



Lifelong Learning As A Pedagogical Place

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ABSTRACT

The dominant form of lifelong learning has relatively recently become a “pedagogy of the self” shaping a particular identity of a “learner” which may limit the flourishing of the individual in society. How did this come about? And what may be needed from educators towards the re-invention of a lifelong learning pedagogy that intentionally assists the flourishing of individuals? These questions, to me as an educator, rank highly as important educational challenges educators may all have come to know in one way or another in our teaching and learning situations today.

As it may be possible to recast lifelong learning into a critical pedagogy and to acknowledge a social dimension at the heart of its discourse, what is the best kind of contribution educators could be making in this regard?

As a university-based adult education lecturer, in this paper I reflect on the kind of lifelong learning I regard as emblematic of my teaching and learning arrangements. In particular, I seek to understand “critically and systematically” how I could contribute to the revised pedagogy of lifelong learning Hinchecliffe (2006) puts forward.

Drawing mainly on phenomenological insights from the work of van Manen to guide my critical self-reflection, one of the main matters for further consideration is finding a shared understanding among educators of lifelong learning as a pedagogical place, and what a future-focused lifelong learning pedagogy might look like to inform educational success for all and in ways that are both personally and professionally meaningful to individuals.

Keywords: Lifelong learning, pedagogy, adult education, self-study, lived experience

INTRODUCTION

In education we now hear calls for ‘caring schools’, ‘caring teachers’, ‘caring curricula’, ‘caring pedagogies’, etc ‘Care’ becomes a critical term of a morally attuned professional language, expressing vocational commitments, and passing on the ‘tradition of service’ (Schervish et al, 1995). ... But if we want to understand how caring is actually experienced, then conceptual models and professional discourses are not always the best references. We may need to bypass

conceptual and cognitive models in favour of more literary and imaginary sources that stay attentive to ethical experience, (van Manen, 2000, p.316).

More than twenty years later as I take into account van Manen’s insights pertaining to ‘caring’ in educational spaces, and specifically with reference to recent UNESCO calls, my educator experience as a lifelong learner impels me to explore the interchange, of “caring” with “lifelong learning”, in the teaching and learning spaces I may be seeking to better understand and improve. A recent

UNESCO report presents a case for “a future-focused vision of education, which demands a major shift towards a culture of lifelong learning by 2050, (UNESCO, 2020, p.10). All over the world individuals are called upon to consider the importance of learning societies and to adopt a lifelong learning identity throughout their lives as an appropriate point of departure for addressing the urgent matters of our time. These challenges would include matters pertaining to our global climate emergency and societal inequality brought once more to the fore, clearly and aggressively, by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Broadly aligned to this new, and re-imagined, call for lifelong learning, another recent UNESCO report focuses on the transformative work on teachers as an important focal area of education landscapes world-wide, and it is especially interesting to note that every “teacher’s ‘*life library*’ is fundamental to their work” and teachers are also considered to be “agents of an education entangled with life, ” (UNESCO, 2021, p.90). Indeed, as an educator, what does my ‘*life library*’ look like at this point in time, and how has it assisted in shaping the kind of lifelong learning that may be required to address an educational entanglement of the lives the students I serve, intentionally to guide their educational flourishing?

However, Hincecliffe’s own observation is that there may be two main ways in which to understand lifelong learning presently: either as a particular application of the Deweyan concept of education as growth (1985) or taking into account the “dominance of the liberal market, allied to the effects of globalisation and the ensuing risks of uncertainty, lifelong learning turns out to be an extra layer in the commodification of labour,” (Hincecliffe, 2006, p. 96).

Furthermore, and specifically within a South African context, Black (2022) also highlights complexities

associated with dominant understandings of lifelong learning:

However, despite UNESCO’s attempted discursive stand through these reports against the onward march of globalisation and neoliberalist thinking, the take-up of lifelong learning has tended towards instrumentalism (Biesta 2006, 2013), with a focus on labour market return:

Lifelong learning discourses are currently the overarching educational and training policy discourses ... [i]n their more than 40 years of existence, most of these discourses have come to reflect our technocratic global conditions more and more, emphasizing the pursuit of self-interest as freedom and objectifying most people into the assets of the few (Friedrich and Lee 2011, p. 154).

Post-democratic South African education policy has not escaped these transnational forces and trends, including the global discourse of lifelong learning, (Black, 2022, p. 676).

