uncontrolled mass migrations of refugees and economic migrants.
2. Our thinking, learning and pedagogy fail to address the technological developments that are threatening the skill base and lives of working people in favour of the rentier class of wealth owners. This means there is the need to engage with future learning and the new 'conjuncture' of modern technology and hyper-capitalism, as the digital age rolls onwards (Zuboff, 2019).
3. The breakdown of traditional communities and cultures and the need for engaged learning and teaching, has highlighted the need for critical thinking aimed at an improved social result. Spiralling levels of social inequality are re-making social classes but not in the image of the past (Dorling, 2018; Savage, 2015). Universities themselves play a growing role in the generation of powerful elites. New political realities around identity, race, ethnicity, gender and around the nearly ubiquitous but often suppressed themes of migration and identity have emerged as central and core concerns (Appiah, 2018; Collier, 2014).

4.3 The Problems Out There

Today, in western liberal democratic states, the divergence of social, economic and political interests, the decline of the older heavy industries and the growth of successful 'new' computer and media focussed locations are widening the divisions between the blue-collar workers in the declining industrial towns and the booming service-sector cities that employ the creative and cosmopolitan elites. This has created new anxieties with new ruling elites based on educational selection, where metropolitan elites control social and political life and provoke resentment and pessimism among the working classes. Politically, the outcome has supported the trend towards the emergence of national populism (Goodwin & Eatwell, 2018; Rutherford, 2019; Sandel, 2018).

What has been evoked here is not just a fear of the unknown. Nobody knows what will happen to the world's economy in a decade from now but there is a visceral fear of lack of control felt by many about the near future. Parents do not know if their children will be able to find meaningful and rewarding lifelong work; they do not know if their children will be able to afford to buy or rent a house; they do not know if the planet will be sustainable for their grandchildren. What they want, however, is clear and it involves a combination of security, opportunity and the drive for self-determination. The onset of mass migration right across Europe (and the world) as a form of diasporic re-settlement has thrown the older cultural and social constructions into disarray. Communities are not what they once were. Politics has thrown up unanticipated divisions and all of this has brought to the fore the question of who belongs and by what right to the nation and how we understand such things, for example, as patriotism and who belongs in the national community.

Having briefly synthesised the evolving context of our theme, what are the framing issues we have to encounter? They include how knowledge gained inside and outside the classroom can engage people and communities in new and meaningful ways in order to address the problems and change outcomes. This has been called 'real knowledge' and 'engaged education' (Hyman, 2005, 2017; Nyland & Davies, 2017) and focuses on issues to do with learning and knowledge that meet the challenges of the times in schools, universities, workplaces and communities. It forces us to engage with the 'big issues' and to recognise that poverty is still with us—globally and locally—young people are still marginalised, climate change and environmental destruction proceeds apace and the new digital industries continue to destabilise traditional economies and communities (Mason, 2019).

4.4 Future Learning and the Digital Age

The second aspect of our argument concerns the reality of the now and existing digitalisation of global economic life, communication and learning. This is what Castells (1996 and 1997) called the network society and the information age. The

potential for both liberation and oppression seems to be inherent in the digitalisation, automisation and roboticisation of industrial capacity and of our social life. The work of Evgeny Morozov (2011) has proved to be prescient and ground-breaking in our understanding of how the internet might not lead to freedom and liberation and how we should be sceptical of the 'cyber-utopians'.

The internet has undoubtedly transformed our lives, particularly the lives of our young people, our students and those who will become our students. Is this generation—which has grown up with the internet, smartphones, Facebook, Snapchat and Twitter—thinking critically about the world they inhabit? For many, much of their day is spent in one way or another in front of a screen. Perhaps it is too early to know the impact on their brains/minds of all this screen-time. It is, however, worth considering whether they are critical in their thinking, engaged in discussing the big questions of the day—for example, climate change—and the impact of the internet on our freedoms. After all, these are the issues that will impact their futures.

Recently, Monbiot (2017) has suggested that contact with the 'tangible world' is lessening much faster than we perhaps appreciate. Some children, particularly as they move into their teenage years, are beginning to live virtual lives. How connected are they with the world around them as they retreat into a land of experiences through their headphones and screens? Too much information is the condition of modern humankind. A world exists now with literally billions of pieces of information available to consumers. The cost is we cannot take in all this information and we cannot easily separate the trivial from the important. In processing this virtual universe of information, we have to resort to using attentional filters that process what we can recognise and deal with, both consciously and subconsciously.

Given the sheer volume of data impacting us, we have to impose structure on the sensory and imaginative knowledge that the world now generates. It can be argued that this task is now central to human learning. The key question is surely: what is really useful knowledge and how can we categorise it for use? It seems we now have realised it is important to shift the burden of doing this from our minds or brains to the external world. It needs to be out there for us to access when we need to, rather than in here, cluttering up our minds and thoughts. But what are the best attentional filters and how can they be recognised and put to use? Levitin (2015) and Alter (2017) have argued that many are now 'neurally addicted' to their screens and the hyper-immediacy of texting.

The sheer power and availability of computerised automation have now shifted the nature of work and leisure so fundamentally for so many people that we are faced with an existential challenge. Computerisation has narrowed people's responsibilities and removed complexity from jobs. Once upon a time, work involved some of us in meaningful tasks; it laid out clear goals; it set down a clear time-frame for achievements; and it provided a context for meaning in communities and neighbourhoods that 'validated' work and workers. Work may even have allowed some individuals and groups to use their skills to the utmost by being deeply absorbing and rewarding.

Left to itself or to the workings of the globalised, liberal free-market ideology, technology and computerised automation is unlikely to deliver a great increase in

human freedom and autonomy. There is no doubt it delivers great increases in productivity and wealth production. Conversely, the fruits or profits of this are unequally distributed. The gains in wealth and productivity connected with the new technologies are going to those who own the technologies, not to the workers who actually produce the gains and operate the machines.

What is significant here is that automated productive systems have been able to benefit from the advances in "… processor speed, programming algorithms, storage and network capacity, interface design and miniaturisation—that came to characterise the progress of computers themselves" (Carr, 2015: 15). The result is that everything is being automated at incredible speed and things that needed human capacities are now done by machines. Software that replaces judgement-type activity and decisions is moving from our desks and offices to our pockets and hands and now to our headsets and spectacles. It has been said that "… software is eating the world …" (Carr ibid 2015: 40).

Economic life shifts from the flow of goods to the flow of data and information and the 'network society' is created as a reality for everyone (Castells, 1996). Some of the effects of this are catastrophic for some whose intellectual and skilled jobs become automated, including the threat of displacement and unemployment even for those who operate complex computer systems.

How does this impact the need for critical thinking? Michael Crawford has offered us an insightful way of conceptualising the idea that all work is knowledge work: "If thinking is bound up with action, then the task of getting an adequate grasp on the world, intellectually, depends on our doing stuff in it." (Crawford, 2015: 164) Crawford has encapsulated a deep truth concerning how we get knowledge, how we use it and how we think about learning. The supposed distinctions between manual work and knowledge work are tenuous and all work involves thinking while acquiring knowledge is not an 'armchair thing'. In modern terms and times, the debate has moved on to the notion of embodied cognition, in which thinking is conceived of as a process that involves not just the neural workings of the brain but the actions and perceptions of the entire body.

Most crucially, we need to be aware that computerisation is taking human purposes and human volition out of the picture. Fully automated computer searches now predict what we want to ask before we know it ourselves. The automated friendship systems and social networks such as Facebook seem to remove the effort and intelligence from socialising and put them into a marketplace for the exchange of data. As Carr states: "Google, Facebook and other makers of personal software end up demeaning and diminishing qualities of character that, at least in the past, have been seen as essential to a full and vigorous life: ingenuity, curiosity, independence, perseverance, daring. It may be that in the future we'll only experience such virtues vicariously … in the fantasy worlds we enter through screens." (Carr ibid: 182).

4.5 Community and Engagement

Universities are always thought of as somehow being learning communities. If not this, then what are they? The relationship a university has to its own community may involve a strong connection to the local or regional town or city and stand for a set of localised identities. On the other hand, a university may not aspire to be a physical community at all but to be a learning community without borders of a conventional kind.

If there is a question mark about what a university is, there is equally a question about what a community is. We need to re-examine the university's relations with both its own community, however, defined and with the wider social forces and events that force the idea of engagement into our consciousness, for we are surely forced to engage with economy, society and culture. Can there still be a sense of retreat from the cares of the material world into an abstract search for knowledge, science and truth within the walls of the academy?

4.6 What Makes a Community in the Twenty-First Century?

Universities, while committing to research, scholarship and learning, often invoke the community as their reason for being. It is not always clear what this means in reality or in practice. The idea of community is under severe challenge according to some (Bauman, 2001). When we examine the idea of community, we can find ourselves embroiled in questions of identity, nationalism, ethnicity and belonging - deeply cultural matters that go to the very heart of what we think we are and what we would like to become. These are existential questions in a world where migration, globalisation, dispossession, war, terrorism, poverty and extensive cultural and social conflict characterise our way of life. We live in changing and uncertain times that force us to confront such issues if we wish to have universities that help shape our communities as active and engaged partners because it is ultimately as communities that we face the challenges of change. The ideology of individualism has created and sustained much modern thinking and behaviour, especially in relation to consumer-driven economic development and cultural industries. However, when faced with what existential issues are, the notion of belonging and community re-asserts itself, sometimes with a vengeance!

What then makes a community? Zygmunt Bauman writes: "… in a community people remain essentially united in spite of all separating factors". This includes the notion of 'sameness'. Once we are no longer the same, we are unable to maintain the boundaries of community. This raises the question of whether and how, in a globalising world, we are all becoming the same. Regardless of our national origins or identities, we all consume similar food, clothing, consumer durables, entertainment and technological 'fixes'. Does that mean we are all becoming the same? Does global

change mean we lose that local community given to us by birth and have grown up within its boundaries? Is community replaced by an individualised identity that sets up boundaries of difference rather than boundaries of sameness?

4.7 Who Belongs in a Community or Nation?

These are not small matters. Who belongs within a community and how that is to be determined is the stuff of modern politics. In societies undergoing mass migration, the notion of community belonging, usually within a national state or a religion, can be decisive in how people are perceived and accepted or rejected (Murray, 2017). Who belongs in the nation and who can be properly excluded becomes central to politics of nationhood and identity (Rutherford, 2019). How these questions are handled may be seen as the test of our humanity and of our democratic right to be what we feel we are and to maintain our right to exclude those who do not belong. So there is a concern with how we think about 'community' that leaves us searching for answers.

If culture and community are deeply problematic, this does not mean we have simply abandoned our sense of what community might mean and how it might be relevant to learning. John Berger, the great writer and broadcaster on art and society, reminded us that community is one of the longings of our century (Berger, 2016). It retains a powerful charge and seems to offer a framework of meaning for modern life. But it is the culture that connects us to the events 'out there'. There is no community outside of and beyond cultural forms and practices that make us what and who we are.

4.8 An Engaged Curriculum for Critical Thinking: What Do We Need to Know?

Having considered some of the contexts for a more vital and critically-engaged university role, the aspect we want to consider now is that of the need for curricular renewal and the idea of critical thinking skills as a feature for all university learning and teaching programs (Teare et al., 1998). We have already alluded to the fact that the really big issues facing us are somehow marginal to our key concerns with the curriculum. The big challenges of our times are not central to our learning.

In an era where billions of people cannot access academic education, there is the question of 'skill', by which we mean how individuals primarily understand and grasp their environment in order to make it work for themselves. The better this understanding, the better life can be. Skill is what people develop to survive and thrive in the environment in which they find themselves. Sometimes this involves changing that environment or seeking an entirely new one. This is a deeply cultural matter. It involves how the individual self attends or relates to the environment which itself

is 'cultural'. Some commentators, such as Crawford (2015) argue the environment actually constitutes the self, rather than just impacting on it and therefore how the individual pays attention to this environment becomes key to succeeding in it. In an internet dominated world, the idea of the public attentional world (what and who is on the internet and in our minds and for how long each day) gains some serious traction.

However, in acting on the world, (in reality or in virtual reality) we find skill is a key part of the process: "Through the exercise of a skill, the self that acts in the world takes on a definite shape. It comes to be in a relation of *fit* to a world it has grasped." (Crawford, ibid: 25) What is still deeply problematical, though, is how public space (including, spectacularly, the internet) in general diminishes the skill of understanding and acting on that environment. The digital and virtual world is one made up of mediations where our daily lives are literally saturated with representations made elsewhere. We make contact with the worlds of work, of family, of friendship, of communication, entertainment, consumption, learning and leisure, through the apps and software provided for us. We make contact through, not with, these representations and become 'skilled' at the point of gaining access, but we do not make or construct the objects of our desires and we do not become skilled at practices that give us 'agency'. Crawford argues persuasively that it is when we are engaged in a skilled practice that we can understand and own, as it were, a reality that is independent of the self and where the self (the individual as an identity) is understood as not being of its own making.

The illusion of the internet is, of course, to implicitly infer that the virtual reality constructed by the 'individualised' internet software has been precisely made by and for the individual self. The significance of this insight is we believe in the encounter between the self and the external world, skill—defined as the capacity to engage with and act on the real world—is the critical element. It embraces the skills of the head, the heart and the hand and above all, it means an engaged education is needed in universities.

We can see here the elements of a critique of what we think of as knowledge of the world and potentially the ways in which we acquire that knowledge. Knowing and learning in which we acquire something (knowledge) that is outside ourselves by virtue of our mental efforts, can be replaced or augmented by embodied skill in which we practice and expand our grasp of what is happening around us. This is important in a world where virtual reality is replacing actual reality at an exponential rate. We live highly mediated lives and the representations we consume in the digital and virtual world are now everywhere across the globe. These representations are of course themselves embodied in language, symbols, images, stories and narratives which make up the products and experiences we purchase via the new digital technologies and through internet. Music, film, news, television reportage, entertainment and 'edutainment' and extraordinary amounts of data and information regarding all aspects of human life are available via the software programs and apps we consume. Crawford is of the view that all of this activity is what he calls a 'horizon of relevance and potential' which is created by the representations in the various media and although this seems to expand exponentially as we watch and consume in fact it

narrows and forecloses our options. As we become absorbed in the screens in front and all around us we become less and less capable of influencing what is happening. We are excluded in fact from agency in our own lives. We can consume the mediated products but not produce our own experiences. As individuals therefore we can become self-absorbed and narcissistically inclined to disregard others around us. Even in the most packed of public spaces, we can be lost in privacy, unaware of public and civic responsibilities even at a basic level for recognition of others' presence in the same space and the need for politeness and respect. Crawford has pointed here to the importance of attentionality in both private and public life and the need for learning which connects perception, experience and action.

The powerful mediating institutions that provide our means of accessing life on the internet are not democratically organised and accountable, no matter how much they assert their right to offer choice in a consumer-driven world. Neither do they offer a world of freedom simply to communicate with whom we wish even though we can reach almost every living human being on the planet with a hand-held device. The 'real' reality is that we now make contact almost exclusively through the representations of people and objects that are provided to us on our devices by media corporations. We no longer rely on ourselves and our own skills to do this and we are potentially diminished as a result. We are, of course, 'free' to deny realities and to dissociate ourselves from the effort needed for skilful engagement. If we can pay, there are always others in the market who will provide these things for us.

The matter of skill thus becomes critical for our understanding of what universities might do and how they might re-construct their curricula. This is so in respect of two major objectives: first the need to deliver learning programs that equip students with critical thinking (as we are defining it in this chapter) and second, the need to recognise alternative forms of 'skill' that those beyond the boundaries of conventional universities (that is, the billions in the 'third world') possess but that largely go unrecognised and unrewarded.

4.9 Critical Thinking

If critical thinking is an intrinsic part of an attempt to reclaim our realities we need to be clear about these 'realities'. Reality, both singular and plural, exists, we believe, outside our heads as it were, but is mediated by our conceptual and cognitive skills and capacities. This relationship between cognition and what we can call epistemological understanding is complex both philosophically and sociologically and it is surely the case that knowledge itself is contested terrain (Seidman, 1998). It is equally clear that experience in the modern world is mediated by representations of it which are distorted and can lead to poor or false understanding. Critical thinking we believe involves understanding how individual lives are shaped by ideas of the 'self' and personal identity but also by the social forces which show how individuals and groups interact with communities and society itself (Jenkins, 2004: 56). Critical thinking proposes the existence of a social individual who is also a cognitive being and one

who is active in dealing with everyday life, including that of the internet. Such an individual is, we anticipate, able to be fair-minded in their judgements and capable of objectivity in selecting and judging facts (Ennis, 1996).

The attributes needed for critical thinking make therefore certain assumptions about the need for a meaningful connection between individual and social understanding and skills (Polanyi, 1974). This cannot simply be taken for granted and one way or another it has to be learned whether consciously through formal learning programmes or unconsciously through socialisation and experience. Both of course are at work in the lived experience of individuals. Habermas (1972) evaluated what he called instrumental, interpretive and critical knowledge/learning and the last type he asserted was a requirement of learning which could transform realities and bring about change and social progress. This captures a key point about critical thinking; it is focused on the engagement of individual and social lives in producing a better outcome. It is not a neutral or indifferent activity; it is knowledge engaged at the individual and personal levels for understanding and realising social analysis for social critique and change (Hall, 2017). We can say it is knowledge conceived to be part of a social purpose.

Critical thinking has no programme of planned lessons or a specified list of intended learning outcomes. It is not and cannot be a schooled curriculum with a unilinear subject-based content. A single academic discipline cannot contain the sheer variety of concerns and ideas and attributes necessary to understand its object of study- which involves all our individual lives and our collective knowing. These are necessary foundations for the common well-being of our communities and societies. Critical thinking is an approach and a methodology for thinking and understanding which tries to recognise the ever-shifting realities of modern life as the basis for knowledge and critique. It is also a value statement about the need for knowledge to be engaged in the search for social justice and fairness. The social sciences have been at the forefront of applying the academic disciplines and methods to these concerns and to the teaching of such concerns at the higher levels (Shor, 1980; Guess, 1981; Ashwin, 2015) and in rarer but no less valuable cases in primary education (Hart, 1997; Khalaily, 2017).

The intellectual disciplines and performance skills needed for conceptualising and analysing our social lives and in particular the role played by our educational experiences and institutions is vital for critical thinking. We believe this is best applied within a framework of knowledge as a guide to action for social progress and improvement- a true role for education.

Critical thinking is not a unitary phenomenon and can have differing meanings within its different contexts. For the universities, its significance is in the qualities it can develop in the student, enabling them to be disputatious and critical. For an engaged institution, this might mean giving the learner the capacity to separate truth from ideology or ‘post-truth’. It should surely mean not taking things at face value or not letting others make up our minds for us. As Newman (2016) asserts, critical thinking—drawing on critical theory—is concerned with the idea of social justice and fairness and that knowledge can be generated and applied for an improved social result. It involves learning that should lead to an enhanced sense of self in the real

world and not just in the virtual world. This means we might expect a more capable individual, who is able to relate to others and be personally more responsible and 'viable'.

This is not by any means an entirely new field of social thinking. Critical schools of social theory and empirical studies can be found in the critical social science of pivotal figures such as Wright Mills (1960, 1963) who sought to reconfigure sociology into a morally and politically engaged discourse. Public sociology was also available in the works of W.E.B. Du Bois, Robert Lynd, David Riesman, Erving Goffman and Alvin Gouldner—to name only a few in a canon of critical thinkers from an American tradition (Seidman, 1998: 13). Paralleling this indigenous American thinking was the German school of critical social theory known as the Frankfurt School, much of which emigrated to America in the 1930s. The work of Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Franz Neumann and Herbert Marcuse (Jeffries, 2017) challenged much of conventional social thinking by arguing the case for a committed, value-based and politically engaged form of human studies. In the latter part of the twentieth century, the work of Jurgen Habermas (1972) continued to develop the case for a critical social science as crucial for the human need for autonomy.

Our major cultural reality that might impact the university curriculum concerns community and community development (Kearney and Todhunter, 2015). We are suggesting that universities support forms of learning and accreditation that are rooted in an action-learning paradigm. This might involve helping self-sustaining and self-directed processes in communities where people have learned themselves to analyse and solve their own problems. Individuals, groups and entire communities can be mobilised, given the necessary support and resources (Teare, 2013). The potential for identifying assets-based community development is great and can highlight the significance of existing skills, resources, social capital and the creative energies of people who can see a solution to an existentially felt problem. There are questions, of course, of identifying and facilitating leadership in communities and this is also a learning agenda for those involved and for those providing learning opportunities such as universities. In communities that have historically lacked access to learning through formal education systems, there is a need to revise the teacher-led, content-centred and propositional knowledge-based curriculum in favour of critical thinking. This was here defined as being learner-centred, self-directed, problem-oriented and participatory. It requires a commitment to the idea that critical thinking can help transform any given reality through its engagement with learning.

Ways of learning relevant to a community stress the importance of common identity, shared values and a sense of shared experience aimed at changing and conserving valued traditions. The community, in a sense, may become the curriculum and a belief can emerge in a large reservoir of talent and ability within individuals and their communal experience that can be tapped and released. The 'disputive' university can sponsor learning that revolves around this growing and developing a sense of awareness.

Learning is not just a social activity. It is also an intensely personal activity. 'Change yourself and you change your situation' is no mean epithet, especially when allied to a notion of a community, since all individual action needs to find its

appropriate object and community, as we have seen, is one of the longings of our century.

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Chapter 5
Freedom Through Education: A Promise Postponed

David Davies and James Nyland

Education, or better still learning, interests us all, especially our own and that of our children. It is surprising though how quickly interest is lost when the topic of education and its deep impact on society and culture is mentioned in polite society! Yet schooling is now ubiquitous—it is everywhere and in every parent's mind and it is the universal key to the door of opportunity. Few people can get anywhere without it and whether it is enclosed in brick, concrete and glass or downloaded from the internet platforms which have come to dominate so many lives, learning in some form is intrinsic to life that swirls on all around it. Education goes deep but it squanders the talent of many who pass through it. Equally significant is the possibility that conventional education and its curriculum is now increasingly irrelevant to the world we are educating for—the world of 2050 and beyond.

It has been said that education professors can be considered to not so much speak on or about education but are obliged to speak for education. Education is more than a subject or field of study or academic enterprise; it is the major means by which a society such as ours defines and achieves its intentions for change, tests its sense of social justice and delivers on its aspirations for a free society. Education within and through universities in the modern world stands as a proxy for the public interest in what is increasingly seen as a 'learning society', a concept that came to the fore in the 1990s. It signalled a growing conviction that learning was for everyone and that it should and could be available for all those who wanted it and needed

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it (Fryer, 1997; Dearing, 1997; DFEE, 1998). This chapter considers the transition from a previous and highly selective type of higher education, designed for a minority of any population, to a mass system thought to be democratically more inclusive and extending participation to a vastly greater number of learners. This broadening of opportunity developed significantly in the last decades of the twentieth century and was a crucial conjuncture in modern social life (Barnett, 2000; Trow, 1974, 2006). It was the focus of academic debate and wide policy discourse as this chapter demonstrates. In the last decade of this, twenty-first century, however, there has been once again debate and discourse about the purposes of higher education, especially around the theme of engagement. In the light of the need for a rejuvenated economic and social life and in the face of the great issues and challenges of the day, the role of higher education became critical once again (Bell, 2018, 2019; Davies & Nyland, 2018; Walker & McLean, 2013; Williams, 2013).

5.1 Threads Through Time: The Challenges to Higher Education

The notion of freedom that informs this chapter is about access to opportunity and fairness. It is also about combatting manifest inequalities and the role of learning and knowledge linked to aptitude and ability in the search for a just and equitable education for the broad masses of people who need it. The role of education in modern society is the key to this concept of freedom. The growth of mass higher education has simultaneously and co-extensively been the growth of opportunity. It is this phenomenon that has provided opportunities for economic prosperity for the millions who had no family wealth or capital to invest and whose 'cultural capital' and aspirations were denied in the past. It is also about how education should enable people to find themselves and to find a place in the scheme of things. Freedom is about economics and life chances but it is also about constructing a culture of inclusion not exclusion, a perspective shared across the whole period of growth of mass higher education. Sheila Rowbotham used the term 'threads through time' to encapsulate this sense of continuity in the struggle for improved and more just social outcomes and it is a fitting description of the modern development of mass higher education (Finegold & Soskice, 1998; Finegold et al., 1992; Hockings, 2008, 2010; Porter, 1999; Rowbotham, 1999).

For most of the period after the Second World War, higher education institutions formed the pinnacle of the education and training systems in Britain, in Australia and elsewhere. They recruited highly selectively from 18-year-old school leavers (mainly white and male) and prepared them for secure and well-paid employment in influential roles in society and the economy. Through its influence on school examinations and its position at the end of the ladder of progression, higher education set standards for the rest of the education system. Through its teaching and research

functions, it defined what kinds of knowledge, skill and understanding were to be most highly valued in society (Edwards, 1998).

By the end of the twentieth century, much of this educational landscape had changed! At that point in time in the UK, for example, a large proportion of entrants to HE were 'mature' at the point of entry whilst some 42 per cent of 18-year-olds in England and Wales entered higher education and the proportion of women of all ages had increased rapidly. However, as the new century progressed it became clear that a first degree was no longer a guarantee of high-status employment. The traditional role of universities in defining and valuing knowledge was also less clear (Watson, 2014); in many fields, new knowledge was being created in commercial and industrial settings and the right of the academic world to validate knowledge came under challenge politically from external forces and philosophically from within the academy itself (Barnett, 1997; Scott, 1997; Wills, 1998).

By 2020 some 165 higher education institutions were enrolling some 2.4 million students in the United Kingdom, of which 1.8 million were undergraduates, though Scotland and Wales were by now funding their provision differently from England. Student debt had supposedly been privatised but was under-written by the Government whilst still being a massive burden imposed on graduates' futures, except where parents could afford to pay fees or pay off the loans for their offspring. Notwithstanding the huge growth of higher education, mass illiteracy and innumeracy was and remains the fate of millions who simply failed at every level of schooling.

In Australia, universities expanded exponentially in this period and the Bradley Review in 2009 led to the introduction of the demand-driven system and participation targets for under-represented groups. The total number of students rose from around 1 million in 2008 to 1.5 million in Australia's 37 publically funded and four private universities over a decade and in 2020 more than 40 per cent of Australians between the ages of 25–35 had a bachelor degree or higher. A wide range of disciplines can be studied in Australian universities and great efforts have been made to offer open and mixed modes of learning so that many different types of people can be supported in their learning. Over the past decade, the number of students from the poorest quarter of Australian households has increased by 60 per cent. Yet despite such significant increase in numbers of targeted groups, many remain under-represented, for example, Indigenous people, those from lower socio-economic backgrounds and those from remote and rural areas (Smith & Skrbis, 2017). People from major cities are twice as likely to hold a degree as those from remote or regional areas. By contrast, the internationalisation of Australia's higher education system has been tremendously successful in that Australia's international student population is the highest of any OECD country. The education of Australia's international students is Australia's fourth-largest export behind iron ore, coal and natural gas and is valued at $40 billion a year and does not contribute to the egregious problems of environmental degradation and climate change.

Massive and significant change has occurred in higher education provision and real achievements have been made in the period we are considering. These changes have been part of the wider growth and change in economic and cultural life across the world, though they always have a vital local and regional dimension. We have

reflected on the beginnings of mass higher education and now perhaps we can extrapolate our understanding to wider themes as we continue to negotiate globalisation, modernity, change and challenge in the current conjuncture.

5.2 Where Are We Now?

This is a disarmingly simple question with a confusingly large and complicated backstory (Featherstone, 1990; Fieldhouse, 1996; Williams, 1997). Fundamentally our modern but outdated education system has evolved (through struggle) historically as the hand-maiden of industry (Jackson & Marsden, 1962; Johnson, 1988). Right up to the late twentieth century quite high levels of unskilled male and female labour were required for the industrialised economies. Additionally, cohorts of the skilled and trained, mostly men, were needed for the factories, mines and construction sites. These were augmented by a managerial class of overseers, organisers and professionals qualified in many branches of science, engineering, technology and business, topped off by a financial elite able to control and extend capital investment and financial services necessary for capitalist businesses to survive and thrive. The state itself needed a managed bureaucracy and eventually, social welfare and healthcare system emerged. Crucial to all this was the existence of a large population of unskilled and semi-skilled people needed to create surplus value and profit whose higher educational needs were held to be insignificant or even non-existent and had been denied for generations by those set above them in authority, power and wealth.

The needs of industry, though a tremendously powerful force in shaping education, were not alone. Industrialisation also brought with it social differentiation and the creation of different forms and levels of economic, political and social power. The demands and struggles for rights and social justice of working people historically were often also concurrent demands for schooling and education to lift themselves out of poverty and want and if not for themselves for their children. This is a narrative that has still to run its full course and the provision and meaning of education are contested terrain even in wealthy and economically developed nations. What was clear was the fact that education mattered to all sections of society and was a key arena of social policy for nation building and social progress.

In many societies and communities selective and fee-paying private schools have become a major route by which economic and socially exclusive elites secure future advantages for their own children. In addition, the middle classes in many parts of the world have attempted to protect the future of their children and families by using education as a means to enter the higher echelons of public life as well as accessing professional and business life (Ball, 2010; Power et al., 2003). School and university systems the world over are not all of a piece of course. Faith-based schools and universities, for example, often have as part of their missions the fostering of social inclusion and a concern for social justice which seeks to mitigate the differences of wealth and privilege amongst their communities. In some cases, they support and teach a values-based common core curriculum (Hirst, 2015).

Since the 1980s university academics have pointed to the dysfunctional impacts of the marketisation of social, cultural and educational life under neo-liberalist policies and to the continuous increase in social inequality that has resulted (Featherstone, 1990; Nederveen Pieterse, 2020). The conjuncture 30 years on from the original analysis highlights some themes which help explain why mass higher education has not brought about the transformations many supposed were underway as the new institutions and campuses began to be built and globalisation, cosmopolitanism and transnationalism surged ahead (Featherstone ibid; O'Flaherty et al., 2007). The new world order meant a global culture where learning could be bought and sold as a national enterprise yet could be delivered internationally. Education also became a driver in economic performance and social dynamics as greater connectivity called for innovation and training in new skills. Learning was needed everywhere by the millions and masses but it could not prevent the enormous concentration of financial power where the impact of neoliberal globalisation has produced a world in which a handful of billionaires own as much wealth as half the world's population. This sits alongside shifts in perception where liberal market economies are viewed as under threat from inside and out and where at best we can speak of anxieties about the future (Nederveen Pieterse ibid). There are no clear and unequivocal master narratives for us to follow and there always existed a question of the role of education in the wider society where it hardly ever played the decisive or determining role. Education helps reproduce society and creates space and opportunity for challenge and change but it does not control or manage the central nodes of decision making and it does not confront unequal political power and the system of social differentiation.

At the pinnacle of the system of social differentiation today are the so-called elite universities. Ultimately, however, it was the 'mass produced' universities that exercised the power to admit very large numbers of students and confer the qualifications which are used to distribute scarce opportunities and jobs for the bulk of the population. Theirs was the promise and the power to bring freedom through education. A mass higher education system has however emerged hand in hand with highly selective and wealthy 'elite' institutions occupying the high ground of status and prestige. Whilst institutions apparently compete for resources and status, the playing field is frequently not fairly level and entry to the elite by the newer and less well-endowed universities is severely restricted.

For the majority of contemporary graduates, the conjunction of mass graduation and 'de-skilling' of many graduate/professional jobs threatens their futures and limits their options. What once required a first degree now requires a masters as the premium qualification. In the 2020s the undergraduate degree on its own is now relatively worthless as a passport to a lucrative, stable and prestigious career. Given this unanticipated outcome of mass participation, what kind of freedom, choices and future prospects has higher education now produced for the broad mass of the people? And is this not an indictment of the utilitarian understanding of the value of learning and education which came to prominence in the era of market liberalisation at the end of the last century? (Casey, 1995; Edwards, 1998).

The marketised model of a university where students pay for what they get in a competitive and differentiated 'learning market' has prevailed since it was identified

as a feature of the neo-liberal economy (Edwards ibid: 1998). The consumerist ethos dominates in a market where you get what you pay for from a hierarchy of providers who distribute unequal access to jobs and futures. This system does not work well for the majority of graduates let alone for those who are outside the campus gates with lesser qualifications for work which may disappear as changing investment flows drive jobs overseas. Most worryingly for a large number of graduates from the non-elite universities, the prestigious work their credentials might have earned them in the past is disappearing as automation and artificial intelligence remove whole layers of intermediate professional jobs and careers. What remains for many is lower status, lesser skilled and worse paid jobs that previously did not require a degree as the entry point to working life.

As for the universities themselves, they have over generations valorised the academic hierarchies of subjects with mathematics, medicine, sciences, languages and law at the top of the list of high-status subjects everywhere in the world whilst humanities and the arts and the social/human sciences are relegated to the bottom. Nevertheless, reality has a way of imposing itself and shaping future prospects and the clear fact is that within 40 years everyone studying or working now is likely to be retired and the knowledge they acquire now will be redundant in terms of its usefulness for work long before this. The degrees being issued currently to the mass student 'market' are a key signal for this future, not because study at an advanced level is ever just worthless, far from it, but because technological and industrial change is so fast and pervasive and so globally structured that any given skill set embodied in a degree is likely to become outdated. Unless something else is possessed, the degree holder is also likely to be economically redundant. The knowledge that universities took for granted as their right to own and define came under challenge towards the end of the last century (Barnett, 1997; Becher, 1989; Gibbons et al., 1994; Lyotard, 1984) and forced attempts at rethinking the role of academic tribes and territories in the twenty-first century (Trowler et al., 2012). Whether what we might call root and branch reform of the university academic structure actually occurred is moot, as the conservative force of tradition was brought to bear and continues to act as a brake on change.

What is required in the third decade of the twenty-first century is a conceptual shift and a strategy to re-think some of the fundamental purposes of public higher education. This must surely revolve around the idea of creativity, which itself will drive our need to re-think how we provide learning. There will also be a need to re-invent the notion of critical thinking for a change and for universities this will require a re-assessment of the social purposes of learning and engagement with communities in addition to the rethinking of what might be a critical pedagogy for social justice (McArthur, 2013; Smyth, 2011). Whichever path is chosen the point of departure must surely involve learning and education which takes us from the debates and concerns of the previous period (Jary & Parker, 1998) to that of the new and emerging reality and its prospects (Barnett & Di Napoli, 2008; Bell, 2018).

5.3 Future Prospects: Learning for Creativity

Academic intelligence that has set up the hierarchy of subjects and disciplines should be questioned and challenged (McArthur, 2010). The system that evolved to serve industrialism is no longer fit for purpose and we cannot continue to disregard and then dispense with the intelligence and creativity of the majority of our people whilst forcing those who succeed into the straight-jacket of subject disciplines which can no longer be relevant to the future. Nobody knows what will happen to our future and the best we can do is to liberate the creativity and imaginations of as many of our learners as we can. The whole curriculum of formal schooling and university education needs reforming and re-structuring around notions of creative thinking and action. Music, art, creative literature, dance, film, story-telling and environmental action should be re-positioned in the curriculum. Of course the 'positivistic' or fact-based subjects encoded into disciplines with formal knowledge can be accessed remotely or via distance learning technologies. They do not need the existential and experiential learning that creativity demands. The need for technologists, medical and specialist professional staff and levels of learning skill and competence will be needed and sustained, but their requirements need not drive the hierarchies of status and reward in the distorting and ineffective way they do currently.

Our era is obsessed with measuring, quantifying and ranking achievement. It is fixated on performativity and professional lives are dominated by targets, impact assessments, league tables and stock-taking audits. Away from work, our lives devolve onto social media and the technological 'fix' of the internet engages us mainly with the 'busyness' of others who create for us the online and virtual experiences we appear to think to belong to us. Public, social and cultural 'awareness' is suffused into the apps we buy and consume online in a process we do not create or control ourselves. All public space becomes available for commoditisation and commercialisation. Our connections to the world around us become the property of others and we lose the capacity to shape the actions and events of our lives. Mathew Crawford in his influential book 'The World Beyond Your Head' (2015) says that there are… 'darker precincts of "affective capitalism" where our experiences are manufactured for us'. We are the objects of others' intentions and actions not of our own and our subjective selves are diminished as we rely on consuming rather than creating our own realities—imperfect though they no doubt are.

Learning for creativity is an answer to part of the problem (Robinson, 2016). Not everyone can be artistically creative but we cannot continue educating people out of creativity. We need to learn in different ways. Creativity is one of the departure points to more critical and improved education. It is also part of an ecological form of learning where creativity need not be exclusively identified with the arts. Knowledge and culture from a very diverse set of sources can be used if we start from the perspective that all cultures have potentially equal value and that much is to be learned from, for example, indigenous knowledge especially perhaps in respect of the environment, care for the land, respect for wild-life and the care and custodianship of an ever more fragile planet. The curriculum could be radically re-arranged to

accommodate this agenda for change, which is conterminously and existentially an agenda for planetary survival. The integration of environmental issues with issues of human survival and development—employment, education, health and nutrition—has only begun recently. The emphasis (bias) on 'green issues' though crucially important to our understanding of ecological crises, is not aided by the separation of academic fields and professional practice into the natural and social sciences. We surely need to understand 'environmental justice' in the overall context of social justice and communal life. We need to understand also how social class and poverty and poor housing may be related to identity and ethnic issues—all of which have become the concern of environmental education and should be the subject of creative and critical learning.

5.4 A Critical and Dynamic Curriculum for an Uncertain World

The challenging economic and social realities of the late 20th and early twenty-first century have been accompanied by a rapidly changing knowledge base. Anthony Giddens (1990, 1991) has called this an ending of traditional epistemologies. He argues that the knowledge economy has expanded not only in relation to employment opportunities but also in terms of its structure and reach. New fields of knowledge and expertise are created continuously and expand beyond the old boundaries. The knowledge and information-based service industries, for example, have grown exponentially within recent decades and have merged in substantial ways into the leisure and entertainment industries.

It is also the case that learning itself is being transformed by the technologies of the information age. The new communication technologies have disrupted the fixed realities of time and space. This impacts economic and social life in fundamental ways. According to Castells (1996–1998), the global economy is maintained by endlessly complex financial flows. The industrial corporation has become a network, as opposed to the Taylorist hierarchy of control and production in a fixed place, normally a factory, of previous eras (Freeman, 2018). Social networks, as clusters of relationships, are no longer fixed in time and place and labour becomes disposable, literally across the world. Anyone can in theory be employed by any employer to work in the digital economy across all or any national boundary. In these circumstances, referred to as the 'network-society', individuals seek identity and meaning because although economies and communication networks are global, experience is local and regional. People still inhabit places and spaces which are dear to them and there is a longing for 'community' and belonging. In a sense, the globalising and techno-features of modern life are a new infrastructure in which we see the need for a more educated and autonomous working population on a global basis. The 'cosmopolitanism' in which people see themselves as beneficiaries of an increasingly interconnected world is sometimes counter-balanced, however, by a sense of loss of

culture and belonging (Bauman, 2001). This has been noted especially amongst diasporic migrant peoples and ethnic groups (Skrbis, 1999, 2017; Alder, 2013) and as a focus for resistance and cultural renewal on a global scale (Hall, 2017a, 2017b). A great social anthropologist once observed that … 'capitalism fuels the imagination's flight' (Brody, 1973) and the hyper-capitalism and networked society in which we live generates demand at speed for its products, which now include education as a key consumer item or positional good in the market for life chances and opportunities! The paradoxes of local versus global and national versus international are intrinsic to the turbo-capitalism and forces of change that is itself giving rise to increases in insecurity, instability and social inequality in many and varied nations across the globe. The imagination for what is desired is fuelled beyond reason by the immediate access available via the internet to the images of the world's riches and resources. Actual and real access and ownership of these resources is quite another matter though and on a world scale, there is a deepening of wealth inequalities and a heavy cost to the global economy (Foroohar, 2020). A commensurate curriculum that would enable universities to understand and teach for these revolutionary changes is needed which we might call a critical curriculum.

This thinking builds on the new epistemologies suggested by Giddens and also on the intellectual heritage of the Frankfurt School which taught us the value of interrogating surface reality to reveal the deeper currents of social thinking and ideologies. For learning to transform the object of study it must, first of all, know something of its self, its own limitations and origins (Habermas, 1972; Jeffries, 2017; Polanyi, 1974). If it is to transform reality into something better, knowledge and learning embodied in a curriculum must be self-critical!

If it is self-evident that learning, in general, is central to human experience, it is in the struggle to recognise and to overcome our own nature and circumstances that we become genuinely social beings. We must learn, not only to survive and prosper but because we want a better life which gives us more choice and opportunities. We can only truly learn in conditions of freedom and mutual association so the growth of knowledge and access to learning are still the keys to the wider goal of democracy and freedom.

The strategic design of learning for the future needs to engage with what is learned, the way it is learned and how this learning is relevant to those acquiring it. In other words, creative and critical learning demands what has been called a 'dynamic curriculum' (Teare et al., 1998). A dynamic curriculum first of all must incorporate the gains of recent years associated with modularity, credit transfer, student-centredness, IT-supported learning and flexible part-time and access provision. The dynamic curriculum model recognises the existence and validity of different 'discourses' and 'paradigms' within learning activity such as experiential learning, action-learning methodologies and workplace and community-based learning. When learning can take place everywhere why do we need university exclusive campuses and closed-off schools? The pedagogies we use and the ways of teaching we apply will also need to be radically re-shaped for a changing world.

The authentic freedoms to be gained through creative and critical learning cannot be bought off the shelf as if the university were simply a market for consumers.

A dynamic and critical curriculum surely will challenge the hierarchies of subjects and be a departure point for the unification of academic and vocational learning. The creation of a 'learning society' and unification of the academic and vocational divisions of learning both involve the transformation of higher education (and further education) and in particular how it organises its curriculum divisions and its teaching and learning (McArthur, 2010; Scott, 1997).

5.5 The Meaning of Vocational and Academic Education

Historically the division between 'vocational' learning and general education reflected the relation of divisions of the curriculum to employment, though some high-status 'academic' subjects were always vocationally focused such as medicine and law. These areas differed (and still do) in the types of students they attract and in the life chances they offer. Mass schooling towards the end of the nineteenth century institutionalised the boundaries of education which were mostly co-terminus with social class. These have substantially persisted, with modifications for the impact of racial, ethnic and gender factors, unfortunately up to the present (Dorling, 2017; Reay et al., 2005). In Britain in general the hewers of wood and drawers of water and the bashers of metal got the three Rs, whilst the ruling elites were schooled in the classics, sciences and humanities in their public schools which were in reality exclusively private. The ethos, the curriculum and the style of these schools became the model for those who were 'selected out' from the masses to be given a grammar school education so as to occupy the intermediate stations of the British and other economies and states as they evolved through the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

By the last quarter of the twentieth century, it was clear to many if not to all that a learning society requires no such divisive and ultimately dysfunctional boundaries and divisions (Robertson, 1995; Davies, 1995; Young & Spours, 1997; Fryer, 1997). More than two decades into the twenty-first century there is an awareness that realising the full potential of a majority plus the potential of the new information technologies means liberating the knowledge and willingness to learn of a vastly greater number of the workforce and population in general than had previously been thought necessary (Hockings, 2008; Sharpe et al., 2013; Walker & McLean, 2013).

The idea of unifying vocational and academic learning, however, is relatively new! Michael Gibbons and others (1994) and Peter Scott (1995, 1997) in the 1990s put forward challenging versions of alternative forms of knowledge as did Polanyi (1974) a generation before that. However, the idea of a learning society and the different meanings associated with it as well as its different policy implications, was relatively untested (Hillman, 1996; Robertson, 1995; Kennedy, 1997; DfEE, 1998). The suggestion we are making is that unifying academic and vocational learning should be seen as a way of promoting a learning society which is itself an intrinsic aspect of the freedoms education can bring to the wider population. The means of doing this could embrace greater student choice and the adoption of reflective models of teaching and learning—that is to say—critical pedagogy and dynamic

curriculum which stresses the importance of an expanded view of learning and insists that learning is a major feature of all social relationships—at the personal level, the institutional level and the societal level. A reflective model would of course need to encompass schooling and high levels of participation in both further and higher education provision, the continued growth of qualifications available for all and the extension of access models for education and training throughout people's lives. Following Schon's (1983, 1987) and Freire's (1972) earlier work, reflective practice and dialogue became a focus of pedagogical concern and policy in the 1990s (Casey, 1995; Dearing, 1997; Shor, 1992). This approach was in effect a key element in a model that challenged some of the dearest held beliefs of the status quo; those in which the academy had often been concerned with keeping people out and rationing the available places.

The alternative is a model of learning and education which is dedicated to open access, innovation, creativity, critical thinking and the social and cultural transformations needed for life in 50 years' time (Sharpe et al., 2013; Ashwin, 2015). It is also one that embraces critical thinking and systematic and scholarly critique of the dysfunctional power of the digital revolution which has impacted economic, social and educational life in profound ways yet to be fully addressed by the academy (Zuboff, 2019; Foroorhar, 2020).

5.6 The Social Purpose of the University: The Promise Denied?

What has characterised the HE system since the mid-1980s has been extreme volatility and endemic and unpredictable change. This has been masked to a degree by the fact that change, generally speaking, meant growth. Mass higher education everywhere meant the emergence of a new and truly large scale industry. The economic and social and mass psychological pressure to attend university, especially for young people, has been immense all over the planet. Some nations such as the USA, Great Britain and Australia benefitted immensely and the pre-eminence of English and the relatively egalitarian access to the expanded institutions and campuses helped establish a widely perceived view that learning was crucial for opportunity and getting on in the world. The emergence of a flexible, inclusive and accessible culture of higher education has been due largely, though not exclusively, to the expansion of new and, in the UK, post-1992 polytechnics, universities and colleges of higher education. The Open University once described as 'the last gasp of social democracy' from the labour inspired post-war social democratic settlement, became the largest university in the UK. As a model of open access and as a creative force in open and distance learning methods and pedagogies the OU became a world class presence in educational opportunity. The question which remains unanswered is whether mass higher education stalled in the attempt to democratise learning and thus change social life in Britain and elsewhere in any deep sense? The belief in meritocratic ideals as

the powerhouse for combatting social and educational inequality, though deeply held and widely practised, has proved to be less than adequate in many societies in bringing about changes necessary for a more equal and fairer society (Ball, 2010; Reay et al., 2005). At its worst, it has proved mendacious, for example in British private schooling where vested interests ensure that the charitable purposes of such schools are corrupted to accentuate the already privileged children of the wealthy and thus help to deny millions of children a fair start in life (Green & Knyaston, 2019; Verkaik, 2019). In Australia, it has been argued that emphasising meritocracy may compound the disadvantages young people experience from less educated or vocational backgrounds, including those from rural parts of the nation and those from indigenous communities (Smith & Skrbis, 2017). The phenomenal growth in the number of higher education institutions and the engagement of millions of more students did not come with a democratic mandate to empower either learners or teachers to produce a better, more equitable society or a more secure future. In a sense, the expansion of the new came at the cost of their own subjugation. The older elite institutions were encouraged to expand at the same moment also and became as might have been expected the 'standout' performers with their already acquired cultural and financial resources. No major strategic changes in curricular thinking took place in respect of the need for critical and transformative learning required for the new century and its challenges.

Throughout the transition to what is often referred to as 'modernity' (Giddens, 1990) and includes the transition to mass higher education, the elite (so-called) universities have not changed fundamentally and their students, pedagogies and performances are predominantly traditional, expressing and reinforcing a hierarchical, selective, elitist and ultimately divisive culture. Alongside elite schools, they form what has been termed 'engines of privilege' (Green & Knyaston, 2019). It is, however, lifelong learning perspectives and critical thinking, as part of a widening participation agenda, which yield the capacity for a socially purposive higher education. This implies a new and much deeper radical reform of what we mean by learning and critical thinking and how we can conceptualise university engagement with communities, as opposed to simply responding the perceived needs of industry or business. Universities are needed as engines of democracy where communicative action and participatory norms act as a counterweight to social exclusion and division. This was a key concern in the previous century and is surely our new departure point in the present one?

The new and more volatile twenty-first-century environment which we associate with globalisation and the impact of social and economic crises along with the potentially catastrophic impact of climate change and environmental degradation provides the opportunity to re-shape universities in accordance with the radical agenda of lifelong learning and to build upon the legacies and struggles for higher and continuing education as a realistic and socially purposive objective. In this global era young people often seek out cultural experiences and forms of identity which counter a stationary and insular parochial life. Even before the current internet-driven and globalised youth culture impacted cosmic awareness, young people were generationally restive and were the sources of renewal and energy for the future (Brake,

1980; WPCS, 1975). High levels of social and physical mobility are both a necessity and an expectation for young people and they need knowledge and learning which is adequate for this challenge, which is immense and daunting (Nyland et al., 2016; Skrbis et al., 2014). The key elements to be addressed are still poverty, deprivation, social injustice and social exclusion and now more than two decades into the twenty-first century no one can deny that there is still much to be done through an expanded education system and a new culture of inclusion and wider participation.

5.7 Conclusion: A Promise Postponed

Millions in the twenty-first century now benefit from higher education which expanded in the twentieth century and lifelong learning is a palpable reality for many, if still not all who could benefit. The university experience is now available nearly everywhere and mass higher education has not only outgrown the existing 'pre-ordained' elite system, but it has in effect invented another—with its own hierarchies and its differing unique selling points, which are not at all unique in reality. New universities in particular have also changed meanings and cultures in higher education. Specifically, they have changed modes of delivery: they have gone some way beyond the boundary; they have implemented some elements of a 'dynamic curriculum'; they have helped to re-conceptualise work and learning and to de-monopolise knowledge; they have broadened and extended the range of academic and professional disciplines and they have challenged existing epistemologies through developing credit systems, modularity and new, open pedagogies. They have continued to grow educational opportunities and to widen participation on an ever-lower resource basis for those who will not be admitted or choose not to attend the elite institutions.

In the main, however, the inheritors of the old system have adapted themselves to the global changes outlined above. A mass higher education system is now represented as a hierarchy of social and educational value and worth and is now part of the economic infrastructure and the social hierarchies of many nations. The social meanings and importance represented by the university league tables are in the heads of the people and hopes for their children are often channelled through these selections. Socially and culturally, the whole future of each succeeding generation leaving school is shaped by what universities are and do. Today the social aspirations of many are projected onto the front runners in the university league tables. There is now a mass higher education system almost everywhere in the developed world which is highly differentiated and which functions to buttress an economy and society which is profoundly unequal and unfair, whilst at the same time bringing opportunities undreamed of by the forebears of today's students. This paradox was never designed as a purpose for the growth of higher learning; it emerged as an unintended consequence of historical processes and change which few if any thought were relevant to the provision of higher learning. It is a truism now, but nevertheless still valid, that we must learn from history, for those who do not understand their own history are

condemned to repeat it. What surely can be learned from the growth of mass higher education is that moments of historical change in the content and function of education are also moments most characteristically in sympathy with the idea of freedom. We still need therefore an awareness of the true content and meaning of education which is self-critical and which is able to define itself in terms of its contribution to freedom.

In reality, whereas changes in the outside and globalised world have often been swift and profound, the pace of change within parts of our society and culture has often been glacially slow! Our system is still based upon forms of educational selection and division, which are inimical to authentic freedom and as a whole, it remains in thrall to class-based and cultural divisions. At its most elite levels and in respect of the needs of socially deprived and excluded communities, including in many places indigenous people and ethnic minorities, it can be corrosively divisive. Universities have increased participation but the challenge remains—to widen access for the persistently excluded, lower socio-economic classes and to engage for a genuine transformation to a socially just society. This means a challenge to notions of 'mission diversity' and 'quality' which operate to legitimise the continuing disproportionate recruitment of the more affluent groups to the elite institutions, to the long-term detriment of those universities which are combatting exclusion and to all of us who aspire to a more cohesive and fair society. Enhancing access to an unjust system and to elite institutions has proved to be elusive as far as re-drawing the boundaries of possibility are concerned. We need access to something much more profound so the promise is delayed not denied. The route will surely be via a re-definition of learning so that not only can individuals benefit from learning opportunities but through organised collective action and engagement in which a sustainable and more just society can be envisaged. Universities are uniquely placed to carry this agenda forward.

An American ballad put the matter eloquently and succinctly …." freedom doesn't come like a bird on the wing, doesn't come down like the falling rain". It surely comes through learning, critical thinking and the continuing struggle for something better for all.

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Part II
Engagement, Culture and Democracy

Chapter 6
Academic and Scholarly Freedom: Towards a 'Disputing' University with Critically Engaged Students

James Nyland and David Davies

Introduction

The theme of this article concerns the need to learn and teach the question of academic and scholarly freedom as part of what we term the critical curriculum for universities. This has implications for learning and teaching precisely in relation to social and civic engagement and goes to the heart of what the university is really for. Scholarly freedom refers in this chapter to the right to research, publish and teach within the parameters of the academic disciplines and fields and to the role of the appropriate peer groups who adjudicate academic quality. Academic freedom refers here to the more generic concept of the right of individuals to hold and pursue views and opinions within the university without undue influence from external agencies or authorities. Universities have in the 'Western tradition' sought to minimise the influence of the state for example on the social and political views of teachers and researchers. There is obviously a type of what Seidman (1998: 318) called "communicative contact" between these two notions and what appears as allied concerns over the institutional autonomy of universities, though the latter is perhaps more concerned with governance and funding than academic matters.

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6.1 An Australian Debate

The Australian democratic culture ingrained across its institutions can be summed up in two of its most famous 'motifs'—that it is the land of 'have a go' and the land of the 'fair go.' These twin concepts underpin Australia's commitment to engage with democracy through its universities which now rank as the nation's third-largest export industry. Australian universities are the largest in the world on a per capita basis, comprising 1.4 million students across fourty two universities, only two of which are private.

The modern Australian university is expected to be many different and contradictory things. It is expected to be an innovator in learning and knowledge; collegial in its dealings with its staff and its partners yet competitive in an increasingly marketised and monetised world; caring in its concern for people yet entrepreneurial in its business dealings; it is expected to be both a public institution and a private organisation and it is almost always both a local and global institution. This wide array of university roles and identities does not imply that it must in any sense be compromised in terms of its adherence to academic and scholarly freedom.

Yet, when we explore recent debates and developments relevant to understanding and protecting academic freedom and institutional autonomy in Australian universities, we find ourselves somewhat perplexed. In recent times, the Australian higher education sector has been immersed in debates around academic freedom and institutional autonomy. A touchpoint for these debates has been the establishment of the Ramsay Centres for Western Civilisation, in a number of Australian universities. Staff and students at some universities originally targeted for these Centres protested that their academic freedom was being compromised through a forced, single view of history being imposed on their university. In response to such protests, some Vice Chancellors chose to reject the Ramsay Centre's lucrative offer and their establishment in a small number of universities remains a contested issue for many in the sector to this day.

The Australian Federal Government beleived it necessary to intervene on the broader issue of academic freedom, appointing Former Chief Justice of the High Court Robert French to conduct a review into university freedom of speech (French, 2019). The resulting French report made a number of critical points, namely:

1. Academic Freedom is potentially restricted by: commercialisation of research, anti-terrorism and sedition laws;
2. The current debate is a global one affecting universities worldwide; and
3. Freedom of speech on campus and academic freedom apply to academic and professional staff as well as students.

French argued that Australian higher education needs to maintain an open and robust culture even if expressed views were controversial or harmful. There are key themes and issues that need the academy to be a genuine forum for debate and dispute and to engage with the wider world as well as a wide array os issues and opinions. As a result, Australian universities have since worked hard to incorporate

an active dimension to their missions and strategies in terms of their commitment to academic freedom and institutional autonomy, freedom of inquiry, free expression and open and critical debate in public discourse. The Australian 'have a go' and 'fair go' psyche is alive and well in public discourse on its university campuses.

6.2 The Civic Role of the University

The civic role of the modern university is a theme that feeds into a focus on engagement through learning and teaching, re-shaping social knowledge to fit the emerging concerns of the contemporary world. It is in the spirit of public and democratic education that universities are changing their communities and this has led to a better role for universities and better outcomes for students of all kinds.

The role of the modern civic university in Australia offers a route that says we should examine what we do and think in order to produce insight and understanding which can change and transform our communities through the creation of knowledge for a social purpose. The focus is on developing and strengthening partnerships for economic and civic benefit; it is on the culture of learning, the social significance of the institution (the university as a social network) and the need to personalise our learning in an age of mass education which shows a capacity for de-humanising and depersonalising our learning experiences.

Re-imagining the civic role of the university requires us to take a critical stance on the nature of university life through the specific prism of the curriculum, i.e. the organisation of learning and teaching. It suggests that the need for reform of engagement across a broad spectrum of university activity and thinking requires a co-existential and consecutive reform of the curriculum as well. It suggests that the transformations of learning and its institutions that we have seen over perhaps four decades have not been matched by commensurate changes in what is learned and how it is taught. For our present existence and the future of our children there can surely be no denying the significance of climate change and global warming; the life-threatening pollution of the air and the oceans upon which ultimately all life depends; the obscenity of poverty and early death of millions excluded from progress and affluence; the continuing impact of war and armaments production; and the impending conflagrations around population movement and migration.

These are the contexts and situations for which the current university curriculum is inadequate. These issues are not addressed centrally as a *Leitmotif*, a guiding thread of concern and critique for all learners since all people are impacted by them, which is not to suggest that all academic disciplines and boundaries must be abandoned and all existing curricula be instantly transformed into an issues curriculum. The realities of the world dictate that transformations may have to be gradual and as is frequently stated we want our brain surgeons to know a great deal about brain surgery and our air pilots to know precisely how to fly the airplane we are using to get to the next university conference across the continent. But it is not naive to ask that we renew the purposes of the university and just what sort of knowledge we want

it to develop. The radical growth and transformation of mass higher education itself and the explosive power of the internet have both occurred within the last 20 years without a corresponding change in our approach to learning.

6.3 A Disputing University?

What is more important for scientific debate, the deepest and critical knowledge or the acceptable answer? The right answer or the correct answer? The answer is clear, is it not? Or perhaps not? We can see much discussion about the meaning of academic freedom and the changing climate on freedom of opinion within and beyond the universities.