My exploration in this paper is therefore further informed by my sense that my educator lifelong learning ‘*life library*’ may need to be more adequately future-focussed in both my personal and professional domains, inclusive of ‘informative’ and ‘transformative’ innovation (Dede & Richards, 2020, p. 79) that may bring into view the kind of lifelong learning teachers and students now and in the future may need in their teaching and learning arrangements to address the societal challenges of our time.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: SITUATING VAN MANEN’S PHENOMENOLOGICAL INSIGHTS

In doing phenomenological research, through the reflective methods of writing, the aim is not to create technical intellectual tools or

prescriptive models for telling us what to do or how to do something. Rather, a phenomenology of practice aims to open up possibilities for creating formative relations between being and acting, between who we are and how we act, between thoughtfulness and tact, (van Manen, 2007, p.13).

It is noteworthy that phenomenology is not considered to be only a qualitative research method but it is also considered to be a philosophy. Furthermore, there may be “as many styles of phenomenology as there are phenomenologists,” (Dowling, 2007, p. 131). In this regard Dowling goes on to clarify that “the many perspectives of phenomenology locates its various forms in the positivist (Husserl), postpositivist (Merleau-Ponty), interpretivist (Heidegger) and constructivist (Gadamer) paradigms (Racher and Robinson, 2003),” (Dowling, 2007, p. 131).

Although there is scholarly debate regarding whether the phenomenologist Max van Manen’s work is to be categorised as new phenomenology, he “has contemporary popularity among not only nurses but also medical practitioners (Mak and Elwyn, 2003) and physical educationalists (Goodwin et al., 2004),” (Dowling, 2007, p. 138). It is further noted that his “phenomenology is commonly used in conjunction with other contemporary influences in nursing phenomenological research studies,” (Dowling, 2007, p. 138).

I have chosen aspects of van Manen’s phenomenological approach for my lifelong learning educator self-study and have accordingly been guided by some of his insights as a useful way in which to approach and structure my exploration in this paper.

In particular, I am drawn to his work that emphasises phenomenological research as the study of lived experience (van Manen, 1997, p.9). Here, gaining a “deeper understanding of the nature of meaning of our everyday experiences” (ibid) is a primary aim of phenomenology.

Also, “phenomenology does not offer us the possibility of effective theory with which we can now explain and/or control the world, but rather it offers us the possibility of plausible insights that bring us in more direct contact with the world,” (ibid).

I am also persuaded by van Manen’s insights that the practice of phenomenology is the “attentive practice of thoughtfulness”, (van Manen, 1997, p.12), this is to say as, “... educators we must act responsibly and responsively in all our relations with children, with youth, or with those to whom we stand in a pedagogical relationship,” (ibid).

Finally, I am drawn to van Manen’s view that to “to reject the standard of rationality would mean that one assumes that there is no basis upon which human beings can come to common understandings,” (van Manen, 1997, p.16), and instead there may be value in working towards “a broadened notion of rationality,”(ibid).

MY PHENOMENOLOGICAL SELF-STUDY ON LIFELONG LEARNING

Phenomenological method, in particular, is challenging, because it can be argued that its method of inquiry constantly has to be invented anew and cannot be reduced to a general set of strategies or research techniques. Methodologically speaking, every notion has to be examined in terms of its assumptions, even the idea of method itself, (van Manen, 2006, p.720).

Phenomenology is not the study of how or why people attribute their meanings to texts. ... The problem of phenomenology is not how to get from text to meaning, but how to get from meaning to text, (van Manen, 2017, p.2)

Embarking on a phenomenological self-study, I note the “complex link between what we experience and who we

are,” (Čapek & Loidolt, 2021, p. 223). I also agree that although “... there is no set methodology for how a first-person account should be conducted and presented,” (Levinsson, Norlund, & Beach, 2020, p. 10) my self-study’s descriptions of my lived experienced “need to be carefully crafted to bring forth a deeper understanding of the phenomenon,” (ibid).

Specifically in terms of my method, I set out to learn how my lived experience could play a role in shaping my self-understanding and my work as a researcher/educator (Chapman, 2012, p. 82) and my data set includes my writing and reflections contained in my teaching portfolio, a recent institutional reflective report, and reflections on a particular lesson in an undergraduate classroom setting. Finally, I use my own writing as a basis for critical reflection and future-focussed possibilities, noting that Van Manen’s protocol writing “offers potential as a research tool in a myriad situations where conventional data collection techniques are impractical or unavailable,” (Fortune, 2009, p. 1).

For insight into my own teaching philosophies and practices, I have chosen to self-study my own educator and mature student understandings of lifelong learning, casting light on certain kinds of lifelong learning I have embraced for many decades, and keenly so, as an agent of education ‘*entangled with life*’ (UNESCO, 2021, p.90) in so many different ways.