Whether there has been a definitive shift over time is difficult to argue, however, for some two decades or more we can observe a critical and scholarly dialogue about the meaning of academic freedom and the changing climate on the 'crisis' of knowledge and freedom of opinion within and beyond the universities (Barnett & Griffin, 1997). There can be little doubt that the emergence of new social and political movements reflecting some substantial changes in both the reality and perceptions of social life have occurred. The new movements have created new social knowledge which is contentious and have disturbed, for example, established racial, ethnic, sexual and gender hierarchies (Seidman, 1998: 253). Some of the identity-based movements have claimed to be representing a distinctive social reality that is at odds with the predominant paradigms of knowledge and contests important aspects of social science disciplines. In this sense, they can be said to have questioned both scholarly and academic freedoms thought to be embodied in institutionally autonomous universities and in the notion of academic freedom for scholarly pursuits. For example, some people who inhabit what may have been experienced as marginalised identities may indeed feel threatened by individuals having their status and feelings discussed in open and contentious ways or in forums that include actual or potentially hostile adversaries. The targets have been on the left as much as on the right and the informal pressures of the best arguments make the seemingly more radical positions possible. Nick Cohen put the point in a historical context which still finds its resonance today: "The campaigners of the sixties fought racism, sexism and homophobia, but they also fostered an aggressive individualism that dissolved the bonds of mutual support and balanced it with an aggressive identity politics that threatened basic freedoms" (Cohen, 2007).

No-platforming is quite common in Australian universities, similar to the UK and US. No-platforming refers to the banning or preventing of (usually) notable academic or political figures from speaking in universities following an invitation to do so because some students (usually) and sometimes academic staff may feel threatened or have their views, perspectives or identities challenged by the views or the previously published work of the speaker. A notable case in the UK was the withdrawal of an invitation to speak at a renowned university from Professor Germaine Greer, a well-regarded and indeed famous Australian academic, because her views on

transgender issues were not in accord with those of some of the students at the university. Radical left students shape the discourse in many places where controversial right-wing speakers are banned so that their viewpoints are not damagingly engaged with by those with whom they disagree. Some critics refer to this as a student-led 'debate police' whose actions can impact potentially uncomfortable public discourse (Hartung, 2019). The point here is that the universities have neither developed a curriculum nor a philosophy that would empower students to debate and discuss the most contentious issues and problems challenging their future lives and in fact, they share this with schools and schooling. To quote Tomlinson, 2019:

"While many young people were aware that they would live their lives in a globalised world, with rapid communication and population movement, the failure to think seriously about a curriculum for a globalised future—which would need an understanding of the past—left schools either trying to ignore tensions or unable to cope with conflicts." (Tomlinson, 2019: 160).

Those who preach with moral fervour and fury do not want a dialogue and those who simply shout back equally want only competing monologues. The person opposite is no longer a discussion partner but at best a listener and often a projection space; a 'screen' at which thoughts are 'projected'. No serious response is required. Speaking and speechlessness in this way often hang paradoxically together. There is too much certainty and too little doubt. Our capacity to control the way in which our attention is managed is itself under a severe challenge from the digital devices through which so much communication is organised and managed for us, on our behalf and without our full acknowledgement or agreement (Crawford, 2015). Even where our attention is freely given and we are consciously paying attention, attentionality is not contested through reasoned argument and evidence but through things being attested, stated, confirmed and re-enforced through declaration (often by reference to revealed 'sacred' texts which cannot be disputed by those who believe in them). 'Non-believers' are apostatised; declared to be committing blasphemy and dialogue becomes accusatory. The language of apostasy here reflects the often 'rootedness' of argument in the 'revealed' texts of religious discourse. Even if the convictions concerned may not be religious, they are treated as if they were.

To use the English language creatively by adapting a metaphor from an allied context, what comes to mind here is what in the United States is known as 'helicopter' and 'snowplough' parenting. This involves anxious and perhaps obsessive parents who keep a close watch on all the doings of their children and remove any obstacles to their success in whatever enterprise they are involved in. Educational institutions can be persuaded to act in a similar way and must surely be warned against snowplough education.

Collier (2018: 106) has recently made an allied argument concerning the significance of what he refers to as 'hothousing' in the American experience of family life and later success in professional spheres and the uptake of opportunity. The impact of parental interventions and support for their children can have decisive effects on educational outcomes. There is a homology here between the issues of personal development and the issues of democratic deliberation. The enhancement of both requires conscious and ethical intervention to safeguard intended results and

outcomes. The unintended consequences, however, may deliver results contrary to those expected. Collier notes the way in which the new hothousing has produced children of the educated class but who are in the bottom national group of cognitive ability yet who have a higher chance of getting to university than those children from less-educated families who are in the top ability group. Democratic deliberation and debate in universities, homologously, requires a conscious and deliberate intervention to spell out the conditions under which academic freedom for universities can be upheld. To assume even implicitly that a neutral stance will achieve this is to be subject to the fallacy of expectations over that of unintended consequences. Universities have a 'duty' not to remove obstacles and challenges to student experience and perceptions, but rather to equip them with the skills and values to argue and debate their own case. Only in this way can the university's moral mission—measured in terms of commitment to democracy and militancy for tolerance—be delivered.

Genuine education is not to be had without intellectual challenges and courage and only those who literally engage and rub up against opponents can prove their point. It is a vital function of a university to facilitate what the Germans call *Andersdenken* (literally 'thinking differently') which is what we might call dissident or alternative thinking. Thinking and disputing are siblings.

A crucial matter—especially for students it seems—which exemplifies this argument is that of identity formation and defence. Universities have attempted to be neutral in this matter wishing perhaps to promote an emollient view that a neutral stance might defuse potentially ignitable issues around the often fraught sexual, cultural, religious and social identities and the sometimes contrasting values espoused by those inhabiting a specific identity. However, Kwame Anthony Appiah has argued persuasively: "There is no dispensing with identities but we need to understand them better if we can hope to reconfigure them and free ourselves from mistakes about them" (Appiah, 2018: xiv).

However, it is clearly tempting to state that … 'on the one hand there is…'. and 'on the other hand we can see the justice in…'. This is problematically acute when students state that their identity is literally threatened or injured by certain academic or quasi-academic positions or theories. However, there can be no true study and clarification without open controversy in many matters. On the one hand, universities must protect their academics and guests from attacks that are unwarranted, while on the other hand, they must protect the space and places where hard questions can be asked.

This can only be done when universities take constructive controversy to be part of their declared role and function; it must enter self-consciousness and self-understanding. This means controversy and argument play a bigger role than has been the case recently. They must become 'controversy universities' by which means the teachers must teach more intensive discussion and exchange to their students. Learners, therefore, need lecturers who will irritate and disturb them and they need to encounter theories which they may have declined or refused to explore and with which they may disagree. At least some teachers may need to be from different backgrounds and have other opinions than those of the majority. Decisions in a democracy should be achieved through what Jenkins (2019) recently called ''relentless debate",

not through the power of money, or lobbying nor the chants of crowds and certainly not through the guns and brutalities of war. Yet people do not come to support the democratic institutions of democracy by chance or simply through habit. The politics of the masses in the street can have a massive potency but this may not always be a positive force for progress. The recent rise of authoritarian right-wing populism in Europe is an example (Eatwell & Goodwin, 2018). The key is to debate and argue, which can counter the politics of fear and hate with arguments based on reason and rational evidence and science. Even the politics of emotion must be subject to the voice and imprimatur of reason. No-platforming can never win a debate and it invites reaction and a retreat into confirmation bias. An engaged university must be engaged in debate and instil in its students an incitement to reason.

A contesting and disputatious university needs to have expectations of its teachers. Of course, they will be bright and will have proven their academic worth and achieved their proper place in a reward system that gives professional security and social status, a good wage and a sense of personal achievement. The expectation, however, should be the courage to speak out. Those who retain their silence and do not speak out against the banning of free speech, for example, because they feel themselves under threat need to have more courage. Those who challenge their students need to have more care and awareness of the results of such challenges. Those who are totally committed to their researches and work and thereby seek to escape the disputes need more science and humanities to apply their knowledge to a disputatious world of which they are inescapably a vital part.

A disputatious university cannot shrink itself within itself. An inner migration will simply not suffice. Next to teaching and research, the third mission must be to be effective in the world. The university should be a forum for discussion and debate about the things that really matter. This might be focussed on the 'wicked issues' including poverty, inequality, war and disasters, migration and ethnicity, climate change, global warming and the destruction of the homeland planet. We are referring to a newer concept here of the 'homeland planet' to denote the specificity and uniqueness of a threatened ecological system of truly global proportions and significance. The planet is THE single and only homeland for us all. This surely indicates to us all that there is a need to change the way we think and communicate the absolute core messages of global survival in an era of unmitigated threats. It might mean a critical examination of the nature and effectiveness of our human future in an age of surveillance capitalism (Zuboff, 2019) in the information age (Castells, 2000). Discourse without effects on the real world and without openness is only a symposium, whereas we surely need engagement.

The very best students write without fear and want to engage in the very things that matter to them and can in a sense matter only and specifically to them. This argument can perhaps be supported by reference to the way in which digital life and phenomena are re-wiring and re-scripting our external and inner lives. The pre-digital lived experience involving learning, communication, the consuming of goods and services has evolved into a world of ceaseless communication, instant access to information and global connectedness to potentially every living person on the planet (Scott, 2015; Zuboff, 2019). And as far as identity is concerned, Appiah has

shown how we must approach the subject of identity anew with values that allow us to rethink questions of creed, colour, class and culture for a future which seriously questions and indeed critiques our past understanding of these matters.

It is their future in a way it cannot be ours, who will not live to inherit the issues we have sown. But those of us here now can sow the seeds of critical thinking and discourse. A dialogue of analysis and critical insight rooted in critical and humanistic science is possible. Perhaps the discursive and disputatious university can bring forward its graduates without fear of controversy through education with dispute, focussed on knowledge for change and a better social result. This would surely be a victory for a better society and a better future.

6.4 The Meaning of Critical Thinking and the Curriculum of Universities

John Berger, the great writer and broadcaster on art and society, reminded us that community is one of the longings of our century (Berger, 2016). The need for belonging is a common human characteristic. It retains a powerful charge and seems to offer a framework of meaning for modern life. But it is culture that connects us to the events 'out there'. There is no community outside of and beyond cultural forms and practices which make us what and who we are. Yes, there is an essential sense of self for most people and there are collective experiences and identities and some people feel alienated from the collective norms, values, practices and behaviour which we can observe and analyse around us. But it is in the relation of things that this understanding emerges and that the culture through the various 'languages' it employs becomes the means of relating one thing to another. Without culture and cultural mediation, there can be no valid knowledge that can equip us with the power to change our thinking and consciousness and transform (if we so choose) our social and material lives and, who knows, our human 'spiritual' lives as well.

A culture of academic freedom lies at the heart of engendering such transformation. It forces us to engage with the 'big issues', sometimes referred to as the 'wicked issues' (Firth, 2017)—and voice our criticism towards them.

6.4.1 Poverty is Still with Us – Globally and Locally

The 'real' world still consists of millions who are without an adequate income to rear their families, a world without dignity or education, without clean water or adequate food and medicine and whose share of world wealth is actually diminishing. There is also a world where climate change and pollution are far from improving and where the threat of human extinction is real. The arguments for devising a new curriculum that addresses these issues seems to be self-evident.

6.4.2 The Marginalisation of Young People

The rapid pace of social and economic change, the apparent quickening of mass migration across large parts of the globe, de-industrialisation and the 'hollowing out' of many traditional economies and communities have meant the growth of more challenges to the neoliberal consensus in many societies. For many young people, this has meant their future is at risk with youth unemployment and marginalisation the fate of many across the world.

6.4.3 The Growth of Digital Technologies and How We Understand What is Happening

In a society where knowledge has exploded, learning is being transformed by the artefacts and the apps of the information age. Communications can be instantaneous and reality becomes 'virtual'. Local communities can become marginalised and impoverished by the almost instant switching of production to cheaper locations, perhaps halfway across the globe. We should not underestimate the sheer power and reach of the new technologies. However, it is one thing to describe the exponential growth of digital machines to almost every living human on the planet and the communication networks which sustain them and another to overcome the negative effects and disbenefits which accompany them.

6.4.4 Knowledge and Learning Relevant to Life and Work

The sheer power and availability of computerised automation have now shifted the nature of work and leisure so fundamentally that it presents us with an existential challenge. Modern work, for many, presents a lack of engagement in the task and even leisure and free time may be occupied by 'lazy' and sometimes aimless pursuits. Automation may not have simply removed many people from the prospects of meaningful and rewarding work, but it has the potential to undermine the ethos of work as a self-fulfilling and enhancing engagement with the world of things and people. In this sense, it may make us 'lazy' and insensitive to the real meaning of work, which may not be about earning an income but rather be more about acting on the world around us in life-enhancing ways.

The task facing universities is developing knowledge and skills and a curriculum that can cope with the capacities and threats presented by the machines we depend on and which can help us challenge the loss and separation of ourselves from our communities.

6.4.5 Relevance of Community and Identity

Ways of learning relevant to a community stress the importance of common identity, shared values and a sense of shared experience aimed at changing and conserving valued traditions. The community, in a sense, may become the curriculum and a belief can emerge in a large reservoir of talent and ability within individuals and their communal experience that can be tapped and released. The university can sponsor learning which revolves around this growing and developing a sense of awareness.

6.5 An Engaged Curriculum for Critical Thinking

We have considered some of the new contexts for a more vital and engaged critical role for universities. The aspect we want to consider now is that of the need for curricular renewal and the idea of critical thinking skills as a feature for all university learning and teaching programmes in the context of academic freedom. We have already alluded to the fact that the really big issues facing us are somehow marginal to our key concerns with the curriculum. The big challenges of our times are not central to our learning. Peter Hyman (2017: 17–19) has remarked that: "We have a one-dimensional education system in a multi-dimensional world. We are living in an age of big challenges, big data, big dilemmas, big crises, big opportunities. Yet… (education) too often is small in ambition, small in what it values, small in its scope." He argues that we need something different which can meet the challenges of our times and where we can properly engage with learning. His suggestion is that we need an engaged education that is academic (based deeply in literacy and numeracy and which is empowering); is about character building (involving independence and autonomy, resilience and open-mindedness for the individual), is concerned with creativity and craftsmanship and a can-do approach to innovation (which is about problem solving). These three facets of learning correspond to education of the head, the heart and the hand and can help us overcome the artificial and self-limiting and debilitating divisions we have between academic, vocational and technical education. Those who experience such learning understand that they have an obligation to voice their concerns and apply their knowledge to make the world a better place, not merely to make money, important though that may be.

6.6 What Do We Need to Know?

Although our concern is overt with universities that currently provide mass higher education opportunities for many millions of learners worldwide, there is a disturbing reality facing us as the twenty-first century evolves. This concerns the relevance of what we take to be conventional university provision of learning and accreditation to

the masses who simply cannot access such opportunities and who are in a majority globally. In an era where billions of people cannot access academic education, there is the question of 'skill', by which we mean how individuals primarily understand and grasp their environment in order to make it work for themselves. The better this understanding is, the better life can be. Skill is what people develop to survive and thrive in the environment in which they find themselves. Sometimes this involves changing that environment or seeking an entirely new one. This is a deeply cultural matter. It involves how the individual self attends or relates to the environment which itself is 'cultural'. Some commentators such as Crawford (2015) argue that the environment actually constitutes the self, rather than just impacting on it and therefore how the individual pays attention to this environment becomes key to succeeding in it. In an internet dominated world, the idea of the public attentional world (what and who is on the internet and in our minds and for how long each day) gains some serious traction.

In acting on the world, however, (in reality or in virtual reality) we find skill is a key part of the process. "Through the exercise of a skill, the self that acts in the world takes on a definite shape. It comes to be in a relation of *fit* to a world it has grasped." (*ibid*.: 25). What is deeply problematical still, though, is how public space (including spectacularly the internet) in general diminishes the skill of understanding and acting on that environment. The digital and virtual world is one made up of mediations where our daily lives are literally saturated with representations that are made elsewhere. We make contact with the worlds of work, of family, of friendship, of communication, entertainment, consuming, learning and leisure through the apps and software provided for us. We make contact through, not with, these representations and become 'skilled' at the point of gaining access but we do not make or construct the objects of our desires and we do not become skilled at practices which give us 'agency'. Crawford argues persuasively that it is when we are engaged in a skilled practice that we can understand and own, as it were, a reality which is independent of the self and where the self (the individual as an identity) is understood as not being of its own making. The illusion of the internet is of course to implicitly infer that the virtual reality constructed by the 'individualised' internet software has precisely been made by and for the individual self. The significance of this insight is we believe that in the encounter between the self and the external world, skill, defined as the capacity to engage with and act on the real world, is the critical element. It embraces the skills of the head, the heart and the hand and above all, it means an engaged education that embraces the skills required for exercising scholastic freedom is needed in universities.

The powerful mediating institutions which provide our means of accessing life on the internet are not democratically organised and accountable, no matter how much they assert their right to offer choice in a consumer-driven world. Neither do they offer freedom simply to communicate with whomever we wish even though we can reach almost every living human being on the planet with a hand-held device. The 'real' reality is that we make contact almost exclusively now through the representations of people and objects which are provided to us on our devices by the media corporations. We no longer rely on ourselves and our own skills to do this and we are diminished

potentially as a result. We are of course 'free' to deny realities and to dissociate ourselves from the effort needed for skilful engagement. If we can pay, there are always others in a market who will provide these things for us.

The matter of skill thus becomes critical for our understanding of what universities might do and how they might re-construct their curricula in the context of academic freedom. This is so in respect of two major objectives: first the need to deliver learning programmes that equip students with critical thinking (as we have defined it in this paper) and second, the need to recognise alternative forms of 'skill' which those beyond the boundaries of conventional universities (i.e. the billions in the 'third world') possess but which go largely unrecognised and unrewarded.

Critical thinking is not a unitary phenomenon and it can have differing meanings within its different contexts. For the universities its significance is in the qualities it can develop in the student. For an engaged institution this might mean giving the learner the capacity to separate truth from ideology or 'post-truth'. It should surely mean not taking things at face value or not letting others make up our minds for us. As Newman (2006) asserts, critical thinking, drawing on critical theory, is concerned with the idea of social justice and fairness and that knowledge can be generated and applied for an improved social result. It involves learning which should lead to an enhanced sense of self in the real world and not just in the virtual world. This means we might expect a more capable individual who is able to relate to others and be personally more responsible and 'viable' in exercising their academic freedom.

A disputing university will then seek to re-shape social knowledge to fit the emerging concerns and experiences of its hopefully richly diverse students and of its communities. The concerns of global security and survival no less than those of contested identities and relationships require new knowledge to emerge. Critical thinking, contentious dialogue and authentic and democratic dispute have never been more needed. There is a great tradition in the western 'engaged university' which now requires renewal with an agenda whose time has come.

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Chapter 7
Towards a Twenty-First-Century Approach to Civic Engagement Locally: A Conversation Between Professor James Nyland and Dr. Richard Teare, Co-founder and President, Global University for Lifelong Learning

James Nyland and Richard Teare

The authors realize how difficult it is to illustrate curriculum themes in higher education because they are necessarily specific to places and times yet we are seeking universal and common answers but we have tried to do so in selecting issues such as 'the burning world', ecological learning and civic engagement. Themes that matter to all.

This chapter is an example of how learning can be a 'lived experience' with special meaning for communities without direct access to universities. In this sense, it complements the chapters in the book on indigenous knowledge, the emphasis on community-based knowledge and the need for service learning.

This chapter contrasts, complements and illustrates what Brinks (2018) referred to as universities being ' good for' something (in this case community self-development) and what we have called the need for a critical curriculum in the earlier part of this book.

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7.1 Wider Engagement: The Role of Self-directed Development

Why is it that in the twenty-first century the place where a person is born still determines their life chance? The harsh reality is that millions of people live without reliable sources of water, food and energy—often in communities that are blighted by disease and tribal, ethnic or religious conflict. To make matters worse, they may have little or no support from local, regional and national agencies, especially where corruption is endemic. Yet, poor communities have learnt to be resourceful and to manage without outside help and it is in response to this question about life chances that the Global University for Lifelong Learning (GULL) aims to build on traditional knowledge and experience by releasing the potential for self-directed development.

GULL encourages self-directed lifelong learning that begins and ends with personal development because this is common to all humanity. Those who are fortunate enough to go to school and college or university earn qualifications in the subjects that they study but are they fully aware of their individual and unique gifts, skills and potential? The staggering numbers of people who miss out on formal development tend to know even less about what they are capable of accomplishing and so GULL provides simple formats to enable them to discover, access and develop their innate potential. Richard Teare's book Lifelong action learning: A journey of discovery and celebration at work and in the community (2018) outlines how GULL uses self-directed development across the spectrum from workplace settings where GULL often works with low paid employees to those living in rural subsistence communities. Although the goal is the same (helping people to release their potential) the approaches need to be customized as many GULL participants in community settings are not able to read and write their own language. GULL has supported self-directed development in 60 countries and we have learnt that the world is alive with many powerful expressions of knowing and learning and that it is always possible to verify the practical outcomes of those who contribute to their community and wider society—literate or not.

GULL's challenge at the outset was to establish a low-cost structure in order to reach the excluded and so we put in place a non-profit network movement that works with other organizations to facilitate self-help in communities. At its inception, we decided to avoid setting up or replicating traditional educational systems and infrastructure; instead, GULL works through a network of affiliated organizations with ongoing relationships with communities. It is via these networks that we aim to foster, recognize and certify self-directed development that is characterized by greater self-reliance, financial independence and the ability and willingness of participants to share their learning and benefits with others. Our approach is deliberately practical as life for the poorest focuses on survival challenges (e.g. securing water, growing more food) and so it is necessarily a broader, more holistic form of lifelong action learning. However, this alone will not engage and sustain personal development. GULL's work began in 2007 and we quickly discovered that public recognition is vital too. For example, many Africans in different regions of the continent told us

that public recognition by GULL was an 'answer to their prayers'. We think that millions of people dream about access to education that is beyond their means and in any case, educational infrastructure in the poorest places is often fragile and/or ineffective. What could be done about this? GULL's solution took three years to develop as we knew that securing accreditation for GULL's work would be too expensive for this task. Instead, GULL's professional awards are supported by a statement of recognition signed by a Head of State and a Prime Minister and multiple endorsements from other Governments, Leaders and Institutions—all offered free of cost. The details can be viewed in the 'Recognition' section on the GULL website.

7.1.1 About This Chapter

In the following conversation, Dr Richard Teare, Co-founder and President of the Global University for Lifelong Learning, responds to questions from Professor James Nyland about GULL's work and role in a research project that is developing an inclusive framework for self-directed lifelong learning led by a group of South African public universities. The interview concludes by touching on some of the implications for wider adoption of GULL's approach that would enable universities to become more inclusive hubs for both academic and community-led lifelong learning.

7.2 Q: Why Did You Establish GULL?

A: During the years when I worked in universities I rarely reflected on the fact that they were privileged places and that many of our students came from families where one or more parents had been to university. Naturally then, they encourage their children to follow this route for better career prospects after graduation. I began thinking more deeply about the concept of inclusion during the late 1990s when I first saw for myself the myriad difficulties faced by a high proportion of the world's population in developing countries and in particular, the limited educational provision available to them. The experience gained as a professor at four UK universities gave me the confidence to set up the Global University for Lifelong Learning—a very different kind of institution that draws on local and traditional knowledge to encourage community participants to find solutions to their own problems.

7.3 Q: Why Does GULL Focus on Self-help?

A: As the poorest say that they can only dream about further and higher education because they lack qualifications, money and often educational infrastructure, a different approach was needed. This began to take shape during a visit to the UK

in 2004 by the newly appointed Governor-General of Papua New Guinea (PNG), Sir Paulias Matane. He had grown up in a remote subsistence community in East New Britain Province, PNG. As both his parents died when he was a young boy, he was raised by his elderly grandparents and at the age of 16, he was able to attend school for the first time. He later became a teacher, headmaster, schools inspector and then national superintendent of teacher education. After that, he served his country as a permanent secretary, an ambassador and a high commissioner (among other roles). Given his disadvantaged background, Paulias had realized early in life that he'd need to be focused, disciplined and self-directed, he became an inspirational lifelong learner and on 26 May 2004, he was elected as the Eighth Governor-General of PNG. His story is relevant to GULL's work because we try to mirror his journey from poverty by encouraging GULL participants to discover and use their human potential to the fullest—first to help themselves and their families and second, to help others. This is encapsulated in GULL's motto: ***Enabling YOU to make a difference in OUR world***.

7.4 Q: How Does GULL Facilitate Self-help?

A: To provide hope and opportunity we needed to create a credible system that would incentivize the excluded to begin a journey that would help them to discover their unique gifts and talents, develop them and make practical, tangible changes in their own lives and in the communities in which they live. Over several years of discussions with Sir Paulias, we concluded that this approach could not be 'accredited' in a conventional way and so he and Sir Michael Somare, PNG's founding Prime Minister and the serving Prime Minister at the time, signed a 'statement of recognition' offered in perpetuity for GULL's professional awards—all of which require verification that pathway-specific outcomes have been attained prior to certification. Next, we sought to establish a decentralized network as a deliberate strategy to facilitate national and local ownership at the lowest possible cost. We wanted to build the network on traditional know-how and knowledge so that anyone could participate. GULL's approach is based on what we call action learning pathways. This reflects the idea that learning should be an active lifelong journey centred on the unique needs and aspirations of its participants.

It is now fourteen years since the official launch of GULL on Friday 5 October 2007 in the State Function Room, National Parliament House, Port Moresby, PNG. One of our guests that day from the World Bank made a memorable comment on the significance of our initiative. In his speech, he said: '*We people from the third world—I'm a Kenyan—often feel like we are sinking into a swamp—we lift our hands in the air and hope that someone will come along and pull us out. GULL is different—it is like a low hanging branch—you reach up and pull yourself out'*. I quite often share this explanation because it is simple and clear and by implication, the world needs much greater provision for self-help. If the networks were in place to support this, people everywhere could contribute what they can afford (avoiding entitlement

and dependency) and begin a journey towards becoming more confident about what they are able to do and more skilled in equipping themselves and responding to life's challenges. If it were easy, it would be happening already—but a shift is needed. Personally, I think that there is still too much emphasis on training and not enough on equipping people to find their own solutions. This transition requires a system, structure and process—the very things that GULL has been refining over the years by working with social entrepreneurs, NGOs and other agencies in many communities around the world.

7.5 Q: Do You Have an Example that Illustrates the Value of Self-help?

A: Yes, there are many—some of which are documented on the GULL website—a good example of the power of self-directed action learning is illustrated by a project facilitated by the international NGO World Vision with GULL in Burundi. Nationally, Burundi struggles with high child mortality due to Malaria and malnutrition. In an effort to tackle malnutrition, a World Vision facilitator working in a rural area with eight community volunteers had the idea of starting a soya milk production facility. The opportunity to participate and become a GULL student was met with much enthusiasm by community volunteers and several months on, she was working with 105 community volunteers. During a review visit to the soya milk production facility ten months or so after scaling up the project, community members told us that as an outcome of their GULL project, they had eradicated child malnutrition in their commune—a claim that was independently verified by World Vision. They had secured this outcome by organizing the distribution of soya milk to vulnerable children over a wide geographical area spanning 29 hills and valleys. They decided initially to distribute soya milk free of charge to the parents of sick children and when the problem of malnutrition had been addressed, the milk would then be sold to parents to prevent re-occurrence and to ensure that their project would be self-funding and sustainable. If families did not have the funds to buy the soya milk, the community's benevolent fund covered the cost and a community team began working with the family until they were able to generate enough income to pay for the soya milk from their own resources. The soya milk production facility is now producing a cash surplus for the community and they have used their profits to increase the production capacity. After securing these valuable and tangible outcomes, the soya milk production team had earned their GULL professional certificates and many hundreds of people came to witness the certification ceremony in a football stadium—the only venue large enough for so many curious and excited observers!

7.6 Q: Does GULL Work with Academic Institutions?

A: Yes and I am hoping that the network of universities using GULL for community engagement and service learning will increase in the next year or so. Earlier, I outlined GULL's mission to those without access to conventional forms of further and higher education and as I reflect on the highs and lows of our efforts to respond to this challenge, I wondered whether it would be possible to work with universities on a new agenda for inclusion. This is with a view to shaping a twenty-first-century paradigm for lifelong learning that embraces both traditional notions of academic excellence and community-led holistic development. How would it be if universities were able to facilitate practical and valuable development in and amongst marginalized communities—alongside the excellent work that they are renowned for on the campus? As the GULL system is designed for the former purpose and does not compete with academic programmes, it can be customized to meet specific needs without affecting its recognized status. Further, as a non-profit initiative, it can be operationalized at low cost by universities interested in working with GULL.

7.7 Q: Has GULL's Self-help Approach Been Used in Australia?

A: Yes. In 2010, Griffith University's coordinator of community partnerships began to make use of GULL's approach to engage with and enable Samoan community leaders to experience action learning for themselves. As a means of sustaining change, project teams embedded a system for action learning using the GULL model of community engagement based on equality and inclusivity. Our primary objective was to widen access to educational opportunities for Samoan families, whose children were reported to be under-achieving at school and under-represented in higher education. This successful pilot led to the introduction of a university-sponsored programme (initially for Samoan families) that sought to widen the community's participation in higher education. In one of the periodic reviews, a community leader said: *'I'm sure that action learning is the way forward for the community—it liberates people, in the sense that at the outset, participants might have relatively low self-esteem and as they journey with this, they can move forwards and strengthen their self-image and self-worth. I also think that action learning offers the prospect of liberation from poverty because it facilitates a change in mindset. It is my belief that unless and until people are liberated from what holds them back, they will not develop and progress and I have discovered that the GULL action learning process does this'.*

7.8 Q: Can You Envision a Wider-Ranging Partnership with Universities in the Future?

A: I hope so because I don't think that the place where a person is born should determine whether (or not) they have access to educational opportunities. Building on the initiative in Australia, I spoke at the Action Learning & Action Research Association World Congress in South Africa (November 2015) and invited delegates from academic institutions to consider piloting GULL in support of their outreach work with communities. Several South African universities said they would like to run a pilot and we began at a large primary school serving a township near to Port Elizabeth, in a shelter for homeless women in the city of Bloemfontein, facilitated by the University of the Free State and in the community of Gatelapele supported by North-West University. The starting point pilots were as follows:

Sapphire Road Primary School, Port Elizabeth: A group of 14 school staff and community volunteers completed the initial stage of a process designed to enable some of the 47 people (aged 19–30) volunteering at the school to enhance their employability. The longer-term aim is to cascade lifelong action learning to the wider community where levels of unemployment are high. Building on these foundations, 'Luniko' (giving and receiving) sought to develop resources that school volunteers could use to engage with the community and in particular, to help improve parental learning support for school children. The pilot group was facilitated by North-West University (NWU) and nearby Nelson Mandela University (NMU) is facilitating ongoing wider implementation.

Bloem Shelter, Bloemfontein: An early success in piloting GULL occurred at the University of the Free State (UFS) and following the annual UFS Community Award Ceremony in October 2016, UFS News reported: *'Through its partnership with GULL, UFS has (and continues) to work with women from Bloem Shelter, an organization that provides assistance to homeless women and children from diverse walks of life. The women are being equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge they needed to become self-sufficient—an experience that has yielded positive, constructive change in the women's lives. Bloem Shelter now has a development pathway to enable residents to move from dependent to independent living* via *micro enterprise'*.

Gatelapele Youth Leadership Development: North-West University decided to pilot GULL among community members who are themselves facilitating leadership development for young people. In the Gatelapele community, youth account for two thirds of the unemployed and intervention was needed to steer them away from crime and substance abuse and instead help them to identify and use their gifts and skills in a more productive way. The pilot participants worked on their personal and leadership skills and on devising ways to cascade their learning to the wider community they serve. Speaking on behalf of the award recipients at the NWU with GULL event, on 19 October 2017, a young leader said: *'GULL should be embraced by every community development facilitator as it offers a strength-based approach that enhances ongoing development'*.

I am pleased to say that GULL is still working with the original trio of public universities: NWU, NMU and UFS, now joined by other South African universities.

7.9 Q: Given the Positive Outcomes, Will Gull's Work with South African Universities Expand?

A: Yes because South Africa's public universities are expected to engage with disadvantaged communities and townships in their vicinity—places where unemployment, drugs, violence and a sense of hopelessness often prevail. Given this backdrop, Professor Lesley Wood of North-West University secured research funding for a longitudinal study of community-led learning facilitated by the group of universities that are using the GULL system. The team are exploring ways of supporting low-income communities as they initiate and lead their own self-help projects. This is a reversal of the traditional way of working with communities that in the past has tended to be university-led with university departments setting the agenda for development. A strand of the research involves developing, tracking and evaluating multiple second phase GULL system pilots in a variety of settings and locations to help develop a collaborative framework that other universities in South Africa and internationally could use. GULL includes its own award system and this is beneficial in the sense that it is separate from the host university's own academic award system. This implication of this is that a university can facilitate community-led learning that culminates in a GULL professional award without re-shaping its own well-established pathways to academic awards.

The South African research project is set in the context of community-based research (CBR)—a recognized form of research since the 1970s—though little development has occurred in terms of how the university approaches it. The reality is that research policies, procedures, rules and regulations are still written for university-led research, rather than being geared to enabling full engagement with community stakeholders. In short, the research and the knowledge generated mostly benefits the university. Although benefits to the community are explained in academic articles to justify the university's involvement, relatively little attention is given to sustainable learning in the community at the end of the project. In view of this, there is a need for a framework that facilitates public recognition of the learning and development of community partners—one that does not involve them having to enrol in a formal education programme that has cost implications and access requirements.

In summary, even though universities may want to be more actively involved in community development, strategies and frameworks on how to do this are lacking. I hope that the pilot extension and evaluation will enable Professor Wood's team to show how GULL's framework, structure and process can assist universities to partner meaningfully with community organizations in pursuit of sustainable, community-led development. This would: yield a practical option for developing the capacity of academics and community organizations to conduct CBR; allow for the

creation of partnerships that are based on mutual understandings of ethical conduct and processes; and officially certify the learning and development of community members.

7.10 Summary Points

1. In marginalized communities where school age children are under-achieving, it may be the case that their parents lacked educational opportunity and so they lack the confidence or the foresight to encourage their children. Our pilot work in Brisbane, Australia revealed that one solution is to facilitate personal and professional development for community leaders so that they can share the process with others.
2. South Africa's public universities are mandated and funded to work with under-privileged communities and the staff and many students involved in community engagement and service learning are dedicated and committed to this cause. Given this, the opportunity to use the GULL system has been embraced.
3. Piloting work with universities in South Africa and elsewhere shows that academic and community-focused learning systems can co-exist and because GULL has an independent mandate, it can sit alongside (and not in competition with) the host university's own academic systems, procedures and regulations.
4. GULL pilot outcomes to date show that university-led facilitation of the GULL system is both engaging and effective in enabling non-traditional forms of learning to flourish. Participants have in some cases made astonishing progress from difficult starting points (such as a shelter for homeless women) towards greater self-reliance and financial independence.

7.11 Implications

7.12 Q: How Could Universities Become More Inclusive Hubs for Academic and Community-Led Learning?

A: Our conversation has highlighted the fact that wider engagement and inclusion requires a different mindset and approach. As a former academic, I know from personal experience that it is difficult to challenge well-established approaches to curriculum design, delivery and assessment and so GULL's parallel system (or similar) is in my view, the easiest way to transition to a more inclusive hub for learning that embraces the very different world beyond the university campus, alongside traditional concepts and methods of learning and teaching. To conclude, I'd like to share some of GULL's key learning points about relevance, engagement and inclusion.

(1) **The learner generates their own curriculum**

There are many world locations where survival is a more pressing need than academic attainment and so GULL's approach draws on life and work experience to assist participants to become skilled, self-directed lifelong learners. This is our sole purpose—we do not offer courses or 'teach' subject specialisms and we do not issue subject-specific awards—except in carefully specified and documented circumstances. If it is to be relevant and useful, lifelong learning must reflect the unique needs and aspirations of each participant. This involves beginning and sustaining a journey to discover and make the fullest use of our human potential. To do this, participants must be able to chart their own journey by drafting and thereafter refining a personal plan for learning as they implement it. When GULL participants have taken stock and identified what they want and need to learn, they are able to use their work (paid or voluntary) and other activities as a vehicle for personal and professional development. To facilitate this, GULL provides a structure (or pathway) that enables organizations to easily connect work priorities and other development activities (such as training) with self-directed personal development.

In June 2021, I participated in a series of five virtual GULL celebration events in different American cities organized and hosted by a leading US food services company. The company began working with GULL in 2008 at the request of a divisional president who is passionate about retaining, developing and promoting from among the ranks of his lowest paid staff. Year and after year we hear astonishing stories of change from participants who had had little or no prior educational opportunity and felt 'stuck' in routine jobs. To facilitate personal growth, we developed a simple format that enables GULL participants to identify and then make changes in their own habits and behaviours and identify and deal with aspects of their own personality and life experience that might be holding them back. First, they identify and work on their own learning needs (via a personal plan for learning). Second, we introduce them to the cycle of learning using a diary format to assist with daily and weekly question-based reflection so that you can review and make improvements at home and work. Third, all GULL participants work with others, including a learning coach so that they have a 'sounding board' for the changes they want to make. Fourth, we want participants to develop the skills and confidence needed to use the cycle of learning to continue making changes in the future.

This approach is both challenging and rewarding as it enables participants to connect with and use latent abilities and re-kindle a curiosity for learning. Year on year participants say that they have become more self-confident and self-aware, that they are better organized and better able to manage their time and that they have learnt new skills like 'patience' and 'learning to listen to others'. Managers say that this helps them too and they enjoy coaching those who they feel have the desire and ability to advance—and they do—most participants assume an enhanced work role or a promotion as a result of their commitment to self-help. This action learning approach works equally well in the community and the workplace and for everyone—young or old—well educated or not—as long as we empower the learner to determine their own learning needs and aspirations.

(2) **Traditional knowledge is valuable—build on what communities know how to do**

Since its inception in 2007, GULL has supported community-led development in 17 African countries and I have visited many subsistence communities where people live without reliable sources of water and food and some with no power supply. In these places, I invariably meet kind, generous people who willingly share the food they have grown themselves with visitors like me. As I chat with them, it is evident that they do not have a materialistic mindset because they do not have Internet access and so they have not acquired a Western way of thinking. They do though have to confront poverty and their highest hope is that life could be more secure. In these settings, GULL works with local, national and international community-based organizations and other organized institutions such as the many African church denominations that are facilitating self-help in the community. Here, GULL's personal development approach helps participants to make full use of both individual skills and natural resources and coupled with community-based projects, I have often seen remarkable evidence of community-led development. Here is just one example: On the way to a GULL graduation event in Soroti, Uganda in 2012, we stopped to visit a community of several small villages that had dug six wells themselves—our visit took several hours because the community leaders wanted to show us every well. They took great pride in this project that had been entirely self-managed—with minimum outside technical assistance. A community member told us that life before the wells had been tough. They would walk long distances for water and adults would often go to bed feeling hungry, having ensured that the children had enough to eat. Now she said, 'Our lives are transformed—water security has enabled us to create fish ponds so that we have other sources of protein and can grow more food. We now have more than we need and we sell our surpluses so that we can buy clothing for our children and other necessities'.

(3) **Value practical learning and its application**

GULL's work in Papua New Guinea—where 80–90% of the population must earn a living from what they can make or grow themselves, centres on the concept of 'personal viability' (PV) which the local GULL team define as the ability to think and plan, set goals and achieve them on time and within budget. Participants begin with PV by playing reality games that enable them to acquire and develop a business-oriented mindset and the knowledge and skills needed to establish and run a successful micro enterprise. PV is based on the premise that participants can attain prosperity with their minds and are more likely to experience it in their lives if they can visualize it. As an enabling step, PV-GULL students are encouraged to adopt and practice the concept of adding value. Here participants aim to think and act in such a way that they add value to every individual they meet and every action they take. This approach to adding value is based on the daily use of four disciplines: productivity (use of time), economy (use of resources), law of success (service to others) and integrity. These disciplines are important because micro enterprise is demand-driven and to succeed, Papua New Guinean participants must transition from what

is characteristically a subsistence mindset to a more business-oriented mindset. In this context, participants must demonstrate that they have become self-reliant and financially independent by attaining verified bank savings targets before they receive their GULL certificate.

(4) **Encourage community-led learning—ask the community to gather its own evidence of impact**

Evidence of Impact (EoI) is an approach to understanding and managing the value of the outcomes (social, economic and environmental) created by GULL community participants. GULL's aim is to equip them (via a local partner agency) with its powerful self-help system. EoI principles include: involving stakeholders; valuing the things that matter by using financial proxies as indicators to estimate the contribution from GULL projects and verifying the outcomes with an appropriate independent assessment of the outcomes. The rationale for this is as follows: If low income and subsistence communities are not closely involved in tracking the evidence of their impact, how will they know that they have changed and developed the capacity to bring about change themselves? This is the most important function of GULL: it can—and should—serve as an enabler of self-directed change. Although participants begin with GULL because they want to be recognized for the work that they are doing, it is the collective impact of 100 s and even 1000 s of participants that make a difference. By involving them in decisions about how to track the evidence of impact, this can be accomplished and in so doing, it justifies the cost and effort involved in deploying the GULL system. To illustrate, here is a comment from a World Vision Kenya volunteer and GULL participant: 'We started with GULL in 2009 and we are working on a number of ongoing projects. These include education, health, sanitation and our continuing work to reduce the scale of female genital mutilation. Our GULL projects have enabled us to find and implement solutions to many of the issues that our communities face and because of this, we have grown in confidence and gained the experience needed to make a real difference. As an example of the kind of work we are doing in relation to food security, we have set-up greenhouses, we have beehives and we are producing our own dairy products.'

(5) **Public recognition and affirmation is important but don't confuse this with academic attainment**

There have been many GULL celebration events in African countries and speaking after the largest event to date, a representative of the organizing team offered this reflection: 'After graduation yesterday, I received a lot of responses from people who attended. They felt it was a unique occasion and it had encouraged them. It was a way of recognizing what they have done. Most of the people we have trained in church and community mobilization have had a major impact in their communities … they are so happy that they have been recognized and awarded certificates. This validates their efforts as they help people to overcome poverty … It was a wonderful time together'. This comment illustrates the importance of public recognition for GULL participants, almost all of whom have no other learning or development option available to them. Most say that they have unfulfilled educational aspirations and by

linking their community work with GULL, it is possible to meet these needs. I have felt encouraged by the willingness of GULL's South African university partners to organize graduation events for community participants on the campus and for encouraging them to wear traditional graduation attire. Everyone knows that we are celebrating personal, professional and practical attainments that are different from academic attainment but no less meaningful to the GULL students who have enabled and facilitated advances in their communities.

In summary, even though universities may want to be more actively involved in community development, strategies and frameworks on how to do this are lacking. I hope that the examples and ongoing CBR research that I have outlined, illustrate the ways in which GULL's framework, structure and process can enable universities to partner purposefully with community organizations in pursuit of self-directed sustainable development. This can: yield a practical option for developing the capacity of academics and community organizations to conduct CBR; allow for the creation of partnerships that are based on mutual understandings of ethical conduct and processes; and officially certify the learning and development of community members.

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Chapter 8
Indigenous Knowledge in Australia: Imagining a Different Society

David Davies and James Nyland

8.1 Introduction

Aboriginal people have been described as traumatised, dispossessed and corrupted by racism and contemporary welfare state dependency and this cannot just be ascribed to the history of colonial development (Pearson, 2009). There is a worldwide issue of the economic and cultural rights of indigenous people being extinguished. A clash of material and cultural interests, where one set seems intent on driving the other to extinction, seems unavoidable.

Richard Trudgen in his memorable book 'Why Warriors Lie Down and Die' (2000) states that the root cause of the 'diseases of development' for indigenous people is loss of control. Strategies can be developed to counter this, but it requires education and re-education focussed on many factors. The argument developed in this paper is that the modern world needs new knowledge that can build solidarity based on self-determination and self-esteem, which is rooted in the indigenous communities. It is knowledge and learning for all of us that will bring back control to indigenous people.

There is a knowledge issue that cuts both ways—to traditional and local 'cultural knowledge' and to the rational and 'scientific' westernised knowledge which 'universally' transforms, although in unequal ways, our economies and societies. Can traditional Aboriginal knowledge and culture, what we might call indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) respond to the forces of modernism and dynamic global capitalism which threaten to overwhelm it? A people who have persisted for some 60,000 years in the face of the harshest of challenging 'country' must have a great deal to teach us, including who we are. It is this indigenous knowledge, intimately connected to

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Aboriginal 'identity' which Australian society and Engagement Australia needs to re-assess.

8.2 Identity Questions as the Conjuncture

The current population of Australia is substantially mixed with black, white, Asian, European, Anglo-Celtic, Slavic and many other ethnic, racial and cultural groups having sought and been given the opportunity to forge a new and different life and identity from that of their origins. What cannot be denied is that, whether indigenous or migrant, each individual has various identities which are layered and imbricated. Group identity can form around characteristics such as ethnicity, age, geography, religion, place of birth and linguistic affiliation and individual identities around regional, professional, recreational and political affiliations. Some identities are shared with some members of a group and some are not. Different cultural markers such as dress, style, hair, music and language can signal an identity or belonging and can indicate the boundaries between different groups of people. Who we are or who we are seen to be matters enormously just as who we can be, the possibility of becoming someone else or something else, is often the reason we are forced to engage with change. What is noteworthy is the fact that if we reduce the complexity of identity to a single feature, we reduce its capacity to help us understand and to overcome the challenges of identity and the need to overcome the monocultural nativism which has impacted many nations across the world (Eatwell & Goodwin, 2018; Hall, 2017; Hughes, 1992; Pearson, 2009).

Yet as Noel Pearson states: "Australia is a country shared by two peoples" (ibid: 327). The non-indigenous and the indigenous are the two Australian peoples and they do not live in a united sovereign state in equality with each other. It is clear that within these two categories the indigenous peoples contain different 'nations' (that is, clusters of distinctive linguistic and cultural groups) and that the non-indigenous groups embrace many kinds of cultural and ethnic identities, reflecting their diverse origins outside Australia. The problem for indigenous people living in the advanced welfare state that is contemporary Australia is that there is no need to maintain the traditional economy and lifestyle. There has been a breakdown of the economic basis of Aboriginal society and its cultural forms. Traditional cultural forms and practices have become a matter of choice and are no longer an economic necessity, as passive welfare has undermined and corroded the traditional lifestyle.

We must therefore ask some difficult questions of ourselves: how did we get where we are and how do we understand this? How can we fully grasp the complexity of the ethnic, national and cultural diversity in which we now live? Which ideas are in use when we think about how our identities make us what we are? These are not just questions of geography and history but of identity and awareness (Jenkins, 2004). The maintenance of cultural identity by Australia's indigenous peoples through European colonisation, environmental challenges and post-colonial racism is a story of resilience against the odds. Josephine Flood calls it "one of the great human stories

of all time" (Flood, 2019: xi). Does this story not need to be told and re-told in the context of the very real demands of modernity and the future-facing needs of Australia itself? Is this not a key part of our sense of engagement that links our past with our common future?

Questions arise such as what will the future Australian identity be? How do people in a mixed and varied society with many different communities and ethnicities secure their common identity? There is no single or simple answer to these questions. Identity is immensely complex. The original Australians were possibly the most multilingual peoples in the world (Flood ibid: 172) and the sheer variety and abundance of traditions defy any easy description of people spread across an immense continental distance and landscapes of astonishing variety. Yet this society showed remarkably similar social and economic organisation everywhere across the land. After some 200 years and more contact with the incoming world, it faces a daunting challenge along with the remainder of a rapidly diversifying and modernistic Australia, which tells itself it is a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society with its own distinctive history and identity.

The implications, though not the details, are clear. There will be a new and radically changed sense of identity and belonging for Australians. Only a new 'conjuncture' (Hall, 2017) which recognises the plurality of our lives and identities (Sen, 2007) can radically re-order the actual and symbolic relations and hierarchies of these existing and emerging peoples. We do not want just a plurality of monocultures, existing side-by-side as it were as parallel lives, but we need a conjuncture where different cultures come together and interact. A monoculture has a single dominant affiliation and—whether that be religion or race or ethnic belonging—it cannot in itself and by itself reconcile diverse and layered identities which exist beyond it. Above all, for our questions about future identity, what role will the history and current state of the Aboriginal people play in the intended common future?

It is clear that without some reconciliation of the social and economic 'interests' of Aboriginal people with those of the broader Australian population there can be no resolution of the injustices planted historically and nurtured through the generations. Aboriginal people need jobs, careers, income and opportunities in their own communities as well as recognition of their culture. And we should not overlook a modest fact pointed out by Pearson (2009 ibid: 338)—some of the most interesting and valuable outcomes of our history and culture happen at the interface between cultures.

8.3 Frameworks for Understanding

Our concern with indigenous knowledge immediately encounters matters of ethnic, cultural and racial diversity. The Australian kaleidoscope of peoples is positively tangible but the encounter with how a peoples' knowledge and culture is treated by a majority with a predominantly different culture is problematic. One of the keys to unlocking the power of universities is through the application of critique

or frameworks for critical thinking. We have assumed, perhaps wrongly, that our western scientific knowledge corresponds to the world out there, yet the 'burning world' (Klein, 2019; Davies & Nyland, 2020) we have seen in Australia recently has forced us to re-assess the adequacy of our thinking and, importantly, our ideas about practical knowledge and the destruction of our environment. In this, we have much to learn from the Aboriginal culture and peoples.

One way to make sense of very complex and diverse subjects such as identity and consciousness and culture is to construct and apply what we can call 'frameworks'. These can be simple ways of ordering and recording experiences and sentiments (Doherty et al., 2009; Neitzel & Welzer, 2012; Outhwaite, 2016). Frameworks help us understand the taken-for-granted assumptions which lie behind our thinking and actions. These frameworks are of course a version of the 'paradigms' and paradigm shifts that track the growth of and inform the analysis of new social knowledge (Seidman, 1998: 253). Roger Hart in his ground-breaking work on environmental development offers us a choice of growth-centred and people-centred models (Hart, 1997: 7) with which to analyse key assumptions we make about community and environmental development. Drawing on these sources and insights, we anticipate the frameworks provided below can yield some sense of how the social backdrop through globalisation and industrial growth impacts local and people-centred communities possessing their own knowledge systems.

Industrial/scientific growth	People-centred/indigenous knowledge systems (IKS)
Knowledge is formal and recorded with limited access to it	The earth's resources are finite and there are limits to how people can enhance them
Knowledge belongs to those with qualifications	Those who control resources also control power
Almost all products can be bought and sold in the market	The needs of the poor and communities are recognised
Sustainability is about ever-increasing growth of economic capacities	Inclusive and socially just communities are essential to an inclusive global system
Economic and social interests drive progress and development	Security and identity are vital for families and communities
The earth's physical resources are inexhaustible	Culture is performed
Western science and industry will provide ever new possibilities for growth	Oral traditions are valued
Waste and destruction can be absorbed indefinitely	Knowledge of the environment is key to producing a livelihood
Consumerist norms rule our desires—poverty is only adequate growth	Control of resources is done locally
The liberal market economy can drive growth and living standards	Economic interests and identities are reconciled

Noel Pearson (ibid: 325) evokes this second level or framework through the term 'peoplehood' and he asserts that it is an intermediate level of social organisation that

is positioned between close-knit units such as family and kinship groups and the universalism which underpins the identity people find with, for example, ethnic or religious groups. We can also contrast the peoplehood dimension of local communities with the universalism of a global community that might claim, for example, universal human rights or be a global universal community of internet users. These frameworks of understanding also shape our view of our own history. To gain the clearest view we suggest there is a need to re-negotiate our history and biographies in the light of the possibilities offered in both the people-centred and the scientific frameworks. For universities, this may mean a critical revision of conceptions of learning is needed and the creation of a more creative and diverse higher education curriculum (Davies & Nyland, 2018).

8.4 The Original Australians and the Contemporary World

8.4.1 First Contact: Worlds Apart

The first recorded contacts between Europeans and mainland Aborigines in the closing years of the seventeenth century exposed a "chasm of misunderstandings" (Flood ibid: 7). Aboriginal men did not carry burdens and would not work for the explorers while women carried household items and small children when moving camp. Selling their labour had no part in Aboriginal life. Cultural life was conservative for the vast majority of Aboriginal people. Arnhem Land stands out as a major exception where cultural adoption and extensive trading by the Yolngu people with the outside world took place.

8.5 Cultural Conservatism and Change

Traditional Australian art and culture are largely unchanged from the ice age and its patterns of life were exceptionally successful in sustaining life over at least a 60,000-year period. Pascoe (2018: 41) goes even further than this and supports a contention of 80,000 years and more as the exceptional period of settlement of Aboriginal Australians. This would suggest that Australia was populated some 10,000 years before the 'Out of Africa' theory states that modern humans began to leave Africa to populate the globe. What cannot be contested is the immense periods of time indigenous people occupied the continent and the relative isolation from other groups of peoples and their cultures. Mainland Australia saw no major innovations such as pottery production or use of metals and while non-indigenous people tend to see this as stagnation or backwardness, Aboriginal people disagree and are proud of their conservatism and the longevity and unchanging character of their spiritual beliefs and cultural, social and economic practices. They have the oldest enduring religion

and the most ancient living culture; it is essentially unchanged says Flood (ibid: 31) since its beginnings in dreaming. In 1788 at the First Fleet point of contact with the British, this was a low-density population estimated at perhaps 0.5 million people in a landmass the size of the continental United States. The frontier conflicts and new diseases reduced the Aboriginal population to an estimated 60,000 by 1921. Australia was the last inhabited continent to be colonised and its people were regarded as being nomads with stone-age material culture and primitive 'nakedness'. The uncultivated and seemingly infinite supply of land was seen to be ownerless and could be legally colonised without a treaty with the inhabitants.

This then is the historical context for our current debate—profoundly different conceptions of what life means and deep, existential differences between peoples and their cultures. Britain's own sense of its historic destiny and role would shape white Australian sensibilities for generations to come. These were focussed on mono-ethnic and racialised conceptions of what 'civilised' people were and on the eradication of the 'barbarism 'of colonised people (Hall, 2017). A sense of innate superiority was the lens through which the early British encountered what they wished to believe was a nearly empty land. Most did not consider the evidence of an existing economy and society because they knew that it was about to be replaced by one they knew through their ideology of race and destiny to be superior in every respect.

This is not to argue that this process was uncontested by First Peoples themselves (Pascoe ibid: 8–9) or that evil simply dwelt in the hearts of all those who successfully colonised and controlled the land and resources. Frontier encounters rarely took place across clear boundaries and the scope for misunderstanding on both sides was great, but as Jones (2018: 4) argues: "Europeans were rarely on the Aboriginal frontier for philanthropic purposes." That a bloody attempt at ethnic cleansing and extermination occurred at times and places cannot be denied and its repercussions carry on with us to this day. Yet paradoxically, according to Flood (ibid: 49) there was a desire for peaceful co-existence and reconciliation in race relations in Australia going back to the very beginning of colonisation.

If the physical colonisation of the land and resources was contested, so too is the historical story of just how Aboriginal peoples existed in the landscape and how they organised their economic and social life. For example, the absence of widespread cultivation of crops and domestication of farm animals in traditional First Peoples' cultures was viewed as evidence of the lack of engagement in complex agriculture (Gammage, 2012). This viewpoint and the misunderstandings around it are today seriously and vigorously contested. The whole subject deserves specific treatment since it lies at the heart of colonial exploitation of the land and the later justifications of unequal treatment of First Peoples. The expropriation of land rights and ownership and the diminution of indigenous resources and culture which accompanied this process is central to the story of modern Australia. The notion that Aboriginal people were simply hunter gathers gained traction. Yet there is evidence that wild seeds and grains were extensively propagated, cultivated, harvested, stored and traded by Aboriginal people and that prior to colonisation extensive and sophisticated agriculture was present with food surpluses being produced—normally a characteristic

of sedentary agriculture (Pascoe, 2018: 32). However, the onset of western agricultural methods and practices eradicated local traditions and dispossession of the knowledge of local grain production and the food sources associated with them went side-by-side with the wider dispossession led by a people with a burning desire to acquire land and possessing modern weaponry, advanced technology and metallurgy and organisational skills.

We appear to be confronted by contrasting, not-to-say contradictory views on life at the dawn of the new reality of invasion and colonisation. It may well be the case that that pre-colonial Australia was neither a paradise nor utopia. According to Flood frequent starvation, hunger and exposure were characteristic of First Peoples' lives. Furthermore, violence and cruelty by native men against women and children were considered shocking by the first colonists. The Australia the British began to discover two hundred years ago had a culture which in their judgementally harsh terms was only on a downward trajectory. Yet, it has been noted that Australia was a remarkably homogenous society for a continent with such a variety of environments. Basic social and economic organisation was everywhere the same, states Josephine Flood (ibid 2019: 202). 2000 generations saw little change in the hunter-gatherer way of life. Ultimately though there was conflict over land and its use and a cultural chasm between peoples. Georgian Britain and Aboriginal Australia were worlds apart. The indigenous people would not be allowed to stand in the way of 'progress'; interests and identities were in conflict right from the beginning.

8.6 Questions of Land: The Making and Meaning of the Landscape

Gammage (2012) in his immensely detailed study argues that native Australians used fire to create the landscape that the 1788 incomers saw and took to be a natural phenomenon. He states: "Comparing forests in 1788, 1900 and 2000 would show a tree kaleidoscope, never the same." He goes on to say: "Across Australia, newcomers saw grass where trees are now and open forest free of undergrowth now dense scrub." (ibid: 6) Over tens of thousands of years generations of indigenous people all over Australia and Tasmania created grassland, woodlands, rain and eucalypt forests. He suggests, for example: "To convert eucalypts to grass, people had to let fuel build up so fires could run, but burn often enough to kill seedlings and maintain this over many generations until the old trees died. Burning most eucalypts every 2–4 years would in time make grassland while burning a little less often would let some saplings survive and create open woodland." This was a complex and sophisticated system of managing the environment. The extent and variety of the landscape with its open grasslands, differing woodlands and variety of plant life was the result of the application of different fire regimes requiring great complexity because many plants need particular and distinct types of fire applied at the right time in the year and with the right frequency and intensity. And this was more than using fire to help plants

thrive. Gammage suggests that early settlers were struck by the aesthetic qualities of some landscapes which clearly reminded them of desirable and perhaps idealised landscapes at home. They found: "Trees planted as if for ornament, alternating wood and grass, a gentleman's park, an inhabited and improved country, a civilised land … Much of Australia was like this in 1788. After 'bush', the most common word newcomers used about Australia was 'park'." (Gammage ibid: 14).

Extensive tracts of parkland were common and widely distributed at the start of the colonial period and few if any of the colonisers thought such a landscape could have been produced by the native people. To have given credence to such a belief would have been to recognise qualities in the indigenous populations that were not commensurate with the Europeans' desire to acquire land and resources. Gammage states that it seemed preposterous to the Europeans that Aborigines might have created a landscape suited to 'gentry' rather than to shiftless wanderers who seemed to have no definite claim to ownership of the land (as viewed through a Eurocentric lens belonging to land hunters and land grabbers). The newcomers had no use for a people and culture which wanted the world to be left as it was. As they saw it, the indigenous people: "… bestowed no labour upon the land and that—and that only—it is which gives a right of property to it" (Sydney Herald 1838 in Gammage ibid: 309).

The perception by the incomers that nothing could be learned from a people who were perceived to be peripatetic hunters and gatherers with a low level of material culture served the material interests behind the desire to possess land that could be seen as unused and empty of agricultural produce. This was in spite of the evidence, which according to Pascoe (ibid: 42) had the incomers wished to see it, would have shown the Aborigines producing grain and yam harvests and engaging in sedentary agriculture—one of the key indicators for the production of surpluses and the growth of civilised life. Of course, the Aboriginals' 'sedentary' practices were a form of sedentism not 'seen' or recognised by the settlers. Crops could be planted and seeds sown and left until harvest time with no fear of interference by surrounding clans since spiritual sanctions would be applied to transgressors. People did not need to stay with the crops to protect them and this allowed greater freedom to travel and participate in cultural rituals and activities.

This is not such an uncommon feature of indigenous agricultural life in other parts of the world. Around the year AD 1000 indigenous North American Indians in the area between what is now Lake Ontario to Pennsylvania and the Atlantic coast planted maize in the Spring and returned to harvest it in the Autumn. They moved on circuits harvesting plants and hunting wild animals and have been called "mobile farmers" (Hansen, 2020: 60). The European settlers could not see mobile farmers in Australia and could not adapt their own perceptions to those of the already settled people. Neither could they adopt the advanced knowledge and 'technology' embedded in Aboriginal practice; the cultural distance was too great. A contrasting example may help illuminate the point. In the early fourteenth century, the Norse/Scandinavian settlers in Greenland who had been there for approximately 400 years began to abandon their settlements, as they had done earlier in continental North America.

Climate changes at this time seem to indicate a less favourable and cooling environment for the Norse people, whereas incoming Thule people from Northern Greenland and indigenous Inuit groups from Alaska were better adapted to this and were actually moving into this land. The native communities possessed multiple technologies, skills and knowledge that the Norse never adopted which meant they could thrive in inhospitable conditions. The Thule used specialised harpoon techniques for hunting whales and seals; the Inuit knew how to hunt seals through ice holes in winter, a crucial skill that eluded the Norse and provided food throughout the winter season. Drag floats were used by inflating sewn-up seal skins allowing the Innuit to hunt large sea mammals such as whales and to track them until the animal died and could be retrieved (Hansen ibid: 48).

If cultures are fundamentally opposed and foreign to each other as they were at the foundation of modern Australia, we can see the difficulty of learning from the other side even when there are demonstrably useful and life-enhancing skills and knowledge to be gained. The problem was not a technical one of acquiring useful knowledge, but rather one of Europeans perceiving the 'other', the native, the black Australian as 'beyond the pale' and outside the boundary of civilised community. A cultural perception infused naturally enough with the values of the era which valourised conquest and power and relied on force and weaponry to enforce compliance on the one hand and on the power of amelioration of Christian belief in the sanctity of human life for God on the other.

Over some two centuries, the indigenous 'parks' in Australia have disappeared and generations of over-grazing have transformed traditional agricultural and hunting areas. After 1788, controlled fire stopped and in modern times bushfires, naturally occurring, devastate large areas and have catastrophic impacts on species that flourished in the millennia of Aboriginal burning. Modern agriculture and settlement have their own impact and contribute to the immense changes to plants, animals and land ecology. Some of this impact can be seen in the mammal extinctions in Australia since colonisation. Some 23 species have become extinct and since about 1940 almost a third of world mammal extinctions have been in Australia (Gammage ibid: 17). Australia has become a world leader in animal and plant extinctions says Gammage (ibid: 320) and this reflects how venerable and 'vital' the literally unnatural, human-made and cultivated use of fire in 1788 was for the construction of a landscape and ecology suitable for human and natural life.

There is powerful evidence that up to 1788, Australia was a 'curated' and created land whose people ensured its resources were used to sustain a viable and valued way of life and culture. That all of this was not commensurate with resolute and expansionist colonialism and imperialism that was to dominate world development and shape all nations, was the vital problem. The land and its management was of course a key economic concern for First Peoples but in the way in which it was managed it also embodied some key principles which have been brilliantly summarised: "Think long term; leave the world as it is; think globally, act locally; ally with fire; control population. (Aboriginal people) were active, not passive, striving for balance and continuity to make all life abundant, convenient and predictable.

They put the mark of humanity on every place … This is possession in its most fundamental sense" (Gammage ibid: 323).

8.7 Aboriginal Knowledge: How We Think About the Issues

The question arises then of how the world's most simple technology, though applied in sophisticated ways to land use, allied to a narrow range of foods eaten and the world's longest isolation from other societies and cultures, shaped and impacted the minds and consciousness of the Aboriginal peoples? What kind of intellectual and thinking powers could be exercised and developed in such an environment and how did they find expression? What was the dynamic of Aboriginal society which could take it beyond subsisting, conserving and surviving into developing and re-shaping the environment, in which many if not most human societies were engaged? (Jones, 2018).

We have already seen that the indigenous people were not akin to the European notion of 'peasantry' where whole sets of social gradations and hierarchies were tied to the land and its types of ownership and obligations. The land in Australia was not owned by those who lived on it and passed through it. In the same way and in some senses the Aborigines saw themselves as 'gentry' with access to the land as and when they needed it and having time for 'leisure' or recreation in their cultural and spiritual life and practices. We could argue that up to the point of conjunction and contact with the incomers they produced knowledge and religion which was fully commensurate with their age-old ways of living and being. There is no doubt they favoured a lifestyle that was anathema to most of the colonisers who brought with them not only technically superior weapons and tools, but a fundamentally different way of thinking. The assumptions of the British settlers who brought with them the widespread belief in a racial hierarchy plus the belief they were taking an unclaimed and non-owned wilderness from an uncivilised native population led to what can only be called a catastrophe for the indigenous way of life. The native people were equated with savagery and categorised within racialised thinking as inferior by the Europeans, whereas in the indigenous tradition of the 'Dreaming' each person and everything had a place and a right to exist.

The oral tradition is a noteworthy feature of Aboriginal society and enabled the history, legends and myths to be transmitted across the generations. The famous 'songlines' or dreaming tracks indicated the way Ancestral Beings sang as they formed the land. The songlines have been said to be the means of acquiring mental maps of the country and some are verbal and mental epics, knowledge of which can confer great prestige and power and are things of great age and beauty (Chatwin, 1987). Aboriginal stories and songs can have both secular and spiritual meanings and progression from one to another (Flood ibid: 169). This verbal tradition conveys moral, spiritual and secular beliefs and codes of behaviour and can be part of the

performed rituals of the community, including musical events. All of these enactments help a society confirm its rituals and affirm its sense of collective being and consciousness. This consciousness is not simply fixed and historical in past time as it were, but it remains as a current and deeply relevant contemporary way of thinking and being, even when disrupted and fragmented by the internal diasporas such as that described by Roger Hart in his 'Old Man Fog' stories of Barrow Point in Northern Queensland (Haviland & Hart, 1998). In spite of being geographically and socially separated from his local community ("mob") since childhood and its language for decades, he remembered the language, culture and stories so that his social universe could be reconstructed. In its telling of the mischievous stories of Wurrbal—Old Man Fog—the narrative reveals the "… massive and pervasive intervention in Aboriginal life—one could almost say its deliberate dismantling—by European society in the first half and particularly the first 25 years of this (21st) century and … a special dilemma of identity…" (Haviland and Hart ibid: xviii).

The need to make sense of Aboriginal identities, which had been scattered and dislocated, may have been suppressed for generations but it was not eradicated. Though impacted by many factors, some structural and some contingent, including missionaries, the churches, race and racialisation, traditional law, territory, land, ownership and modernity, the stories about Old Man Fog can be said to be the intellectual property of the Barrow Point people today. The stories define who a person was and is today, even though the links in kinship and family chains have in many cases been broken over the generations. They are stories about the last days of the bush people but are coterminously about who and what people are here and now. They are not just about individuals but stand for a whole chain of equivalences and other people in the social universe of the community including its location in a particular geographical place. A person belonged to places, to languages, to stories and to other people in his/her clan. Talk in the distinctive but related local languages about all of this was the idiom in which social recognition took place and which expressed social cohesion and belonging, even when this might be conflictual between and within clan groups and 'mobs'. (Haviland and Hart ibid: 48).

8.8 Language and Loss

Indigenous knowledge and culture were of course expressed through and were coterminous with spoken languages, many of which have been lost and extinguished. This can be described as a type of unhealing trauma where loss of language signifies the simultaneous loss of people and of identity. Australia's native people encountered their loss over a long period when public policy favoured dispossession, attempted assimilation and in some cases homicidal extermination. The private sense of loss felt by the native Australians should have been understandable to many of the incoming migrants in the nineteenth century at least, as significant numbers of migrants, some forced and some willing, came from the Celtic parts of Britain and Ireland, parts of

which had been colonised, ethnically cleansed and linguistically extinguished themselves (Brody, 1973; Friel, 1980; Keneally, 1998; Prebble, 1963). The aching sense of loss of place, land, family and identity is a well-known feature of many of the displaced groups who came to Australia. But recognition of the grief and pain of others in the colonial enterprise was not generally the case by any means. The loss of language can be described as a form of 'grief' which can be experienced as ongoing and perpetual as it moves down through the succeeding generations hand-in-hand with social injustice and racism against black Australians. If we ask the question: what is knowledge for an indigenous person, the answer may be that it is the things they know and which are part of their practice of living, which includes its expression in the local language(s). It is the practice of culture through the living language that creates and distributes the personal and social value that is formed when people tell stories, dance, sing, write their histories and extend their imaginations. This creates the possibility of an exchange of different knowledge systems where spaces are made for different experiences and cultural practices. This conception of knowledge in effect can constitute a claim on language, culture and land and can be of central importance in modern Australia as indigenous people seek a fairer and socially just future.

There is then an articulated but historically disrupted complex and multi-faceted 'knowledge' which traditional Aboriginal people possess. It consists of a diverse and complex set of 'pathways' of learning and experience that cannot be acquired through book learning or via simple instruction. It has to be lived within its appropriate context. It involves economic, spiritual, ecological and cultural knowledge(s). It endows, we can argue, the person who acquires it as an 'epistemological subject'. This means Aboriginal people may possess intrinsically a shared sense of cultural worth which could not possibly have been recognised by those involved in colonising the land 200 years ago but in today's world should be recognised. Perhaps this could be encoded in the principle of 'co-creation' where learners can see themselves in the curriculum of the school, the college and the university. There are profound implications for how we construct the curriculum in such an approach and in how we conceive and think about knowledge and who possesses such knowledge (Nyland & Davies, 2017).

8.9 Knowledge, Nature, Culture and Identity

It is perhaps in its relation to the natural world and to an ecological consciousness of nature that something we can recognisably call Aboriginal knowledge of country that the breakthrough to more general awareness can be forged. In today's world, the alienation from nature and the climate crisis affecting the whole world means that the ecological crisis is at the same moment also a crisis of culture and knowledge.

Our capacity to remake human nature and society in the modern epoch through technological development and progress has perhaps blinded us to the idea that some peoples refuse the offer, as it were. The blandishments of modernity are refused, even

if that refusal is played out in terms of passive acceptance and obeisance to higher and more powerful authority in order to survive and protect as best it can what it values most. This is an issue not just about how people may or may not be incorporated into a burgeoning labour market or whether they successfully internalise the consumerist norms of liberal-democratic life within the westernised forms of advanced and globalised capitalism, important though these are (Mason, 2016). It is an issue about the broader themes of culture and identity. Put very simply, who we are and who we shall become is only partly a matter of economics. The Aboriginal peoples may indeed have refused to develop their individual and economic self-interests in favour of what Jenkins (2004: 177) has called: "… the imperative authenticity of individual and collective identity".

This particular crisis of culture may then not devolve onto a debate as to whether Aboriginal people can or can't accept industrial work discipline or whether they internalise the need to succeed in the ever more competitive labour market, or whether their child-rearing practices conform to the western health models. The crisis may in fact address whether the dominant society has in fact the imagination to envisage a more diverse, less acquisitive and more morally sustainable society where difference does not require one culture to remake human nature and social behaviour in its own image.

Weber (1976: 181) wrote of the 'iron cage' of modern life and the demand for rational conduct and bureaucratic organisation of social life in which the concern for material goods diminishes the human spirit. However, this iron cage is also manufactured by the society we inhabit; it is not God-given and inexorable and it can be challenged and changed. Rustin (2020) has suggested, for example, human fulfilment can be found in art and creativity and that perhaps these activities can help replace our dependency on destructive and consumerist habits embedded in our understanding of rationality and modernity (Habermas, 1972).

What is needed is a broader concept of human and social flourishing where things other than carbon consuming energy is required. Aboriginal cultures and values within what can be called an 'indigenous knowledge systems model' (IKS), which is being suggested in this paper, may in fact provide examples and models for such thinking (IPA, 2020). Culture is a key here since it is 'enacted' and performed and lived by those who subscribe to it. It is not imposed or enforced and it finds expression in spoken tradition, singing, music, art and performance. For all of these aspects of culture, the First Peoples offer a rich heritage for all Australians since this is a type of social knowledge that is of immense value to all.

8.10 What Kind of Social Knowledge is Needed Now?

There is initially the question of how to understand history given that Aboriginal history is oral history and that written history is generally given more credence as a demonstration of knowledge of what has happened. Some Aboriginal stories of historical events are clearly parables, not meant to be taken literally. John F.

Kennedy's apocryphal visit to Central Australia, for example, has been told by Gurindji people as the start of the land rights movement in 1966, yet Kennedy never visited Central Australia (Flood ibid: 137). The story signifies the importance of international support for indigenous peoples' land rights. The telling of the 'true' story, especially by those who experienced it, becomes itself part of the restitution and re-assertion of rights and claims (Trudgen, 2000). It is also no accident that the uniqueness of indigenous people and their knowledge is inextricably connected to their claim on land.

Change requires a material difference to be made so that false promises and prospectuses can be avoided in favour of measurable and determinate outcomes, which show progress for First Peoples in all aspects of Australian public life, including private and public employment. There should be recognition that collective action to tackle marginalisation, institutionalised and personalised discrimination and the lack of awareness requires the independent mobilisation of indigenous peoples' organisations. Such organisations should embrace the possibility of emerging Australian identities which are inclusive and specifically designed not to be exclusionary.

We need also to be aware that the history of the interface between indigenous peoples and 'mainstream' Australians was an interface between black people and an economically and culturally predominant white society. In the post-World War II period, this relationship has been impacted by major changes in social policy and by the upsurge in liberalised and globalised economic growth. Major shifts in immigration policy and objectives have occurred, not without contention and strife. Our generic understanding of immigration (Collier, 2014; Shah, 2020) must shape our response in this period so that our social analysis is part of the struggle for racial equality and social justice across the wide Australian canvass. We cannot paint a narrow picture and hope to capture the broad perspective, let alone those things that are below the horizon.

8.11 Contexts for Knowing: Environment and Human Development

Questions of education and knowledge always raise issues of self-empowerment and this requires knowledge of the communities at issue and the recognition that their own sense of knowledge is a key resource. There is also, as Pascoe (ibid: 96) rightly asserts, a desperate need for a revision of Aboriginal history which has been denied agency and effectiveness. This was especially the case historically and persists up to this day, for example in the way in which Aboriginal life was characterised as being a 'hunter and gatherer' culture. As such it could be viewed as having had little capacity for sustainable agriculture which itself was said to indicate a failure to generate surpluses and failure to create what Europeans took to be a recognisable civilisation. Yet knowledge and how it is conceptualised is deeply problematic and

Aboriginal knowledge did not recognise (how could it?) the strategic goals of those who came to change everything. The inadequacies of local, indigenous knowledge and its relative 'powerlessness' in the face of western 'scientific' knowledge and the systems of knowledge as well as mass communications brought by modernism and globalisation should be recognised for what it was and not for what it wasn't. This is an extremely difficult problem both historically and in contemporary discourse! The social and economic purposes of colonialism spoke, however unfairly, to the emerging future of imperialism and later globalisation. Destructive reconstruction became the order of the day and an unstoppable force for change and it set the terms for its own self-understanding through its adherence to the values of patriarchalism, racism and imperialism. This was not an issue limited to Australia and its indigenous people. Their encounter with the forces of modernity in 1788 was one instance of a truly global expansion involving many imperialist nations and the subjugation of native peoples the world over. Few were able to successfully resist or repel these forces. The alternatives were only to emerge in succeeding centuries.

Amidst the many possibilities which may be liberated by understanding the origins of the present situation, one thing though is clear: Aboriginal people cannot have a viable and 'opportunity' future which positions them as receiving only services and income from the government. They have what Noel Pearson called 'the right to take responsibility'. People are not clients but are active agents in their own fate and future. How families and communities are organised and experienced is crucial to having a sense of future prospects.

This is perhaps the point at which concern with the actual and natural environment of place collides with that of the human environment. Both are concerned with the physical environment but often have little to do with one another (Hart, 1997: 4). The integration of environmental issues with issues of human survival and development—employment, education, health and nutrition—has only begun recently but is a key theme in imagining a different future.

What is needed is practical agency and the capacity to be productive. Engagement is surely the way forward while the challenge is to negotiate rights and progress without losing ground and damaging future prospects "… in a struggle which has incrementally advanced and whose destination is still far away" (Pearson ibid: 40). Collier (2020) has recently argued: "To be productive, jobs need to be brought to the places where people belong and their populations trained in the skills that enable them to do those jobs … Community begins with locality; most people have a strong sense of attachment to place." This is the context for a reassessment of what we take to be knowledge and in the context of Aboriginal people, this translates as practical knowledge, rooted in experience and which speaks to their social and emotional life as much as to their economic opportunities. In relation to the land as the key source of sustenance and identity, what was possible in the past may serve as a guide to future possibilities.

8.12 Re-assessing Practical Knowledge

There are some key aspects of learning and action in which Aboriginal knowledge offers deep and significant insight. Certainly, the capacity for curating and subsisting in a harsh environment for tens of thousands of years is a testament to the Aboriginal capacity for understanding and experimenting on social reality. They knew what worked in practice to survive and develop a complex and viable culture. Grain production, fishing systems and tuber harvesting were ubiquitous across Australia and provided the economic and material basis for viable societies and cultures.

Aboriginal people also developed what can be called empirical, pragmatic, tacit and personal knowledge (Jarvis, 1994; Polanyi, 1967, 1974) where people acted almost always on the probability that the action will achieve the desired results. If something didn't work, it was abandoned.

Skill was developed as part of practical knowledge, though articulating that skill was surrounded by social taboos, myths and social mores within the tribal or linguistic community. In modern times, much of the knowledge acquired over millennia of how to live in and with the Australian landscape in sustainable ways has been suppressed and/or ignored. The knowledge was there but was not able to be 'performed'. Performing and demonstrating knowledge has been diminished but not lost. Our question is: how can it be revivified in today's crisis?! That the environment and land were there to be developed, exploited, managed and controlled or tamed was once taken for granted by the dominant culture but is now open to severe criticism. Living in harmony and sustainability with a fragile landscape and ecology may require a different knowledge base and mental set—a model framework for which is the Aboriginal community who have retained their knowledge and skills of their 'country'. One example is the contemporary use of indigenous grains and seed harvests to produce bread and flour. In East Gippsland in Victoria, local mandadyan nalluk—translated from Yuin the original language of the local country as 'dancing grass'—is harvested in the traditional Aboriginal way to make bread and find a ready market from bakers and restaurateurs. The original caretakers of the land knew the value of the perennial crops and derived sustenance from what is considered to be degraded or marginal land. Attempts are now being made to resurrect this knowledge and practice. One such person commented: "There's nothing new about it at all, but we ignored it. We turned our back on anything of Aboriginal provenance, such as our sensitivity to the history of the country. It's time to embrace the history of the country and with that, we will be able to embrace its food" (Allam & Moore, 2020).

8.13 Indigenous People and Learning: Are the Paradigms Beginning to Shift?

We are faced with questions that may appear naïve, but which in reality are complex and contested and involve a long historical time span and which ought to serve to refocus our attention and imaginations. Such questions include: who in our educational system is responsible for all children's futures and their identities as Australians? What is to be done for the future when people in Australia are all living in a multiethnic society and where 'race' and identity is often still ignored by schooling and education? This means a fundamental issue about critical thinking is raised. If we need pragmatic knowledge related to indigenous people and their experience, then the criteria for constructive critique must lie in the practicality and usefulness of that knowledge. To evaluate this, we need curricula which allow for critical debate and the opportunity given to practice that knowledge. In the context we have outlined above, the need for recognition of Aboriginal life and experience to be seen as really useful knowledge must not be separated from questions of culture and identity. This has significance for all Australians.

In asking ourselves what can be learned through recognising indigenous knowledge systems and culture we have already encountered the importance of sustainable development. But this should mean sustainability that offers the eradication of poverty and marginalisation of indigenous people while simultaneously rescuing the planet from its degradation, which impacts upon everyone. What we can learn from indigenous people is how to manage a challenging physical environment and how people's relationship to nature is the greatest issue facing the world at this time.

What can be asserted is the fundamental importance of the environment to any other kind of sustainability: social, cultural or other uses to which the term is put. This means that maintaining growth for liberal market economies is not what we necessarily want for sustainability; what we cannot live without is ecological integrity. Within this framework, we can argue that indigenous knowledge systems show us how to care for nature and the environment for its own sake—because it is all we have in one sense. Once destroyed, it cannot be simply re-made. Indigenous knowledge indicates to us that a people-centred vision of development could merge with sustainable issues of social justice and fairness, rooted in local and economically viable self-sustaining communities. When people control their own resources locally and have agency over their own lives and that of their families and children, they are more likely to exercise responsible custodianship and care.

In discussing a vision of improvement, there is always the danger of inserting a naïve 'possibilitarian-ism' into our thinking. Economic and political power are closely linked and having one usually increases the holder's ability to exercise the other. Pearson (2009) has argued that indigenous people are searching for a place in mainstream society that no longer exists. Education for many Aborigines, he asserts, is not held to be socially valuable and yet cultural loss is still proceeding and no community can afford to stand still in the face of its own disintegration. The answer he asserts is in rejecting a passive welfare economy of dependency and in struggling

for independence and autonomy for indigenous people. This is a knowledge and learning issue because the struggle for rights and social justice and what Pearson insists is the right to 'responsibility', is a matter of building consciousness and self-awareness of identity, culture and material interests focussed on the collective sense of belonging. This is the imagined future and must impact everyone in the wider community that makes up a nation.

The shifting paradigm that hopefully is forcing us to re-think the nature and importance of local and indigenous knowledge also may drive us to consider the type of thinking we need to bring to bear on experience. If we are to have knowledge and a curriculum in higher education that advocates social justice and creative responses to the barrenness of past learning about the encounter of indigenous peoples with the settler society then we need a new curricular and pedagogical approach that comes to authentic terms with the past.

We need a clear eyed view of Australia's past and present not least because the dilemmas of belonging and rejection continue to reverberate down through history and face the present with an unresolved problem. How to re-insert the invisible and marginalised people back into the story of the nation so that their history is told and their present and future is re-cast in a different mould? How to present in a more considered light the Anglo-Celtic male interests which have had a hegemonic influence on the collective imagination? There is no singular way or method of doing this and of course, there is no singular group of people who can be the new subjects of this revised discourse and dialogue. Aboriginal people will be joined by the previously undisclosed voices of women who had not fully spoken in the colonial period. Uncomfortable spaces will be discovered as key episodes in Australian history are recovered from the silences of the past. There will be challenges to the 'Aussie battler' figure in the heroic parched outback as the realities of colonial contact, ethnic migration and encounters are told and the true costs and accounts of the emergence of the nation are put under scrutiny (Kossew, 2010: xix-xx).

Throughout this volume, we have attempted to stress the value of standing outside and beyond some of the conventional boundaries of scholarship in order to view the possibilities of an improved curriculum offer. Imagining a different society through the validation of indigenous knowledge. We have indicated some possible departure points or sources for this but it would be remiss not to mention the role and potential of creative literature, art and music. Indigenous people in Australia have an abundance of creative capacity as we have indicated and this is a source of living creativity and self-expression. There is clearly here a route through which people can overrun restrictive boundaries. Here, in addition, is a rich heritage of Australian imaginative literature which creates creative/imaginative dialogue and discourse about the realities of life where boundaries need to be crossed. The works of Thomas Keneally and Kate Grenville are two such writers of world-ranking repute, examples of many whose work creates space for human agency and resistance to the forces that oppress us in social life and the lived space of 'country', yet provide us with future hope. In writers such as these, we can venture with imaginative yet 'real' characters into the dark places of our society and re-tell the stories that have shaped our forms of national consciousness. We may find an alternative and even better selves which would bode

well for the future. There is, we are suggesting, the real possibility of productive exchanges between those who write history and social science and those who write creative fiction. This is an agenda for education and for curriculum renewal in higher education and in fact for all education. In the telling of stories, we can bring to light the history and reality of Aboriginal dispossession yet we can also marry the lived experience with analytical and interpretive accounts which arm and equip us for the future. A future that includes intellectual and learning challenges for all the protagonists in this particular narrative and which are liable to be even greater than those of the past.

The theme of engagement runs through this book and this particular chapter we hope to have shed some small amount of light on issues around what we have termed Aboriginal knowledge but know to be about universal knowledge, embodied in a culture which is due recognition for the future of its wider and developing Australian society in particular, but which is of huge human interest worldwide.

People who work in and across universities in mainstream Australia and even those committed to engagement, cannot be expected to be experts in the social anthropology of Australian peoples and communities and this also applies here to the present authors. However, learning as a universal human quality and therefore what we understand as knowledge must play a role in the solution to the questions infusing identity and interests. It is time to re-assess our views of what knowledge is and does. There must be created a place that truly exists, where knowledge and culture can be sustained and created that allows different identities to be tested and allows the new ones to emerge as better, more inclusive and fairer. Australia's 'fair go' can go further. This is an engagement agenda above and beyond what we have at present but one that is worth striving for.

8.14 Conclusion

In asking questions about the value of Aboriginal knowledge, our task in this paper is not to disseminate Aboriginal culture. Those who hold this knowledge must do that. Our task is to ask questions about which forms of knowledge are required to take the engagement agenda further. If we ask why we need new knowledge, we are asking that our institutions live up to their ideals of social justice, equal rights and opportunities for all. Indigenous knowledge must challenge racist ideologies and speak to a variety of identities that are now Australian. It must articulate its view of a common identity. It must live through the principle of co-creation of new knowledge. This new knowledge cannot, we have suggested, just have an ambivalent attitude to enlightenment knowledge which has powered global development and scientific thought and progress. Neither can it be in ignorance of traditional knowledge and culture, for so long bypassed and rejected. It has to be critical social knowledge in which identities are multiple, where scientific enterprise powers our economies, yet where local peoplehood has its rightful place in both imagining and bringing about a better future.

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Part III
The Future: Slow Burn or Fast Forward

Chapter 9
The Burning World: Transformation and Sustainability or Apocalypse?

David Davies and James Nyland

9.1 Introduction

It is noteworthy how far we have come in defining and shaping a concept of university engagement but the climate and environmental crisis facing the world and the particular problems in Australia of a 'burning world' are unique and as yet unresolved. Universities in Australia are helping to build the future, in partnership with others across the globe also, as part of a new economic and social order. The scope of issues and themes they are dealing with is literally breathtaking. From the intellectual issues of a post-truth world to debate about the cities and communities of a future Australia, and from action strategies for economic development to the meaning of civic life—there are facing us insightful and stimulating debates and ideas both for universities and the general public. Ideas tested in healthy and open debate and put into the public domain are the lifeblood of democratic engagement. Engagement Australia represents many of the university communities concerned with these issues and has been immersed in this culture of debate and challenge.

So far so good. We have an array of vital issues before us, each one of which is significant in itself. The contributions selected for discussion will help us to think through difficult challenges and reach decisions in our 'heimat'—our own place and locality and culture where it will be meaningful—or not! This is exactly the point of having debates. We should test the limits of understanding and get new illuminations from arguing the case, defending our beliefs and meeting the strongest arguments of our opponents. It is vital that we do not all agree, whilst providing the open platform for knowledge creation and exchange that 'engagement' demands. This is EA's unique role. So much for the process of dialogue and discourse, vital as that is.

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However, in looking at the array of matters we are debating, it is clear that we are immersed in processes and experiences in the here-and-now which we only partially understand and recognise. Yet there is a transformation taking place right now and we are part of it. Such transformations can take place below the horizon of awareness. It is possible to be unaware of the meaning and significance of what is right before our eyes. Yet there is one theme we surely can no longer ignore. It is the one that asserts that the planet itself is in dire circumstances and its future existence as our home and heimat is now threatened. If we continue to destroy our natural environment and pollute our seas, rivers, landscapes and forests we shall destroy our very means of existence. If we continue to lower our horizon of knowledge and awareness we shall reap the harvest of self-destruction. There is a great transformation to come and our journal discussions, researches and publications within the Engagement Australia 'family' are an indicator of its presence and of an emerging reality, which is now a pressing force that will not be denied (Nyland & Davies, 2018).

This transformation is already underway and is evolving under the pressure of and in response to perhaps key themes dealt with below, each of which is an aspect of a single and unifying concept—that of sustainability of the Earth's climate and environment. Though the processes of engagement are vital, if we ignore or diminish the meaning of the content of the crisis we face, we shall be lost and eventually, our life and environment will be destroyed by the effects of our own actions. The fact is the Earth's resources are being rapidly depleted and abused as rapacious capitalism, accountable to no authoritative global institution in any democratic way we can presently conceive, exploits its capacity to extract and distribute immensely damaging productive forces.

9.2 We Have Made a Burning World

"Humanity is waging war on nature. This is suicidal. Nature always strikes back—and it is already doing so with growing force and fury. Biodiversity is collapsing. One million species are at risk of extinction. Ecosystems are disappearing before our eyes…Human activities are at the root of our descent towards chaos. But that means human action can help to solve it." (Antonio Guterres, United Nations Secretary General, 2020).

How have we done this terrible thing? The crisis of climate change, so long the object of denial by many commentators, has been developing with remorseless speed. Deforestation, intensive farming and soil erosion and loss are creating conditions for an irreversible environmental breakdown. Food shortages have resulted, accompanied by droughts, floods and hurricanes—all of which have the potential to create new mass migration flows which themselves create destabilising social and political conflicts. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in August 2019 noted that 500 million people now live in areas experiencing desertification and that people do not stay where they are but migrate to live and survive. A quarter of all greenhouse gases are produced by land use and a quarter of ice-free land the

world over has been degraded by human activity. Carbon dioxide can no longer be absorbed by the destroyed forests and nature's equilibrium has been disturbed—perhaps beyond repair as land that could have been used to grow trees has been devoted to unsustainable food production.

The climate itself globally shows a life-threatening trend since the 20 warmest years since records began in 1850 have occurred in the past 22 years (New Statesman, 2019). Extreme temperature events and floods have increased exponentially with animal vertebrate populations falling by 60% since 1970 and insect populations—vital for a functioning ecosystem—declining at an even faster rate.

The causes of the climate crisis include fossil-fuel burning, rainforest clearing, pollution-emitting cars and planes, disastrous land management and pollution of the seas with waste and toxic plastic residues. The destructive consequences include forest fires, melting ice caps, extreme weather events such as droughts and flash floods and creation of air pollution in many cities around the world with deadly consequences for those forced to breathe it. Global warming has been a major consequence, a fact contested by some ecologically destructive corporate and political interests (Klein, 2019).

All of this portends the collapse of what we call our civilization (Attenborough, 2018; Wallace-Wells, 2019) and we can now envisage, based on the scientific evidence before us, the extinction of much of the natural world. How long we have left to avert a major catastrophe is not known. Some estimates suggest we have perhaps less than 20 years to restrict global warming to 1.5° centigrade above pre-industrial levels. The IPCC (2019) suggested we have less than a dozen years to do this and failure will result in catastrophic food shortages, droughts, floods extreme heat events, mass poverty and the mass migration of peoples as they seek a way out. All of these eventualities can be seen right now on your local and national news channels, either in embryo or as fully-fledged crises, depending on where you choose to look.

The situation in Australia is particularly apposite. In December 2019 fires surrounding Sydney brought choking smog to the region and the Premier of New South Wales said the entire coastline of the state was on fire (Guardian, 2019). More than 830,000 acres had burned. Long term low rainfall, drought and above-average temperatures meant major disruptions to social life including the closure of schools and beaches due to poor air quality.

On the global scale, how long can we ignore the continued and wanton destruction of the Brazilian-Amazon Basin rain forest? A far-right government is bent on exploiting its resources and deforestation is proceeding relentlessly such that Brazil's own National Institute for Space Research recorded an increase in deforestation by 278% year-on-year, equalling some 870 square miles. Carbon emissions cannot be countered without the force of the world's last great forests being kept in play and indeed increased. Meanwhile, the American President withdrew the USA from the 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change notwithstanding the opposition of a clear majority of US voters. The USA is the world's largest carbon polluter after China but its moral and strategic presence is also crucial and in this, its **absence** is equally as critical to our global future.

In all of this litany of complaints and distress, it is clear that the worst burden of our failure to act will fall on the world's poor. They are least able to mitigate the failure of decarbonisation, the pollution by plastic of the world's oceans, the desertification of previously arable land, the impact of natural disasters (which are 'man-made' to be truthful) the rising sea levels, the melting of the polar ice-caps, the disappearance of the world's glaciers and the devastating effects of war and conflict. And the poor cannot simply be kept beyond the pale, outside the gates and underneath the horizon of awareness (Crawford, 2015). The World Bank has estimated that as many as 143 million people could be displaced by the climate crisis by 2050 (Guardian, 2019). They will insist on joining us if their lives are unbearable in their homelands so that migration and diasporic movements will be the future for us all. As Stuart Hall taught us, we shall have to understand not only 'roots'—where we came from—but 'routes'—where and how we got here and sustain ourselves as part of the modern discourse on mixing and coping within a multi-racial and multi-ethnic world where instability constantly imposes itself on us (Hall, 2017a).

9.3 The Environmental Crisis is a Social and Economic Crisis

Our argument is that the ecological crisis of our planet is also concurrently the crisis of our democratic life, values and future. The social democratic forms of the post-Second World War world have been by-and-large successful in the westernised economies. Universal public service, for example, is accepted by all shades of political opinion and the sense that there are victories out there to be won through progressive struggles has not substantially diminished in recent times, in spite of the growth of populist movements whose tenor seems to be harking back to previous eras of authoritarianism and even fascism. Few advanced economies debate whether to extend education, though most now contest who gets elite instruction as the preferred route to social and economic advancement for individuals. The debate is surely more often over the means of achieving a high quality of life and high living standards rather than over the overall social goals of any given society or nation state. At least that has been part of orthodox social thinking in recent decades when the 'end of history' (Fukuyama, 1992) or the struggle over competing visions of the purpose of social life have been declared redundant.

Yet looking back, as we are wont to do when a current crisis is upon us, we see that global capitalism from the early 1800s produced not only an unheard-of expansion of production of goods and services but also massive social dislocations. Urbanisation spread the great killer diseases of cholera and typhus amongst many others. Disruption and dislocation have been the common experience of many succeeding generations. The centuries-old links between global capital and carbon (oil, gas, mineral extraction) show few signs of diminishing as the world's fastest-growing economies commit themselves to continued investment in oil, coal and gas. Saudi

Aramco, which is the most valuable, most profitable and most polluting company of all time and which has recently launched itself on the public market, is perhaps the prototypical example of carbon addiction by state sponsored and globalised yet national capitalism. This company, protected by its autocratic state and its profitability, seems immune to the climate and pollution debate. It faces no political pressure from its owners or neighbours in the region to address the carbon issue and its own role in an accelerating world crisis, heading for disaster. A recent analysis of this situation stated that: "A year that has seen the most determined green investor activism, fossil-fuel divestments and climbing climate targets will end with the largest single fossil-fuel binge in investment history" (Observer Analysis, 2019).

It is surely no accident that the most renowned climate change deniers are also the most voracious exponents of unfettered and market-driven, profit-focussed, unsustainable and irresponsible forms of capitalism. We have seen, for example, the growth of climate scepticism and climate change denial. Two factors are interesting in this respect. First, there exists a network of think tanks whose donors profit from the plundering and exploitation of natural resources and second, there is a growing body of research linking a particularly reactionary form of masculinity to climate change denialism (O'Brien, 2019). Our modern industrialised society is itself threatened by the environmental breakdown we can now so clearly see is above the horizon, so that the geographic provenance of climate change has social effects across the globe. The older forms of domination including those over nature *and* of women in exploitative and abusive relationships cannot be sustained. Denialism, argues O'Brien, amounts to a strange form of identity politics among those who feel threatened by the sweeping changes that environmental breakdown makes necessary. O'Brien has suggested that our mechanisation of the natural world sanctioned the domination of both nature and women, leading to a hierarchy that subordinated both. These questions of social identity and social structure and consciousness have begun to play a more significant role as awareness of the growing climate and ecological threats increases.

The European economies and many others beyond have changed in ways that make collective policies on which the traditional 'liberal' centre-left was based less effective. The unionised industries of the industrial revolution have gone in large part and manufacturing has been ceded to the former 'third world' in favour of services being produced in the 'western economies'. Public ownership has largely given way to private sector initiative, though often backed by public interests in the political sphere.

It can be argued that the post-communist and post-fascist world, in Europe at least and probably far beyond, has liberated a new political dimension where the choices are not the extremes or the old centre ground. New political realities around identity, race, ethnicity, gender and around the nearly ubiquitous but often suppressed theme of migration and diaspora have emerged (Hall, 2017b).

The broadening of the political spectrum has proceeded hand-in-hand with fragmentation of identities on which the former middle ground of the centre-left was built. Studies of social class in the twenty-first century (Savage, 2015) show the fragmentation of the traditional working and middle classes and the rise of new hybrid categories such as 'new affluent workers'. Spiralling levels of social inequality are

re-making social classes but not in the image of the past. Social classes arise from inequalities in distinctive kinds of capital, including economic, social and cultural capitals and universities themselves play a growing role in the generation of powerful elites.

Today the divergence of interests, the decline of the older heavy industries and the growth of successful 'new' computer and media focussed corporations are widening the divisions between the blue-collar workers in the declining industrial towns and the booming service-sector cities which employ the creative and cosmopolitan elites. Creative and burgeoning places such as London, Berlin, Melbourne and Copenhagen can be contrasted with places such as Rotterdam, Malmo and Lille. Bradford can be contrasted with Media City in Salford/Manchester; Pittsburgh or Detroit with Seattle. Whereas once the industrial and the 'commercial 'centres were united in their support for social democratic policies, they now appear divided by the politics of identity and difference. The cultural centres are internationalist and socially libertarian whereas the older industrial sites and cities display nationalist and socially conservative tendencies. In the United Kingdom, it has been said that the deepest divisions are around immigration and the European Union. Social democratic parties have of course attempted to co-opt the political voice or at least the votes of the migrant and ethnic communities yet the failure of traditional parties to satisfy large swathes of populations who feel oppressed or threatened by these developments is legion. The exponential rise of the far and ultra-right-wing parties in Europe is testimony to this and the open liberal countries we anticipated following the collapse of authoritarian and undemocratic states signalled in the ending of communist regimes in Europe have evolved into torment over migration and identity. The European experience is not of course a universal one but it remains a powerful beacon for a wider world undergoing similar profound shifts in economic and social development and in the consciousness that arises to make sense of what is happening.

What has been evoked here is not just a fear of the unknown. Nobody knows what will happen to the world's economy in a decade from now but there is a visceral fear of lack of control felt by the many about the near future. Parents do not know that their children will be able to find meaningful and rewarding lifelong work; they do not know that their children will be able to afford to buy or rent a house; they do not know that the planet will be sustainable for their grand-children. What they want, however, is clear and it involves a combination of security, opportunity and the drive for self-determination. The onset of mass migration right across Europe (and the world) as a form of diasporic re-settlement has thrown the older cultural and social constructions into disarray. Communities are not what they once were. Politics have thrown up unanticipated divisions and all of this has brought to light the question of who belongs and by what right to the nation. This question itself presupposes another: can the nation decide to close its borders and exercise control over who joins or is prevented from so doing?

These factors are an important part of the context in which we must develop our knowledge and awareness of the climate crisis and ecological disaster which threatens us. This is the most compelling and urgent issue of our time. We have written before of the need for critical thinking because there is a crisis of believability

and trust in modern societies (Davies & Nyland, 2019; Nyland & Davies, 2018). The misunderstanding of the modern crisis is a major issue in its own right, though its real importance lies in the transformative power of critical knowledge, rooted in science and openness and applied within a democratic milieu. Only through harnessing and broadcasting our views and findings within a democratic dialogue can we move forward to address the key issues with public support, freely given and within a context of challenge which can lead to change. This process also has vital content. We need to understand the science of our planet but equally, we need to understand the social science of our communities and societies. Engagement cannot be done without engaged thinking and so a new approach to how knowledge is formulated and used in our educational institutions is called for. Its proper object is surely the crisis facing humankind. Above all, knowledge and action in this matter, which is about our actual survival as a species-being on this, our only planet, must reflect our shared commitment to a fairer and more just society—key values in the engagement songbook surely.

9.4 Averting the Disaster

There are many things to be done to avert the impending disaster and many of these must necessarily be done by those in government and industry. Those at the coal-face will have to close the coal faces. However, there are things we can do to change awareness and consciousness, bearing in mind that our context of engagement brings its own specific challenges.

First, we must visualise change and for this, we must recognise that a change of values and behaviour must evolve. Even where values are held to be 'unchangeable' and universal they must be challenged. Equity and fairness as well as autonomy and self-determination must be the keynote for a sustainable world—a world that is now globalised and interdependent economically.

Second, we must acknowledge the sustainable goals for the 'wicked issues'. Poverty reduction, hunger amelioration, equal health chances, decent work, responsible consumption, climate change action, sustainable cities and social justice are all listed as part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the United Nations. This is a world issue of which we are a part, right here and now and right here in your hometown. This is a 'heimat' issue for each community and neighbourhood across the globe. No one can afford to ignore the challenge because it is quite simply coming your way.

Third, we need a new social contract that is not rooted in the fundamental idea of a self-regulating market and which may only have needed trade deals between the great global economies to be effective. The old idea that somehow markets could be dis-embedded from the old institutions of a society and operate independently must be challenged. That the growth of the world economy has left behind vast areas and many, many millions of people is the great challenge of economic sustainability. Education is the third-largest generator of GDP in Australia and has a vital economic

role to play and we do well to ask of it—how will you help the new social contract to succeed?

Fourth, the new social contract requires a social debate in which we can address the structural issues of economic change and regeneration, the issues of climate change and carbon emissions, the impact of global migrations in response to environmental degradation, global warming, sea-level changes and the need to equalise power. Voluntarism, the role of 'third sector' economic actors, cooperativism and a 'responsible capitalism', accountable for its depredations and environmental destructions is envisaged. The social debate will require new ways of seeing and new ways of conceptualising the problems we face. We shall need to have critical thinking embedded in our curricula and a new approach to learning for adaptability and survival in a changing and threatening world.

Fifth, we need to acknowledge that place will continue to play a vital role in our future even though we shall be interconnected globally. Care for the land and for cultural landscapes should be central to our concerns and be as much the focus for investment and social innovation as the metropolitan centres. Governance and leadership are at issue here and it needs to change!

Sixth, the great transformation underway beneath our feet is also and simultaneously a technological and digital revolution. Knowledge has exploded into availability and the knowledge industry seems to be part of everyone's future. We have yet to fully understand the implications and consequences of this and the jury is out on whether we are to be 'liberated' or 'imprisoned' in our digitalised futures. What is clear though is that we are unlikely to succeed in engagement without having a new conception of how knowledge is organised and owned and controlled. For this we need new approaches to the curriculum which are open and critical; we need to be active subjects in this and not merely the objectives and consumers of technology and content made somewhere else.

9.5 Can We Seize Back the Debate?

Our presentation of the above issues focuses essentially on two key issues—that of environmentalism and that of neo-liberalism. The latter refers to the growth of a new 'laissez-faire' economic world order which has sought to remove trade barriers wherever they might be found. It was a globalising movement envisaging a one world culture that was unstoppable, universally found everywhere and inevitable. Tony Blair, a British Prime Minister who showed awareness of world affairs, reportedly said, on being asked to debate globalisation, you might as well debate whether winter follows autumn. The threatened fragility of the local and of the unique value of belonging somewhere specific has always been asserted in response to the juggernaut of globalism, though its success can be doubted in many cases. Globalisation signalled the end of history, many believed. At least that seemed the case until 2008 when the global financial crash appeared to derail globalising financial capitalism

and 'the end of the end of history' re-asserted itself. Change might be possible again it was thought (Kingsnorth, 2017) but it did not always produce the anticipated results.

It might be thought that the failures of neo-liberalism and the oncoming environmental crisis would have armed those who wanted rational solutions to climate change and a socially just and fairer future, especially for the poor and dispossessed of the world? Reality asserted a different outcome, however and collective and often toxic national populism (Eatwell & Goodwin, 2018) asserted itself through ciphers such as Donald Trump against internationalism and 'globalism'. Many nationalist voters in the West felt that their community was under existential threat. Strong leaders were looked for and resort taken to the perceived threats from large-scale, uncontrolled migration and from Islamist terrorist attacks which occurred in many places in this period. Ethnic identities were resorted to in the hope that certainty and stability might be restored. Things beyond mere money such as a sense of belonging or adherence to fundamentalist religion held sway. These were not the outcomes desired by those who wished to reform a society where justice, peace and equity were (and are) in short supply (Hall, ibid: 2017a).

If we are now living in the 'anthropocene age' (Vince, 2014) where the mass extinction of species as a result of human activity is an impending possibility, we need to move beyond the idea of self-regulating markets and neo-liberal economics. The accelerating climate crisis is destroying our means of future existence; it is an existential crisis rather than a crisis of business investment choices in which we find ourselves. The Anthropocene age is the time when we may be in irreversible and destructive degradation of our planetary resources, including our human environments. The ever-worsening truths can no longer be simply ignored. Science now needs a cultural and social interrogation of the new realities and new alternatives are the only solution (Findlay & Findlay, 2019). This is surely an agenda beyond all others for Engagement Australia? The universities are the best repositories of knowledge and critique and it is time for them to use their resources for the benefit of planetary survival. What could be more important for those of us employed to think and teach and research? Can we seize back the debate by recovering the learning spirit and critical thinking many associates with our universities? (Davies & Nyland, ibid: 2019).

9.6 The Importance of Sustainable Development

Climate catastrophe, a loss of trust in institutions, the growth of public and private anxiety and the failure of an economy devoted to a narrow focus on growth, regardless of its true cost, are the challenges facing us at the end of the second decade of this century (Guterres, 2019). All of the themes dealt with in this chapter are embedded within the concerns of educationalists and all of them are in effect 'hypotheses' to be tested, debated and changed as we try to define and solve problems together. What cannot be denied, we believe, is the proposition that the great transformation to come is underway and that the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals are a rubric

within which our work can be coherent and focussed and thus help us achieve a truly transformative idea of university engagement.

A stable and equitable future can best be built on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals adopted by world leaders in 2015. These goals address the challenges of climate crisis, poverty, environmental degradation and the deadline to achieve them is only 10 years away!

The outline of the SDGs is graphically pictured below:

According to the secretary general of the United Nations, Antonio Guterres, in spite of some lessening of world poverty and better access to decent work and energy the world is seriously off-track in meeting the goals. “Hunger is rising, half the world’s people lack basic education and healthcare, women face discrimination and disadvantage everywhere” (Guterres, 2019).

Sustainable development will require both private businesses and public authorities to find new ways forward for investment in renewable clean energy and food sources. Guterres is one of those who put faith in the capacity of business to address many of the needs for a low-carbon economy. Sustainability may not be incommensurate with competitiveness and the ever-growing global economy devoted to growth. It is surely an act of faith, however, rather than one rooted in evidence. The fact is we know that it is ethically possible and makes good business sense to invest in sustainable equitable development.

At this increasingly late stage in the climate debate and facing a world that burns, there is undeniably a question of urgency and the need for reform and change. The fossil-fuel age is coming to an end and we must end the war with the natural world that has fuelled our economies for generations. We all live in a place. We all seek a heimat where our cultural identity is tied into our ecological identity. These things we value must be fought for and defended if we are to have a future. Nothing could or should be more engaging.

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Chapter 10
Ways of Knowing: Towards an Ecology of Learning and Community

David Davies and James Nyland

10.1 Crises and Paradoxes

The third decade of the twenty-first century is proving to be a time of great contradictions. It is a huge paradox that a worldwide health pandemic, coronavirus COVID-19 and its mutations, which killed over a million people, has coextensively thrown into sharp relief the reliance we have on low paid, under-valued health care workers and the greater vulnerability of poorer and marginalised people to the deadly disease. The health crisis is, however, one amongst several crises which impact our lives. They include climate and environmental breakdown, economic dislocation and trade wars between the USA and China, the weakening of international organisations capable of addressing transnational issues, the emergence of right-wing authoritarian populist governments, enforced dislocation and mass migration of millions of people due to wars famine and persecution and an explosion of precariousness and anxiety for young people who fear for their futures.

Concurrently amidst the carnage is the paradox that we have vastly more education and learning than our forebears could ever have possibly imagined. Modernity—meaning advanced industrial societies with large-scale and urban populations—is full of schools, colleges and universities. Formal and informal learning opportunities have exploded into possibilities via the digital revolution. It is theoretically and almost practically possible for educators to communicate with every living human being on the planet. Education including research represents the greatest potential for economic growth and underpins a large part of global prosperity. And yet, although education as a social, economic, political and cultural reality is massively significant,

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it is literally amazing that the matter of curriculum is in general of minimal concern. Although there are exceptions, we have a university academic structure inherited from the nineteenth century (House, 1991) and hierarchies of subject disciplines and departments conceived and organised literally for a different century and for different purposes than those facing us now (Barnett, 1997). The stringent need is to reorganise and re-shape the curriculum so that it addresses the paradox!

A starting point for thinking about the paradox is to ask what we think about learning and the acquisition of knowledge and what its purposes might be. What is needed is not just reforms at the margins of the education system but a serious and challenging educational process. That challenge from our perspective must take place within an understanding of the wider economic, social, organisational and value set. There is also the fact that the curriculum itself is often a matter of challenge and dispute. Modern times have thrown into high relief questions of what is truth and what is contested knowledge (Seidman, 1998).

Neary and Winn (2017a, 2017b) in the current era suggest that space can be opened up for questioning the logic of the capitalist state which has created a market-based model of social development and a commoditised and monetised university system. The contradictory and paradoxical character of modern global economic and social development is the wider context for conceptualising the perspective of the relevance of the curriculum.

The growth of individualism within the economic neo-liberalism of modernity has meant a continuously changing policy context and a hostile environment for forms of learning that support a democratic purpose. The government has also proved itself to be a negative factor as education has evolved increasingly as a consumer good available on the market, as is any other commodity. One point of departure, however, is that social consciousness and awareness, **what we can call critical thinking and a critical curriculum**, can become an explicit feature of an educational programme when it expresses and reflects the contemporary need for social and cultural action for change. The paradoxes we face must therefore become a central part of the curriculum we construct.

10.2 Lessons Learned

The lessons should be clear: to meet the challenges of the crises and paradoxes, growing the institutional system and increasing student numbers is not enough. Outdated curriculum content must be reformed; the skills and concepts and ideas for people who will lead—not just serve—the modern world are needed. This is for a century whose needs we cannot by any means foresee. The teachers in this coming world will need to know about the relevant pedagogies and are capable of helping define and set the social and political goals **for** and not just within education. The curriculum which now exists and is defined as much by its values of exclusion and elitism as by its content must be re-shaped. A curriculum for a specific set of social purposes with content and methodology which understands the hidden

curriculum is needed. We must understand the processes through which our efforts and struggles for reform have been recuperated for other purposes and have served a conservative set of values and interests. The tasks facing us derive from the social, economic, mass-psychological and cultural relations that structure and organise our lives socially and particularly in relation to the planet and its ecology, including other species. Whilst recognising the existence of different knowledge communities, surely we must cleave to the commitment to scientific thinking which itself rests on ontological and epistemological principles and practice rooted in reason, logic and evidence. This is the basis of our critique of the old learning and of our desire for a new and progressive curriculum. We need knowledge that is fit for the purpose of exposing the paradox of advanced learning, which appears powerless in the face of existential threats to our lives and our planet.

10.3 The Universities as the New 'Rust Belt'?

Having defined a problem in terms of the curriculum, are universities as key sites of learning adequate to the problems we face? How do they shape up to the paradox we have outlined? Unfortunately in the UK and in many other countries what often drives and animates them **as institutions** is the privatisation of resources through student fees and research grants. Differentiation and financial rewards are achieved through performance league tables and expansion of student numbers and the new forms of inequality in higher education are seen to reflect the false claims of meritocracy. Inequality in higher education has become once again a positive social programme. Those institutions which sit outside the self-determined echelon (in the UK, Oxbridge, the Russell Group and the research-based universities) are deemed second or even third-class as if we were back to travelling on the Victorian railway network. What Orwell (1941) called "the graded snobberies of the English" are alive and well in the university hierarchies. The British system in particular is distorted to fast track those students from Russell Group universities to well-rewarded careers and enhanced life chances. The rest are often shamefully neglected and country-wide in the UK some 20% of the population are functionally innumerate and one in six are functionally illiterate (Hutton, 2020). In addition, the coronavirus pandemic of 2020 has brought the spectre of graduate unemployment into public consciousness. The issue goes to the core of where university education sits in relation to its people and communities. Is it designed in the interests of those who can succeed in a supposedly meritocratic and competitive arena and where those who fail are to be left behind? The elite institutions seem prepared in this generation to leave behind those who are dispossessed and marginalised by conventional schooling.

It wasn't always so and some universities and educationalists have argued for higher education as a universal right available to all classes and social groups without regard to a hierarchy of institutions (Duke, 1992; Watson & Taylor, 1998). The expansion of the universities in the latter part of the twentieth century brought about mass entry of school leavers and adult returners. Attention was given to the machinery

of reform but not to the strategic social purposes it might have carried nor to the actual practices of selection and control of elite institutions which continued, as it were, unabated. There has been no second wave of reform and no new goals agreed for the third decade of the twenty-first century beyond that of accommodating to the digital and techno-revolutions.

The new social constituencies and learners nevertheless emerged hand-in-hand with the emerging crises of the new century. The world's poorest people, those dispossessed by war and famine, the refugees from persecution and penury, the victims of climate change and environmental degradation, the racially and religiously oppressed—all appeared on the stage of history and millions appeared at the gates and customs and immigration posts of the richest nations in the first two decades of this century. This was facilitated by the new communication technologies which opened up a window on these happenings for all to see if they had eyes to do so. This sets a new agenda for higher education since education and literacy in its wider sense is something that poorer and neglected and oppressed people need and which is not given willingly, including to those in the left-behind and abandoned old industrial 'rust belts' of the metropolitan countries.

10.4 Points of Departure

New points of departure are suggested by this, but the direction of travel is blinkered. The content of the curriculum in the expanded higher education sector has continued to be dominated by vocational concerns—what industry is supposed to want or desire—with little regard given to the way the curriculum acts to reinforce existing social, sexual and racial divisions. The opening up of higher education we have experienced over successive generations represents undoubtedly a major step forward for working people and their children but it has not transformed the social division of labour or the social and racial inequalities which bedevil society. Meritocratic selection has not been a route to social equality or social justice.

Our concerns must address the question of which skills and knowledge will be needed for the working population. What will be the curriculum content for that sense of 'universal literacy' as advocated by Hall (1983) which would be a major cultural gain for working people? What are the essential curricular content for social justice and equity? Hall argued that knowledge needs to be acquired in the context of a general education that involves comprehensive literacy and thinking skills. The skills of analysis and conceptualisation, using ideas and critical thinking (Nyland & Davies, 2017) are crucial as is a relevant content or object of study. This brings to the fore the wicked issues and social evils (Firth, 2017) which comprise part of the paradox considered above and which identifies the tasks for higher education—developing strategic goals, using a variety of appropriate pedagogies and identifying the right content. The probabilities of change should encourage and persuade universities to examine the embedded curriculum and question the values of, for example, patriarchalism, colonialism, imperialism and racism which often infuse the hidden

curriculum which has proved inadequate to the possibilities of change. A universal curriculum will find it hard to challenge the disciplines of academia and escape from the chains of the past. As House (1991 ibid) pointed out: "The full development of nineteenth-century industrialisation is symbolised as much by the appearance of the modern, departmentalised research university as it is by the smoke-belching industrial plant with its ever-greater division of labour and specialization." It is more than ironic that many of the industrial plants of that era have transmorphed into 'rust belt' post-apocalyptical landscapes of desolation whilst the university departments go marching on towards their own isolation from the approaching crises with a hollowed-out curriculum inadequate to confront the issues.

A curriculum that questions established and conservative academic systems and structures will not be sustained without struggles. Stuart Hall pointed out: "There is nothing simple about the disciplines which are required to really know anything and no easy escape from them." (Hall ibid: 7) Nevertheless what we study and teach must be relevant to the social and political values and the consciousness needed in an emerging future. A re-balancing of the curriculum is needed since it seems clear that academic ability has not been enough to challenge and reverse the 'normal' which was scarred by deep inequalities and proved ineffective in meeting the challenge of multiple crises. Different kinds of knowledge will be required, perhaps also involving what Peter Hyman has called "… a balance between what we call 'head, heart and hand'—knowledge, wellbeing, problem-solving and creativity" (Hyman, 2020). Pearson (2009) in an Australian context, which has resonance for all of us, has perceptively referred to the importance of "peoplehood" by which he argues that knowledge is generated in intermediate levels of social organisation which are positioned between close-knit units such as family and kinship groups and the wider social belonging which is more 'universal'. This can underpin the identity people find with, for example, ethnic, tribal or religious groups (Hall, 1990). These qualities may be precisely relevant to the idea of a universal literacy that goes beyond the formal disciplines of the academy.

Universities need to state once again why for the mass of people higher education is important. Individuals are always important and can become lost as we search for theoretical and abstract concepts to grasp complex connections between different phenomena. At the end of the day, individuals must be persuaded that universal education and literacy is for them personally as well as for the subordinated and excluded categories of people. This cannot be priced as a commodity; it should be free and universally available to all who can benefit. This perspective was for long the social horizon of learning before the emergence of a hypercapitalised and marketised ideology of education as a positional good, available through the marketplace to those who would pay for it. The realisation that such change is needed is a key point of departure; it is a moment for a democratic and universal education as a national popular goal. And if not now at a moment of world crises, then when?

This chapter addresses the relevance of a single framework of 'knowledge and pedagogy' specifically though not exclusively in relation to the idea of place, locality, neighbourhood and community. Learning in communities is problematised but at the same time, the arguments for it are considered to be still relevant. The specific role

of learning and consciousness is stressed and the significance of having at least an indicative content as well as an awareness of a commensurate and critical pedagogy is supported! The framework could be called an ecological approach to learning and as is the case with really useful knowledge—it matters because its concepts and content can change thinking.

10.5 Towards an Ecology of Learning and Community

Humankind is a learning species. It is what gives us the evolutionary advantage over the other species on the planet—at least until recently, although some are seriously questioning just how much we have learned about ourselves and our capacity to co-exist with our environment (Klein, 2019; Monbiot, 2020; Wallace-Wells, 2019). However, nobody learns simply in the abstract. We always learn in a context: we learn in a particular place, at a particular time and often for a particular reason. We learn about things and objects and feelings and we somehow externalise what we have learned as 'knowledge'. Learning is a product of human activity and consciousness which itself is a handy way of describing the outcomes of learning even though we may not always be aware of what we have learned.

10.6 Places Matter

Although learning takes place in the head or the mind, much of it is actually acquired in buildings and on campuses and we have invented educational institutions and practices that now comprise an enormous social, economic and cultural industry that is worldwide in its scope and reach. There exists practically no person on the planet beyond the reach of a school or college or university. In the deepest Amazonian rain forest and in the wilds of the Kalahari Desert and across the vastness of the Australian bush there is someone willing to provide an educational opportunity for the needy consumer of learning. The product is available everywhere. If no campus is available, the internet will provide access and resources undreamed of in times past. In one way or the other, learning is ubiquitous and pervasive.

This explosion of access to learning and information takes place in what John Berger, the great art critic and writer, called cultures of progress which are rooted fundamentally in the urban landscapes and cities in which most of us now live out our lives. We have unheard-of levels of efficiency, everyday protection, access to food, heating, lighting, health services, education and transport. Yet there is dissatisfaction and discontent with individuals feeling isolated and socially excluded from their communities. Berger wrote: "Recently the insulation of the citizen has become so total that it has become suffocating. He lives alone in a serviced limbo—hence his newly awakened, but necessarily naïve, interest in the countryside" (Berger, 1985). Berger argues that we have lost a great deal in the move to urban and destructive

modernism and one of the key losses is the sense and feeling that we belong in a community. He says we don't just live our own lives but we also live out the longings of our own century, of our own time. Community is one of the longings we have lost and yet here is the paradox: those communities which have been left behind by industrialisation and modernism, the forces which were supposed to eliminate scarcity, poverty and ignorance, now offer an image of stability and continuity—of belonging to a place and to people rooted in a place.

Berger is of the view that that the peasant experience of survival may be better adapted to reality than the hopes of either those wishing to extend and consolidate corporate capitalism on a world scale or those who want to prolong the uneven struggle against it. This is the context then for integrating learning around that older, place-based community that so many people appear to value so highly (Pearson 2009). It is both a geographical and emotional community that is being evoked here which trades on the identities people seek to preserve or invent for themselves. Such communities produce knowledge, understanding and wisdom, which has proved itself over millennia and alerts us to the existence of a type of creative non-fictional knowledge. This requires a cross genre and multiple level approaches to what is valued as knowledge and experience. It is ethnographic in giving an authentic voice to the subject as well as the object of our learning. We can view this as part of **an ecological perspective** on learning.

What then is the content of this kind of learning? Berger does not offer us a method of critical teaching or a pedagogy because that is not his aim, but he does show us that there are different ways of seeing and thinking about things and this is about learning (Berger, 1972). He is a storyteller and how we tell our stories matters for who we are and what we want to become. The stories we tell about ourselves and others, of course, are to do with how we self-create our lives and communities. This is not a pre-ordained process; it has to be made by us. It is a social construction made in communities of people with shared experiences. This is not always a positive shared experience and we cannot deny the existence of conflict and difference in shaping our social lives. Life can often be experienced as a struggle between people who differ profoundly as to what should be done. What Berger tells us though, is that **the past, the present and the future** of communities is produced in part in the imagination. The function of place, time and imagination in our learning needs, therefore, to be re-asserted. Learning (and education more broadly) is not a one-way transmission of knowledge but an active and constructive process. It is not about 'telling' and 'being told' as Ira Shor, a leading exponent of critical pedagogy in America, put it (Shor, 1992, 1996). Rather, it is about those who learn and want to learn being actively involved themselves in constructing the purposes of their learning.

Berger's work introduces a perspective that is underdeveloped, but often present by implication when the meaning of community in relation to learning is under review. This perspective concerns itself with the notions of community and ecology, by which is meant the potential that may exist for integrating learning and community experience of place, location and belonging. Such experience has geographical, ideological, emotional and political levels; it is never a single reality but is always imbricated and multi-layered. It forces us to consider also how experience and learning take

place over generations and over time—what Berger called the time of consciousness. Communities are physical places but they are also communities of feeling and emotion. They are places of both inclusion and exclusion.

10.7 Learning and the Ecology of Community

Learning is always a contemporary 'project' because it takes place in the here and now, in the active present; it takes place in particular places and geographies and it is done in particular languages and with and through cultural practices by individuals who are members of groups and communities. Yet culture and community are deeply problematic; they mean different things to different people and change over time, sometimes rapidly and sometimes less so.

In spite of all the definitional problems associated with the idea of 'community' in relation to education (Lovett, 1982; Anderson, 1983), it retains a powerful emotional charge and has great meaning for many people. For some, it offers the most meaningful framework for modern life. We have already noted the paradox that when all else fails it may be community that offers some hope of support. The world over, the left behind and rust-belt industrial zones which once were economically productive and hugely profitable now represent an unwanted and damaging continuity and stability and only in 'community' and in social solidarity is resistance and an alternative to be found. Increasingly the urban problems of de-industrialisation may force attention onto the plight of and possible solutions provided by peasant and pre-industrial cultures which have of course continued to co-exist within and as part of modernity.

The longing for meaning, for a sense of continuity of past and future, has been focussed on the remarkable persistence of the village and peasant community. Berger has argued that it has relevance for all of us. He suggests that it is not only the future of peasants which is now involved in this continuity. The forces that in most parts of the world are eliminating or destroying the peasantry, represent the contradiction of most of the hopes once contained in the principle of historical progress. Productivity is not reducing scarcity and the dissemination of knowledge is not leading unequivocally to greater democracy. The advent of leisure—in the industrialised societies—has not brought personal fulfilment, but greater mass manipulation. Berger is clearly of the view that the economic and military unification of the world has not brought peace, but genocide (Berger, 1985). In another graphic context, we can grasp something of the dilemmas faced by Australian indigenous peoples who struggle to preserve culture, language and knowledge in the face of destructive modernity and where notions of place, land, country and culture are severely contested (Pearson, 2009).

In a fast globalising world, the boundaries of one community are constantly erected against other communities. It is fear of the 'loss of community', which includes the increasing absence of personal loyalties, the weakening of family ties, regional ties, community and neighbourhood ties and the loss of trust and sense of belonging, that fuels the growth of communities of identity around nation or religion or ethnicity,

much of which sets people apart rather than bringing them together! (Bauman, 2001; Edensor, 2002). We need then to consider the more general level of the cultural horizons which are open to us if we wish to have an ecology of learning which is inclusive of place and geography and which demonstrates the relevance of space and time. This is prime territory for learning since it is in the modern and contemporary community that experience is shaped and formed; fragmented though it may be and contested as it is, it is the subject and object of learning and has both physical, material and emotional content. 'Community' is now to be constructed in our contemporary context of modernity, of global communication and surveillance capitalism (Zuboff, 2019) and the struggle for knowledge and learning which equips us with critical thinking designed to produce a better human future.

An ecological approach to community would argue that there is a continuing geographical basis to most people's lives (Urry, 2002, 2005) and therefore learning and education should reflect this fact and be based upon it. Geographical communities and identities generate natural learning groups through which learning takes place. Relations between people and groups of persons are seen as potent sources of learning and meaning. The elements of national space are linked together with recognisable symbols to constitute practical as well as symbolic imaginary geographies that confirm the nation as the pre-eminent spatial entity. This may be problematic of course where a people defines itself as a nation but has no nation state as a defining territory or nothing we can recognise as a state formation. A people or a nation can exist without a corresponding state as Connolly (2020) has shown in his study of Eastern Europe and as exemplified in the case of Aboriginal Australia (Pascoe, 2018; Pearson, 2009). These examples can help us understand our sense of community in relation to our sense of the nation which always involves a space and a geography. Our imaginations are important elements in defining ideas, concepts and even academic disciplines within the social sciences (Moore & Sanders, 2014). This means that individuals and groups within a bounded geographical community can develop that community's awareness of itself 'ecologically'. In turn, it means there is recognition of elements working within an interactive and mutually inter-dependent system; a system rooted in place, location, geography, culture and in shared experience and imagination which makes up a community that evolves and develops. Where the boundaries of a learning community lie are, however, a significant issue! Is this done at the level of a nation? What in fact are the bonds and boundaries of community and belonging that produce shared experience and lay the foundations for an ecology of learning as defined here?

Despite the fact that there remains considerable ambiguity about the meaning of the word 'community', it is surely apparent that a coherent line of thinking follows from conceptualising community in a specific way? Newman (1979) in a classic study of community learning, demonstrated that we need to think in terms of specific communities, with their class, gender, neighbourhood, ethnic/racial, urban and complex social characteristics. Communities are thus a complex whole, made up of a set of minorities and sub-communities, each with its own interests. Once we are able to think of specific communities, we are in a position to decide what is realistic and necessary for individual self-expression, group cohesion and collective action.

10.8 Imagining and Understanding Our Cosmos

There is another vitally important aspect of how and what we learn in our journey towards understanding our environment and the significance of the place in which we live and die—namely the planet Earth! The increasing dangers from climate change and environmental degradation are threats to the entire planet and no amount of personal wealth can exempt a person from its effects. A number of commentators have described this catastrophe of a 'burning world' and a 'drowning world' that is now upon us and not just one in the making (Klein, 2019). This particular, disastrous future has arrived, sometimes literally on our doorsteps. Yet grasping the scale of this issue and of our place as a planet in the wider cosmos and scheme of things also requires an imaginative leap of faith and consciousness.

As a species, humankind has knowledge of its own short-lived life. Each individual is more-or-less aware of his/her eventual mortality, though naturally, we put off the thought whenever we can! Whatever we may believe about an afterlife, it seems clear that we all have only an ephemeral life here on the planet. We have to face the finite nature of material life and the limited allotment of time given to each individual-each one of us. But to face only death is nihilistic even though we know this is the eventual reality for each one of us. A good deal of our culture is focussed, one could argue, on avoiding the impending realities of personal and collective extinction and therefore we want to embrace 'life'—even in its finite nature or even because it is ephemeral and finite! Yet the unavoidable question arises—what kind of knowledge and what kind of learning is needed for us to understand and apply our increasing consciousness of the planet and its immediate vulnerability? What kind of consciousness exists of the scientific cosmos and the actual time-limited yet seemingly eternal universe of planetary objects in their millions of billions? How do we understand the aeons of evolutionary time (14 billion years) that preceded our existence today, on this particular planet, at this particular brief moment in what cannot be, but seems to be, endless time? This is the point at which materialistic science, the rational core of our knowledge since the Enlightenment and social thought in the form of critical social science need to come together. Science equipped with its tools of experiment, observation and mathematical analysis can, according to its proponents (Dartnell, 2018; Greene, 2020) reveal our origins and future—finite and cosmically distant though it is in both space and time. This is though, according to science, a universe destined for decay. It will end one day, no matter how far away or near that day is! Yet its existence now is precisely what is precious to us and demands of us that we understand it as part of our modern learning, as part of our rational and scientific thinking, not as myth or religion or as fiction. Whereas once the nation was a key spatial category for our identities and our imaginations and though we may value greatly the 'community' as another, it is now the planet and its place in its universe which rationally should be the central focus for our thinking about the future.

How we fit into the hugeness and vastness of time and space established by science in our knowledge and consciousness is also a matter of self-reflection and creative imagination. The science does not yield us a simple narrative that explains all and

everything—far from it. There are immense and complex contradictions such as: "We emerge from laws that, as far as we can tell, are timeless and yet we exist for the briefest moment of time … we are shaped by laws that seem not to require an underlying rationale and yet we passionately seek meaning and purpose" (Greene, 2020 ibid: xii). We have to give science meaning and significance and this is the crucial task of our culture and of our thinkers. It is the task facing our teachers and learners. What we make of our subjective experience in our communities of interest and identity in relation to the evolving scientific knowledge of our planet in its cosmos and in respect of its existential danger, will depend on the kinds of creative learning and critical thinking we evolve for ourselves. This forces upon us a new imaginative purpose, which is to safeguard the future of the planet and the species as a central component of our learning.

10.9 Conclusion

The approach to critical thinking and learning outlined in this chapter has outlined some of the increasingly urgent concerns of teachers, scholars and learners about the future of our societies and the continued existence of our planet. Some of these issues have been termed 'wicked' but in reality, they are more than wicked: they are matters of life and death; they are existential. The fact we are constantly forced to address them across all boundaries of social difference, age and culture suggest that we are experiencing a collective failure of learning. George Monbiot has called this "… a crashing lapse in education, that is designed for a world in which we no longer live" (Monbiot, 2020). By this, he means that the economic models upon which understanding of our economies and social lives are based have a fundamental mistake at their centre. They assume a self-regarding and self-serving version of the human being exists at the core of the universe and the natural world; the planet's ecological variability and fragility are simply invisible to them.

An ecology of learning may well be evolving that would place ecology and planetary systems at the heart of the curriculum—therefore at the centre of learning and teaching. The study of the habitats which shape all our lives including that of the cosmos could be the platform for exploring ecosystems and be central to a new curriculum.

The issue here is the making in part at least of a new curriculum which puts at the heart of learning the actual problems and challenges of the living world. Allied to the notion and reality of a critical thinking curriculum (Davies & Nyland, 2018) and learner-centred methodology (Shor, 1980, 1987) we can perhaps see a progressive basis for better education—one in which both content and form of learning is reshaped to fit a world which knows it must change in order to survive.

However, we 'see' current or historical events, there can surely be no doubt that modern times present new problems which require new solutions. The past, present and future of communities, conceived in positive terms as the creative product of

imagination, implies the adoption and extension of ways of learning that are compatible with the evolving community of experience. This is a significant issue, given the corrosive power of modernism to undermine stability and continuity and the threats to the planet's very existence as a home for the human race. Geographical community and identity-based community are still powerful organising and framing concepts. They both retain resonance and the power to mobilise our sentiments and imaginations. We appear to want to retain them as a locus for our longings and imagined pasts and futures. And if this is truly the case then we need to re-think and re-shape our attitudes and understandings of what learning is and does for us, specifically in relation to our understanding of 'community' and the significance of our ecology over time and through space. We have suggested that a new ecological education is being signalled whose message for us is increasingly clear—that we need to re-assess our identities and belongings in the light of the new world that is emerging with great rapidity. The challenge is to understand and transform our communities and our learning as part of the solution to our problems. The new and imagined future will need new ways of knowing and being and a reformed universal and critical curriculum to match it.

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Chapter 11
The New Normal After Coronavirus: Is There Anyone Here from Education?

James Nyland and David Davies

The global pandemic we speak of as coronavirus was declared a "force majeure". It cancelled previous considerations and required the serious re-thinking of what we know and have accepted as 'normal'. It came in the footsteps of actual environmental catastrophes such as the Australian droughts and bushfires. It may yet come to be seen as another harbinger of the impending crises of global warming, sea level rises and pollution of our lakes, rivers, seas and land on a truly gargantuan and world scale (Klein, 2019; Monbiot, 2018). It signals the persistence of the unresolved 'wicked issues' (Firth, 2017) which continue to bedevil our societies and debase our cultures. We are referring to debilitating poverty, over-population, obscene and bizarre inequalities of housing, income, health and death and disease rates, which give the lie to the simple notion that we are all in this together and we all live in one world! Although there is truth in the view that this virus was no respecter of place and status in whom it infected—and death reached out its grasp to both high and low, rich and poor—there can be little doubt that its most severe impact came to those who were poorest and with least material resources.

As capitalism itself was placed in intensive care and whole economies and social systems of every stripe and sort were declared closed and locked down, governments everywhere declared themselves to be in the hands of the scientists and health experts. Decisions and understanding would come from science-based knowledge and the social and political decisions needed to combat the evil would be made in the general interests of everyone. 'We are all in this together' was a sentiment widely desired and shared. Partisan political capital could not be readily made from this crisis, which was one that could bring people together in shared adversity. The Dunkirk

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spirit (of the British and its former empire) was invoked—in Britain naturally—but similar nation-strengthening sentiments were abroad everywhere, including the spirit of 'mateship' in Australia. In many different places with widely varying cultures, there was a genuine need to pull together to save lives and our faith in the power of science and technology to solve these problems was tested.

At the same time, it could hardly be denied that the dominant economic spirit of the times, or what we might still wish to call an 'ideology'—that is to say the belief or assumption that privatised markets and de-regulated economic activity would solve all problems of supply and demand—was failing. A decade of widespread economic austerity following the global financial crisis of 2008–09 had left many countries with under-funded public and health services. Hospitals and care homes for the aged and ill and run for profit were not fit-for-purpose as the pandemic swept across the borders of nation states. Respirators, hygiene supplies, trained staff and medicinal therapies were all in short supply in some of the most prosperous and wealthy parts of Europe and America. The depth and extent of this failure demonstrated the failures of investment in public health systems across the globe. The price paid in human life was high with over a million deaths recorded worldwide within only months of the outbreak of the disease.

Such was the context for the investment of 'faith' in science and technology, which accompanied the response of governments to the crisis. The solutions were said everywhere to be driven and informed by the scientists (Costello, 2020). In the British context in the first few weeks of the crisis, not a single social scientist or analyst of international repute was brought forward by the government to help chart the social, psychological and political impact of the most significant crisis in society since World War II.

Behind the science and beyond its scope or grasp lay the dominant and hegemonic economic and political perspective of neo-liberalism of the last decade, which required the shrinking of public budgets and the subordination of much of our social and economic life to the disciplines of the market. It is the market that, it was supposed, would bring forward solutions that had necessarily to be focussed on technological and marketable products (Mazzucato, 2018). The market mechanism, however, signally failed at the outset of the pandemic. In response to growing death counts across the world, the 'market' was 'locked down' with vast swathes of public life closed and populations confined by law in their homes right across the world. Marketised competition could not yield the solutions to this problem and Big Government intervention was reintroduced to help manage the crisis. An appeal was made by governments to the old forms of social solidarity and community feeling so that the danger could be averted in the short term. People everywhere pulled together to confront a threat to people's lives, finding a social cohesion that had been palpably diminishing over decades in favour of individualised and self-centred behaviour. 'Society' was found once again and the state was in need of its support when no immediate scientific or technological fix was available.

The crisis then brought into existence some new forms of social coordination and revivified some older ones. The Government in Britain, for example, funded some of the voluntary foodbanks and charities set up over the previous decade to feed the

hungry and needy poor who could not afford to buy sufficient food to survive—this in one of the richest countries in the world. The role of poorly paid care workers in communities across the world has had light shone upon it and hopefully, it will be given an enhanced value, as has that of nurses and medics in public health institutions. It may have come home to many that a nation's health should not be subject to a marketised and monetised system that puts profit and return on shareholder investment before preparation against the likely forthcoming threats to public health and wellbeing.

11.1 Understanding and Learning About Ourselves

Across the world, whole populations were locked down in the attempt to minimise the impact of the disease on their health and hospital services had a universalistic intention. Everybody except key emergency and health workers was included and would make the self-same sacrifice. But of course, confinement does not impact equally—there are hidden and not-so-hidden hardships for those who have less food, less space, less income and less capacity for using resources to ensure a manageable and humane lockdown.

What became apparent was the sustained extremism of some of the geopolitical leaders at the highest level. President Trump, for example, demonstrated his preferences for minimising the impact and extent of the disease in America whilst simultaneously suggesting media conspiracies and Chinese negligence. That the disease spread from China seems undeniable, but blame without meaningful engagement in a solution together, for a problem which is intrinsically now global in its meaning and impact, was unhelpful. The transmission of viruses from animals to humans may indeed have a peculiarly Chinese dimension as with, for example, the first outbreaks of SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) in Foshan, Guangdong, China in November 2002 but the health of all our nations cannot be anything but a common concern. Yet the global response was in almost all cases to act in the *national* interest—regardless of the fact that the virus recognised no such borders.

That there is no universal consensus on how to deal with such pandemics other than mass vaccination is also now obvious. However, in this context, the suggestion that support for the World Health Organization (WHO) could be withdrawn seems counter-productive and self-damaging, yet the leading democratic economy and previous guarantor of global security, the USA, threatened precisely that! What was new here was the perception that the international agencies set up to help nations deal with these issues should be diminished and marginalised by nationalist and populist sentiment articulated by their democratically elected leaders. That some national borders were closed in defiance of treaty obligations in the European Union comes as no surprise either. In the cases of Hungary and Poland, who have expressed their desire to retain somehow their cultures and societies unchanged by the social effects of globalisation, whilst retaining naturally the economic benefits of cooperation and internationalisation, we have seen the borders closed and xenophobic

sentiment mobilised against the 'other'. Outsiders who are seen to have a culture or religion antipathetic to that of the nation are not welcome. Ultimately this issue is about mono-ethnic versus multi-ethnic societies and who has the right to be part of the 'national identity', but the pandemic illuminated a pervasive issue right across ethnic and national boundaries.

The issue of national identity plays to the supposedly binary debates which pose false and simple solutions to complex and difficult problems. In reality, few if any nations have a single and mono-ethnic culture. We may sink our differences in times of trouble, especially in war, but those differences are also what make us what we are. No nation is purely one thing and mono-ethnic cultures are a diminishing minority. A pandemic cannot be harnessed to a test of loyalty; it impacts across the known boundaries and differences of age, religion, ethnic affiliation and class. In its capacity to kill us we experience our commonality! Nevertheless, it is a harsh way to learn the lesson of the value tolerance and solidarity in the face of an enemy that knows no such distinctions. It may have come as a surprise to many in the UK population that some 40 per cent of health workers in the UK National Health Service were people from different ethnic backgrounds or cultures.

What the coronavirus episode showed is the porous quality of borders in a changing world. Without a lockdown of the transactional and transnational economy, there can be no 'closed borders'. We may as well suggest postponing spring following winter as stopping the longer-term process of globalisation. The indisputable internationalisation of our economies and cultures including population migrations ensures the limitations and narrow extent of singular, national solutions. We must surely devise a thinking process and set of solutions that look outwards, beyond the boundary as it were? The answers we find will tell us what kind of society we are.

11.2 New Challenges in a Changed World

Case and Deaton (2020) have tried to go beyond the statistics and descriptions of the dying and deaths contingent on the documented rising death rates in the United States. Their study was not concerned directly with coronavirus or infectious diseases but with what they call 'deaths of despair'—suicides, drug overdoses and alcoholic liver disease. Most importantly they sought to 'follow the trails' and identify the economic and social roots of these phenomena. As Durkheim (1951)—a 'founder' of critical sociological thinking discovered many decades earlier—says, the impact of self-destructive behaviour tells us profound things about our society and ourselves.

Constantly falling death rates were supposed to be one of the key indices of twentieth century life under capitalism (and communism). Mortality from all causes was not supposed to increase in western capitalistic democracies. What is authentically revealed through our responses to the new pandemic and thus the increased chances of unanticipated death, is the dire need to re-think our attitudes and beliefs about the globalised world which we now inhabit. There is neither a single nor simple answer to a problem that is, in reality, multi-faceted and exceedingly complex. It means we

must engage with the critical appraisal of what binds us together, what separates us and what can be changed in order to challenge a world of uncertainty and risk and an enhanced chance of an early demise. Coronavirus represents a challenge that is immediate and urgent. It crosses borders swiftly and with impunity and is capable of killing millions of people across the planet, especially those who are vulnerable due to age, poverty and distress. It came suddenly, unbidden and with little apparent warning, even though international health authorities had been warning the world of the contingencies needed since the SARS deaths in 2002 and 2003 and the most complex Ebola outbreak between 2013 and 2016.

The economic repercussions of the pandemic will only be known in the course of time. Millions of workers of all kinds were laid off and the world economy went into recession with fears of an even greater 'depression' arising more serious than the catastrophe of the 1930s. Whilst in the advanced economies we can hope to see massive public investment and attempts to get things back under control, in developing countries the fear is that the foundations for successive waves of infection are being laid because they are ill-equipped to deal with it. The lack of clean running water supplies is perhaps only the most obvious feature which shows how difficult it is to combat the disease through hand-washing and social distancing. Some people will be faced with a choice of a very high risk of infection by continuing to work in contagious situations or of literal starvation for their families. Many countries in the developing world have no developed public health systems and their solution may lie with the long-term search for a vaccine. In the meantime, they need massive and coordinated support and interventions that can only be provided by the rich advanced countries. Ethno-nationalism with its emphases on defensive nationalism, erecting tariffs, building walls and closing borders, does not suggest any sort of solution.

Yet coronavirus is *not* the existential threat of planetary disaster which rising temperatures and sea levels, environmental degradation beyond repair and the destruction of the earth's atmosphere and biosphere portend. These remain the reality for our future generations who are currently in our schools, colleges and universities. Coronavirus can be tackled and hopefully defeated, eventually, with a vaccine so that we become largely immune. All that this will take will be resources, human ingenuity, effort directed internationally and money—all of which we have in abundance, though not sufficiently or equally distributed at present to get the task done immediately and thus prevent loss of life on a huge scale. Climate change on a world scale, the wilful destruction of our rain forests, disastrous carbon levels in our atmosphere and the destruction of marine life in our oceans are another matter, as is eradicating the obscene poverty in developing nations and addressing the migrating millions seeking a better life. These are problems of a different magnitude and scale and may mean we are heading for the sixth and possibly final 'extinction' of species on our planet, should we fail and continue to fail to reverse the trends towards planetary degradation and destruction (Kolbert, 2015).

What is most significant about the coronavirus pandemic is that our focus and attention has been shifted. We have been forced to confront a deadly disease but one that can be combatted. This is our opportunity to begin to ask questions about solutions for the greater and ultimately more destructive problems around the notion

of sustainable development and social cooperation. People of the current generation will be forced to look at the way risk and vulnerability is organised and managed. If it was true in the past that wealth and membership of an advanced nation gave you immunity to worldwide epidemics and 'events', it is now clearly not the case. What people expect of government and maybe even of themselves will change under the impact of these forces and the questions that arise from them. Will this indeed be 'a new normal' and what form will it take?

11.3 Living with the Here and Now and Future?

There is an argument that history reached a decisive moment in this crisis and that we shall go forward towards a radically different type of society now that the old one has been found wanting. Pope Francis has argued that we are living in a changed era rather than an era of change. It may be that the era of radical hyper-accelerated, all-consuming forms of capitalism (Noys, 2014; Picketty, 2020) and peak globalisation are now over. A more fragmented and diverse world appears to be coming into existence which requires a more adaptable and diverse set of social and political arrangements than that of the hyper-globalisation of recent decades. Economic efficiency as an overriding goal of government has been shown by the crisis to be ineffective and there is a realisation that we in the West must be more independent of China for manufactured goods, health products and security technology. We will travel less by air and produce more of our own food and governments will act to control the global market. Those governments that follow an authoritarian populist path (Eatwell & Goodwin, 2018) may gather greater political support, especially as they challenge the 'weak' and ineffective social democratic states overstate support for key industries, anti-immigrant policies and the supposed failures of the liberal-market economies. The argument here is that the pandemic weakened the liberal-democratic states, including the European Union, which have been disintegrating for many years in the face of alternative models provided by China, Russia and the resurgent USA dedicated, in what proved to be a single but momentous and disruptive term of office, under President Trump to 'America First' (Gray, 2020).

Some things then will change, as will our attitudes towards some of the solutions to the coronavirus pandemic proposed by those in political power. Who takes responsibility, if we wish to have a more responsive and democratic society, has now become a crucial question. We have observed the attempt to elide scientific evidence into political and social policy without adequate and transparent analysis of the data. We have seen an obfuscation of thinking without key assumptions being made clear by those who would use scientists' research and medical judgements for their policy choices. We have seen a world enthralled by technological solutions and fixes, which attempt to use the tech industries to control populations. China's smartphone health-rating app can track who leaves their house and when and it can control access to all public areas of life including shops, banks, transport and public buildings. Companies such as Apple, Google, Amazon and Microsoft have been used by governments for

infrastructure modelling and data capture on their populations. In a post-pandemic world, the communication-tech industries stand to make yet more trillions in profits as we seek to track and trace our health profiles in order to make ourselves feel safe again. However, they are not accountable to those whom they control and manage. There is little democratic accountability and transparency in this brave new world.

Currently, the companies that own and control our commonly-held cyberspace are fundamentally responsible to their owners. Everyone else is either a worker or a consumer with no rights of ownership. The digital platforms are sites for individual and business consumption; they do not exist for social and mutual benefit. Social solidarity and communal assistance, which has proved so valuable in addressing the coronavirus challenge, are not part of the business plans for this burgeoning aspect of modernity. The problem now, at least in part, is how to make the digital platform's part of a more democratic and open society? Morozov (2020) put this point as follows: "COVID-19 reveals the extreme dependence of democracies on the undemocratic exercise of private power by technology platforms."

Perhaps the key issue thrown up by the virus crisis is: how does a state safeguard its people in a world where future growth must be limited, where rising populations with poor economic prospects destabilise whole regions and where geopolitical change including war is pervasive? Two possible scenarios may be worth considering. First, those countries that value collective wellbeing more than individual and personal autonomy may adapt to the new norm better than many western nations; and second, the more 'open' and liberal societies may be forced to socialise their economies and strengthen the state's protective role by providing greater welfare and social support as well as underpinning economic activity. These are developments that literally force us to re-think our attitudes to international and multilateral agreements and organisations because they signal a radical shift in how we imagine they can work for us in the future. The free movement of capital and labour around the world would certainly be affected. For example, what price is Australia's third-largest export-education—when national sovereignty dictates people stay at home to be educated? (Guardian Australia, 2020a).

11.4 Looking Ahead

When the virus has been stopped and eradicated, we shall need to return to these issues because they are arguably the real existential crisis. This means the new normal will change the way we live, what we consume, where we travel and how we communicate and accommodate ourselves to a more intrusive state. We want to be less fragile and vulnerable; we want to feel we can rely on family and community for support and we shall hope to contribute more to it; and we want to mitigate the ruthlessness and exploitation we see everywhere with a greater degree of social justice. Defeating the virus cannot reverse the progress that has been made if we stand by our beliefs and we militate for our freedoms to think critically, to publish our views and to meet

to have our opinions challenged. Post-viral cannot mean post-democratic. We have been locked down not locked up!

A whole series of trends can be identified which may have been accelerated and exaggerated by the pandemic. The retreat of the USA from international leadership will surely force nation states to take charge of their own economic recovery. Climate change and environmental degradation will magnify current trends of mass migration from the underdeveloped world to Europe and America, whilst rising unemployment in the West may fuel anti-migrant sentiment. The further growth of world population and rising tides of expectation from poor people who want what rich nations have—high standards of living and consumer spending—is to be expected. Within 50 years the population of Africa is expected to double, which will have implications far beyond the borders of African states. Global and local economic, social and educational systems will need to be fundamentally re-shaped to cope with such change. Cooperation on a global scale is needed if these trends are not to lead to catastrophic conflict.

If the coronavirus episode of 2020 taught us some positive lessons regarding the need for scientific and health cooperation on a world scale to combat infectious diseases, it also taught us that the wicked issues are still there. These issues are themselves both real and existing. Poverty, war and disease continue to kill people regardless of the struggle between different and competing ideologies and explanations of why these things happen. But it is important to have explanations; it is vital to educate ourselves on the real causes and consequences of our beliefs and practices. There is an argument for the proposition that only critical learning and critical thinking (Davies & Nyland, 2018) can take us beyond the limits of current behaviour and engaged learning within universities is one of the contested yet vital sources of renewal and progress towards the much-needed solutions. There are questions about how university engagement in the past has been conceptualised as a vital and worthwhile challenging management issue rather than one that addresses the learning and teaching challenges both within and out with the universities themselves.

11.5 What Will Universities Do?

The over-reliance on international on-shore students by the majority of Australian Higher Education Institutions in recent years has seen these organisations grow to become the largest universities in the world on a per capita basis. The Australian international student business, which accounted for $10 billion in international student fees in 2019, came to a dramatic halt with the impact of Covid-19 and the resulting closure of international and domestic borders. Continuing restrictions on overseas travel put the notion of a mass return of international students to Australian universities in considerable doubt. Equally, international students who may have had Australia on the top of their study destination list may now look towards countries such as Canada and the UK to avoid online learning from their home country as

opposed to a truly international education experience, even though future health pandemics cannot be ruled out.

In an effort to reset strategy in order to minimise the continuing impact on Australia's fourth-largest export market, the Australian Federal Government has identified an opportunity for universities to align their degree offerings to the emerging 'skills gap' identified in the 5th Intergenerational Report (2021). This report highlights an outlook for Australia over the next 40 years that foreshadows significant challenges ahead. The implication for universities is that there are likely to be fewer domestic students on campus, fewer academics and professional support staff and the ongoing competition for resources is likely to be fiercer than ever. It predicts falling birth rates and falling migration due to Covid-19. The implications of this reduced population growth (and therefore revenue) for universities are vastly significant.

In 2021 the Federal Education Minister Alan Tudge called on universities to develop new degrees that focus on teaching the skills and knowledge areas for the new economy—nationally and globally. He mapped out a digital vision, focusing on online courses to attract international students from untapped markets in a new International Education Strategy for the coming third decade of the century. This strategy calls for a departure from the traditional on-campus model in favour of the global e-learning market which is set to grow from $130 billion to more than $470 billion by the middle of the decade (Zaglas, 2021).

Australian universities performed heroically in shifting to online and multi-modal forms of education throughout the 2020–2022 pandemic and its aftermath to support their students. The Covid crisis has forced everyone to adopt new ways of working and doing things and hybrid ways are the new norm. These changes have included a significant reduction in the workforce and the number of academic and professional staff working in universities is unlikely to return to pre-pandemic levels. Although Australian universities have developed into corporations with predominantly commercial agendas that have fuelled massive growth and profitability, it is fair to say that the international student business model will look very different when it finally is able to revive itself.

Faced with this new normal, what will universities do?

There are choices to be made and debates to be held on what should frame and help organise the response to this situation of crisis, from what is after all a varied and diffuse set of institutions. A similar point could be made from many differing national viewpoints across many different and contrasting nation states. There is, however, at least one commonly-held perspective: higher education is of great if not paramount national importance—economically, socially and politically. Much of it can only exist with state and government support and there are few if any states or communities that deny the strategic significance of learning and research to their futures.

However, when addressing the concrete issues of what is to be done it is probably clear that a range of practical matters will come to the fore. A possible list might be as follows:

- tuition restructured and re-ordered to reflect the 'new reality' of students' lives
- more flexible attendance and use of distance learning
- online learning and tuition reconfigured to include face-to-face and remote contact
- independent learning re-assessed as a curriculum objective
- more creative and 'fair' distance assessments
- less institutional financial dependency on international/out-of-country students
- renegotiation of student fees to achieve fairness and social justice objectives
- more opportunities for distance students to be socially active and engaged in the university.

Many of these adaptive procedures will inevitably involve the further extension of online learning. University teachers will need to construct new and adaptive methodologies for learning within subject boundaries. Face-to-face tuition may become much harder to get for many students. Assessment within online learning will be an increasingly important arena for student engagement with critical thinking, which requires conceptual struggle for answers rather than mechanistic and rote-learned responses. The integrity of assessments will be more problematical than before as students naturally seek to manipulate the demands made on their time and efforts. The real issue will be how to make learning progressive and critical in the context of ever-more digitised systems for learning access and support. At another level—that of strategic intellectual work on teaching and learning—we may want to ask whether we can bring about a more ecologically-based education and one that is rooted in the concerns of social justice. The interconnectedness of health and social conditions with planetary survival must surely correspond with the need for a critical curriculum that embraces learning, teaching, research and scholarship.

A number of strategic issues can be discerned including:

- whether institutions are able to act independently or as a collective on fees and funding
- how universities might adapt to a changing urban landscape and a threatened environment and the communities which inhabit them (Bell, 2019; Davies & Nyland, 2020)
- should an individual university re-dedicate to engagement or retrench?
- can universities themselves provide leadership for the sector and for students against insecurity and a precarious future?
- is it possible to offer a 'new deal' to students around future health and continuing learning benefits, including insurance and family membership?
- can the idea of contemporary university engagement embrace the new challenges of a new era including those of democratic accountability (Nyland & Davies, 2020) and build on the achievements of those who went before in building consciousness of university engagement (Watson, 2007).

It is clear that a range of possibilities exists and it is only possible to touch on what these might be. It is also clear that startlingly different and contrary conclusions can be drawn from the experience and lessons of crisis management. Whilst the coronavirus pandemic was still holding sway in 2020/21 and immediately following a summer

of unparalleled destruction of the Australian landscape by out-of-control bush fires, the education minister announced a doubling of the costs of humanities degrees (Guardian Australia, 2020b). A range of vocational programmes was apparently to be protected. The changes were seemingly in response to substantial rising demand from homegrown year 12 graduating students. If the social and educational reasoning for such proposals is opaque, what is transparently clear is the need to re-think what we learn and teach and the ways in which we do this. This is not a radical approach but it does stress the categoric importance of re-thinking the basis on which we think about and deliver education as we consider the crises we have already had and we contemplate the crises that we almost certainly will experience in the future.

11.6 The New Normal?

The coronavirus pandemic had the unanticipated consequence of shocking world sentiment with its virulence and speed of infection as it spread across the globe. There were undoubtedly worse impacts from the disease on the poor and less well-educated in almost all nations, which seemed all the more shocking when those suffering the most appeared to reside in some of the nations with the most advanced public health systems. Yet beyond the terrible impact at the personal level involving millions of infections and deaths and the tragedies this yielded for every family affected, there is an ongoing 'new normal' emerging. This new normal will be partially driven by economic realities as many commentators noted the difficulties of a bounce back to business as usual following the suppression of the disease, if not its entire eradication through the development of successful vaccines. There will be a period in which many industries simply cannot reach a level of activity that was present before the pandemic struck. Unemployment will rise exponentially, especially in people-facing industries such as tourism, travel and entertainment and it is moot just how long this situation will persist. Years, if not decades could be needed to return to the previous normal for employment levels. Sustained unemployment unquestionably imposes social and personal costs in the form of poor health, congenital illness and lowered life expectancy as well as reducing levels of social cohesion and the strengths of family life. The new economies emerging after the coronavirus crisis will require a more physically-distanced economy and may well demand a different range of skills and knowledge for successful employment. All of this could place the existing low-skilled workforce at a yet greater disadvantage in competing for rewarding work. The state will almost certainly play a more active role as 'employer of last resort' in order to maintain economic activity—as it attempted to do with mixed results in the 1980s in the UK when the infamous Youth Training Scheme (YTS) was introduced to keep potentially idle and disruptive young people off the streets (Dale, 1985).

Yet there remains a serious question as to whether mass unemployment is inevitable. Major policy choices are available at this juncture in history. Large scale lay-offs in the private sector of the economy can be countered by public sector job creation, especially in those regions and cities where few options are available

through private sector investment. Such investment could be within a context of 'green' industrial investment so that environmental regeneration and sustainability could be the hallmark of social and economic renewal. Net-zero carbon emissions could be the aim of economic regeneration, drawing on the lessons of the health crisis. Global health—always locally experienced even when acquired from elsewhere—and the continuing and impending climate and ecological disaster facing the planet are connected. They are both the expression and reflection of how we handle the great social issues of our time. The uncaring and often uncontrolled exploitation of our natural habitats and species yields consequences for the health of all, for the social wellbeing of all our communities and now for the very existence of a viable planetary future for our children and grandchildren. No previous generation in all of history's existence has been faced with such existential questions, so we have both the power to destroy our planet and its precarious social lives and we have the capacity and perhaps consciousness to change course and save our futures by radically reforming our present lives.

11.7 The Implications for Education

Faced with the existential crises of health pandemics *and* planetary survival more generally, we are forced to ask whether universities are adequate for the challenge. Can they dominate, in a good sense, educational thinking in the future as they did in the past and assert their relevance to the big questions of inequality and the need for social justice? (Bell, 2018) Unfortunately, what drives and animates universities are the privatisation of public resources, which has resulted from the introduction of 'market-driven' student tuition fees, the increasing dependence on overseas students who pay high fees and on research grants, many of which are publicly funded. Much of the competitiveness which drives the increasing 'performativity' of universities is rooted in the way universities function to differentiate and select the deserving from the less deserving and thus legitimate those who will receive better funding from the others. It is the grand paradox of mass higher education that the extension of learning opportunities is at the same time the co-extensive sifting and selection of those thoughts best fitted for the elite professions and careers. Many will be admitted but relatively few shall be chosen! The massive expansion of higher education worldwide has not overcome the equally and massively continuance of social inequality and social injustice.

Since the 1980s, there has been no great second wave of educational reform and no new goals agreed for the third decade of the twenty-first century beyond that of accommodating to the digital and techno-revolutions of the communications industries. New social constituencies have nevertheless emerged and these include the world's poorest people, the dispossessed and refugees resulting from wars, famines, climate change and environmental degradation and sometimes from racial persecution and ethnic and religious intolerance.

For the emerging generations, university engagement will need to be different from the past. There are curricular issues to be addressed such as the need for comprehensive and universal literacy. Such a concept might conceivably include for example—within the commitment to learning—the use of more than one language in our public life and discourse. In Australia, for example, the cultural loss of indigenous languages could be countered by majority populations learning to communicate in local languages as well as the 'national' language, English. In many communities throughout the world, people speak more than a single language or dialect and this can be a force for good, helping to sustain a recognised diversity and plurality of cultures. We have to be aware also that monolingualism has often been used as a divisive and destructive cultural pursuit, which has sustained ultra-nationalism, ethnonationalism and social exclusion. The content of degrees in the expanded higher education system has continued to be dominated by vocational concerns—what industry wants or requires—with little regard given to the sexual and social and racial division of labour and its divisive and negative consequences. At the start of the third decade of the twenty-first century, it had regrettably become clear that universities, in general, were not leading the fundamental reform of learning, education and opportunity which had been signalled by the earlier growth of mass literacy and universal schooling and subsequent expansion of higher education. The key concerns of most universities lay elsewhere, in spite of some exceptional attempts to extend learning opportunities and access to excluded learners. The rhetoric of equity and access far exceeded the reality of achievement, leaving university engagement with a challenge of change in the new normal times.

In a world where we are not certain of what skills and knowledge are needed for the future working population and the need for lifelong learning more generally, we can identify some essential curricular content, which has the potential to change the direction. Knowledge needs to be acquired in the context of a *general* education which involves comprehensive literacy and critical thinking skills. The skills of analysis and conceptualisation, using ideas and critical concepts, are crucial (Hall, 1983) as is relevant content. What is studied matters so the object of study should bring into consideration the 'wicked issues' we have mentioned earlier. As we have argued, these will inevitably force themselves onto our learning agendas as social and ecological crises continue to force change, regardless of any desires to conserve what exists.

The key question posed is: how are universities to be relevant to the social and political values and expectations of an emerging future? (Bell, 2018) What the health pandemics, the ecological crises and the challenges of social exclusion and social injustice show us is that the existing curriculum and educational practices of universities are inadequate to the tasks facing us and the possibilities of change.

As social forces emerge and change us, universities need to re-imagine and reinvent themselves once again by asking themselves: why for the broad masses of people is education important? Obviously, for any individual, there is a personal answer to this question, shaped by the contingencies of an individual life. However, at the level of the social group, the community, the ethnic group or even the nation, a different answer is required. For the many who have few privileges and little access

to learning opportunities, universal education, including university education, cannot be priced as a commodity. It needs to be free and universally available to all those who need it and wants it as a social benefit that enriches the whole of society. How we manage our education is an indicator of the kind of society and civilisation we want. There is a social horizon of learning at stake here which must be raised above the limitations of a monetised commodity, bought and sold like any other product or service. The new normal should surely be constructed for a democratic and universal education which is a national popular goal. If this is not to begin now, then when?

11.8 What We Have Learned from the Pandemic

Three waves of the Covid 19 virus had swept across the world by the summer of 2021 leaving its tragic legacy of millions dead and billions infected. The great social disruption occurred and the world economy slumped for a period before appearing to bounce back once the Chinese and American states had made their interventions in public healthcare with lockdowns and set their respective economies on track for growth again. What was clear was the unpreparedness and incompetence shown by states and governments that might have been expected to do better. The crisis in health brought about a crisis in leadership, in trust in governments by their people and in the people's faith in scientific expertise to prevail over the threats. In some states, a situation of apparent paralysis seemed to occur in the face of the localised meltdown of health and social services. Those societies that effectively isolated and quarantined their infected and suspected populations and exercised strict border immigration control fared best and had fewer deaths. Some societies, notably the UK, Italy and the United States, which had advanced health care and scientific expertise available actually fared badly and carried some of the highest death and infection tolls in the first waves of infection.

By the end of 2021 science had rescued the situation to an extent by the rapid development and introduction of vaccines. The USA, Germany and the UK were amongst the front-runners in this and expectations were exceeded with millions of doses manufactured and distributed. This was done on an unequal basis with the wealthy countries initially monopolising the vast bulk of available vaccines. China and Russia had also entered the scene with offers of their own vaccines to their client nations and others who were deemed worthy of support. Science appeared to be the route out of the great threat to lives the world over. However, science proved to be more limited than anticipated in yielding a clear and unambiguous position on how to deal with a pandemic that threw up variants and a bewildering array of disease symptoms. Science and technologies undoubtedly were seen as the best solution to the wider pandemic but they did not, nor could they, solve on their own the problems which our globalised world had produced hand-in-hand with the disease. The production and purchase of the majority of vaccines were initially focussed on the advanced western nations whereas the greatest need was emerging in the poorer nations with their growing social, health and economic inequalities.

Internationally the World Health Organisation (WHO) was exposed as underfunded and was slow to declare a global emergency. American President Donald Trump castigated the WHO and withdrew US funding in an attempt to marginalise an international organisation dedicated to collective wellbeing. Other international organisations fared little better in combatting the pandemic and vaccine nationalism emerged as a theme for countries willing to put their own populations before those of others. The health agendas did not align with the social and political agendas and whereas scientific collaboration ensured information continued to be shared across national boundaries, the political responses to the pandemic were widely disparate (Ball, 2020). Some of the nationalist, 'authoritarian populist' leaders in, for example, Russia, Brazil and the United States displayed a lack of seriousness in tackling the disease early on and some later indulged in denial and conspiracy theories. Some libertarians denied the pandemic's problems existed at all-all of which signalled a crisis in democratic governance and a question mark over the future of the liberal democracies (Garton Ash, 2021).

The Coronavirus crisis did not itself generate the social and economic crises which accompanied it, however, it did hold up a mirror to the societies and communities impacted by it. It appeared to accelerate the sense of growing insecurity and the breakdown of communal norms and forms of social solidarity. Whereas some societies and communities showed outstanding solidarity in combatting the spread of the disease, there was evidence of other forms of communal unity resting on division, segregation and the keeping of distance and borders. Both the USA and the European Union had episodes when separate states went their own ways and abandoned the notion of collective and shared security. According to Zygmunt Bauman …' We miss community because we miss security, a quality crucial to a happy life, but one which the world we inhabit is ever less able to offer and ever-more reluctant to promise' (2001: 144).In the relations of nation to nation, the Covid 19 crisis showed the relative absence of reciprocal and binding ties and sentiments as separate nations rushed to safeguard vaccine supplies for themselves alone. In some cases, there were spectacular breaches of health protocols when for, example, the senior advisor to the British Prime Minister broke the lockdown rules by driving hundreds of miles with his family to a place of greater safety than that of London. President Trump notoriously mingled in unsafe crowds and meetings when social distancing was the health and scientific advice given to the nation at large. None of this is to deny the individual and collective acts of sacrifice and bravery which many people of all nations showed in combatting the disease in their rooted communities, their places of work and in the clinics and hospitals of the front line. However, safety and security was not available through medical interventions no matter how engaged and committed health workers were. Security only became available through the roll-out of the vaccine immunisation programmes worldwide.

The new normal, following the pandemic, is unlikely to replace the old uncertainties and divisions which characterised the old normal. If one lesson alone was learned it was that the world was unprepared for what it was forced to confront. It was hoped by many that a danger to all would generate collective solidarity and facilitate a re-evaluation of who and what was truly valuable. The true value of human life

would be established by recognising the contribution of lower-paid health workers and those without capital, wealth and financial resources who had secured health and care services for everyone in need. To the astonishing disappointment of the nation, the relatively low paid nurses in the UK were awarded a 1% pay rise at the end of the first year of the pandemic by the British Government. Nobody could argue that this signalled a re-assessment of the scale of values and the new normal. If we were unprepared for the pandemic we also demonstrated the fact that collectively we can also have short memories.

In reflecting on the health crisis induced by Covid 19 it is clear that this is very unlikely to be the last. There is good reason to suppose that there will be more pandemics and that these will be linked to environmental degradation and other global crises of population growth, food distribution, the destruction of natural habitats and climate change. Few governments are prepared for these crises and when they impact upon us the response will be about crisis management and muddling through, rather than planning ahead based on the lessons learned about the need for common solutions and collective security. Furthermore, we should surely learn that the crises of security themselves are only a part of the problem since a fundamental issue is that such crises are accompanied by a crisis of information. The digital age and the phenomenal spread of internet based information and disinformation sources mean we inhabit a system of mass communication in which there is no accountability and no democratic control to counter inaccuracy and lies and conspiracy theories. In some countries, this misuse and abuse of social and communication media served to exacerbate the pandemic by facilitating the spreading of untruths, lies and unwarranted fantasised conspiracy theories. The information world and 'big tech' is at the frontier of power and unchecked can represent a threat to democratic norms (Zuboff, 2019).

We have suggested that our social and economic system went into intensive care as the pandemic spread throughout the globe. Two years after its initial onslaught it was clear that much had been done to mitigate the worst excesses of the disease. Science-based knowledge was brought to bear and succeeded to a degree in stemming the tide of death and illness that literally threatened to engulf the globe. This was a limited success since the disease was not wholly eradicated and its impacts continued to be differentially felt- mostly by the poor and dispossessed in the poorer and underdeveloped countries. It is hard to find evidence that we were all in it together. Even in some of the rich metropolitan countries the Covid-related measures to combat the disease produced differential effects. The closure of schools and children's nurseries during the pandemic fell particularly hard on disadvantaged children, who are more likely to have unequal access to technology, are likely to live in smaller homes and live in neighbourhoods where infection rates and school closures were higher. Inequalities in school achievements which may have deepened along class lines and worsened mental health conditions for young people with lifelong impacts were reported (Davies, 2021).

We have learned, however, something more about ourselves- that some of the things that separate us such as our national identities and borders are unlikely to disappear soon. The pandemic forced us to give up freedoms for security—a perennial

issue in communities that want a de-regulated society and its freedoms but cavil at its enforced restrictions which safeguard security and safety. We cannot have both at the same time.

The pandemic has taught us that clear, science-led thinking allied to purposive social and collective action for the greater good can effectively counter the threat posed by viruses. They can be kept at bay and in the longer term neutralised so health safety and security can be re-established. The way the pandemic was handled and understood, however, has offered another lesson altogether. The threats to our existence posed by climate and planetary degradation will be far more serious than that of Covid 19 and our need for interdependence and new thinking will be far greater. We can name the threats but we cannot name the solutions yet we cannot be indifferent without losing our future. This chapter and the book as a whole have opted for engagement rather than disengagement and to make the case for our vision of a better outcome. This is most likely if we continue to have open discourse and educational debate to engage with and pushback what Bauman (ibid: 142) presciently called the 'gathering tides of global turbulance'.

11.9 In Conclusion

This future seems set to be one of continuing social crises, which simultaneously constitutes an educational crisis. For universities, this amounts to the existence of a contradictory struggle where teachers and researchers encounter the older academic forms and curricula and yet are tasked with producing new knowledge and transformations. In universities in the third decade of the twenty-first century, the provided system and conventional curriculum are under challenge. The response will need new tools and ways of doing things. However, the broadening and deepening themes of university engagement in response to crises pose fundamental questions which are now above the horizon and are increasingly part of our consciousness of what universal higher learning should and can be. In the new normal, which will be extraordinary in so many ways, who will be there from education?

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Part IV
Conclusion

Chapter 12
Learning that Matters

James Nyland and David Davies

12.1 Learning that Matters

This volume was produced by two university academics and their colleagues and supporters who have tried to be part of a continuing dialogue on how universities are defining and attempting to develop a progressive programme of 'engagement' with issues, problems and critical thinking, which meet the challenges of change and modernity. These challenges include an attempt to understand and engage with the key issues of our time, especially those that impact higher education.

One of the most important historic tasks of higher education was to terminate educational inequality, which was both a political and educational goal. The successful development of mass entry to universities may have once been thought to have achieved this. Certainly, the past shows us the existence of optimism that universities might be the harbingers of a democratic triumph. However, the progressive dismantling of the vision of a democratic and universal literacy delivered by 'collegial' universities has occurred over recent times. The vision has been expropriated by the notion of 'choice' and transformed into the idea of an educational supermarket where all learning can be given a commercial value and monetised. Universities themselves have become extraordinarily 'big business'- such that in countries like Australia it has been claimed as the fourth largest generator of wealth in the form of value equivalent for gross domestic product. There can be no doubt that as knowledge has exploded into availability through social, economic and technological change, its translation into privilege has occurred at the same time. The inequalities on a global scale as well as within nations have not been eradicated; they

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have been reformatted through educational selection so as to legitimate the false claims of meritocracy.

These factors, along with the imminent and pervasive sense of crisis and anxiety which—alongside a series of actual physical global catastrophes of environmental degradation and health pandemics in the early twenty-first century—have yielded a popular deficit in the public imagination. People can no longer control their own futures and perhaps are unable even to imagine a different future. It is easier to imagine the ending of the world than it is to imagine the ending of capitalism! The central argument in this volume has been the need for the universities, in general, to adequately define and address these issues in the curriculum. This is not an argument that demands an escape from the academic disciplines and thinking that informs departmental university cultures. It is rather an argument for the disciplines to address which values, what emphasis, whose exclusions serve which interests? It is also clear that there is no escape from the reality that knowledge and the curriculum will have a social purpose—it is a question of which and whose social purpose will that be?

The educational goal of this book is to encourage learning and critical thinking; to bring something to bear which can work on experience and which can deal with knowledge as critique. A curriculum cannot teach or tell itself; it has to be taught and learned and that is why a number of the articles in this book try to engage with pedagogy and with inspirational teachers who teach critical thinking, though they may call it by different names. Through this notion of criticality, the possibility of using knowledge for change and for empowerment can be real, but it takes critical thinking to achieve this and this is itself a statement of value for which no apologies are due, in our view.

If university engagement is to live up to its claims to be transforming higher learning experience and not just maintaining the existing order of things, then the existing dimensions of learning need to be expanded. It may not be enough, for example, to assume the co-existence of a dual context of global economy and crises and a problematic national state which may or may not have the capacity for compensatory welfare for those who cannot compete. This has arguably been the position from which many liberal democratic countries have tried to resolve their own particular national dilemmas arising out of truly seismic and global shifts in social and economic life. The university alone cannot solve such a problem but its knowledge of it cannot be reduced to providing information; knowledge cannot become reduced to competence. Not to address this would be a great disavowal. In this volume, university engagement, especially in relation to what we have called a critical curriculum, should be about engaging with the wider world and its pressing problems. The engaged university must provide accounts and explanations which arm those whose needs are greatest so that debate leads to societal action. The implication of this is that knowledge of the world is concurrently intervention in that world. A critical curriculum is on everyone's agenda for future learning in the engaged university.

It might be suggested that the different but connected narratives in these pages raise more questions than answers and if so then we can respond that the search for knowledge and understanding must always involve a question. Without asking the right questions we may never get on to the right track. It may be that a small

number of concerns can be so central and so 'determining' that they stand out as questions that shape our deepest responses to the issues that affect most of us, most deeply. Who can deny that universities, in producing knowledge for an unknown future, are at the intersection of the past and that future and a choice must be made between the competing narratives. The multiple constituencies and stakeholders are held together at a cost and we have competing narratives about paying the price for what we receive. If we are positioned as consumers rather than producers can diverse communities compete on equal terms with economic might and power?

From the reflections arising out of these pages we selected a small number of questions to represent both our current fate and that of the next generations who will be forced to confront and engage with humanity's future:

- If we are all interdependent in a fast globalising world how can we master our own fate without taking account of others? Whatever separates us and forces us to be distant from others, to create boundaries and barricades must surely be overcome through collective action and critical learning.
- Is our identity strongest and most secure with a specific institution or with a wider social network of humanity? Specifically, can the engaged university be the expression of social and moral improvement in a marketised and monetised world?
- Can we generate our own narratives of the future possibilities for education that go beyond the adaptive and organisational capacities of conventional universities? The challenge is to frame priorities that challenge the interconnected issues of poverty, deprivation, inequity, health and the existential crises of our environment and planet.
- Who will re-invent and broadcast the critical curriculum and universal literacy needed to respond to and overcome a 'toxic' world? How will a rapid response be made since time is of the essence and may run out before a solution is in prospect?

For the present the engaged curriculum is a problem to be defined, advocated, challenged and changed: for the future, it is a question to be asked.

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10. Ways of Knowing: Towards an Ecology of Learning and Community

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11. The New Normal After Coronavirus: Is There Anyone Here from Education?

James Nyland and David Davies

Part IV Conclusion

12. Learning that Matters

Note to the Reader

This volume brings together articles and material, some of which have appeared previously in books, journals and academic papers. The different referencing styles used throughout inevitably reflect a diversity of usage, though within each chapter uniform punctuation has been attempted.