Through a phenomenological lens as an educator I explore my lived experience noting that “... for us the theoretical practice of phenomenological research stands in the service of the mundane practice of pedagogy: it is a ministering of thoughtfulness,” (van Manen, 1997, p.12). Foran and Olson’s observations are also relevant and noteworthy pertaining to orienting “our practices pedagogically and our research phenomenologically” to make possible a

challenging of “entrenched, taken-for-granted conceptions in formal education,” (Foran & Olson, 2008, p. 25).

But what kind of phenomenological lens should I use? While it is noted that the reason for re-imagining lifelong learning is not singularly linked to market imperatives and neither to its emancipatory potential (Hinchecliffe, 2006, p. 97), a more important consideration may be that embracing a pedagogy for lifelong learning may have different requirements:

If we think about the nature of various pedagogies for a moment – Rousseauian, Deweyan or pedagogies of cognitive development – then these may be seen as vehicles through which learning happens. But the pedagogy of lifelong learning is subtly different from all of these. For in embracing the concept of lifelong learning one also embraces a whole pedagogy: one cannot have a lifelong learner without bringing in the associated features of the reflective learner, teaching through facilitation, the emphasis on the transferability of learning and the importance of self-direction and self-management. One cannot be a lifelong learner unless one absorbs a whole discourse of pedagogy. To become a lifelong learner is to learn a pedagogy. Pedagogy isn’t simply the means whereby a curriculum is delivered: a person has to live a whole ideology so that one must “acquire the self-image of a lifelong learner” (Knapper and Cropley, p. 49). This auto-pedagogy (a pedagogy of the self, a pedagogy of coping) is, then, the distinguishing feature of what currently passes for lifelong learning. (Hinchecliffe, 2006, p. 97).

A storied account of my own educator identity might foreground the way

in which I have understood and practised ‘problem-posing’ rather than ‘banking’ education (Freire, 1972, p. 52) in my teaching. Reflecting in this way, my educator ‘life library’ would bear testimony to the numerous ways in which I have tried to ensure that societal challenges of the day are the matters to be addressed within my classroom, and that certain societal challenges were unambiguously evident within my curricular content. In this regard, I think of the ways in which Cape Town’s water crisis has been used as a lifelong learning topic for problem-posing and solving (Walters, 2018, p. 146) as well as in my own teaching and learning situations.

If the UNESCO call is indeed for educators to be “*agents of an education tangled with life*” then it is important to consider what this kind of life may denote for the kind of lifelong learning that is being globally espoused. In my neck of the woods, if I were to author my own account of being an agent educator, I would emphasise the nature and number of intergenerational lessons life offers as foundational to teaching, and my attempts to garner the experiences of students as part of problem-posing curricular activity. For example, and with reference to Cape Town’s recent water crisis, my ‘*life library*’ a few years ago became an appreciably more relevant part of my lifelong learning pedagogy when I was challenged by a student who wanted to know why so much attention was being paid to Cape Town’s water crisis at that point time, that is to say, only when the local and national newspapers carried information about it on a daily basis, and not before then when scores of Capetonians walk and pay for water on daily basis. I remember saying to the student that there is nothing I could take away from the

A storied account of my own identity as a university-based adult education lecturer might also reflect on the ways in which universities may understand

observations made but there is now an opportunity to redress the challenges Capetonians face and to find common ways of addressing the water crisis. As an educator, this was a significant intergenerational problem-posing moment.

Without giving up my expert and authoritative role in the teaching and learning situation, it was important to me that students could see that my learning from them is also a necessary part of a useful teaching and learning situation. In the example provided, the ethos informed by this kind of ‘*education tangled with life*’ meant in some way that my lifelong learning educator identity for the most part might always need to be a narrative-in-the-making and especially if future-focussed matters are to rank highly in terms of student engagement.

From a phenomenological point of view, the qualitative researcher is inevitably also an author. Writing is not just reporting the research findings. Writing is the very act of reflective inquiry and of discovery. (van Manen, 2010, p. 4)

Teachers are asked to rewrite their anecdotes, but now from the point of view of an imaginary student in their class. ... The effect of rewriting, and fictionalizing from an imagined student point of view, has a dramatic effect. It is as if this rewritten text creates a space for a new understanding of the original account. We may now discuss how the pedagogical task of teaching involves knowing the importance of “being there” or “availability” for students when it matters. (van Manen & Li, February 2002, p. 9)

its lifelong learning role as part of its mission and vision; beyond the strategic promotion of flexibility of provision of programmes and courses, what does it mean to for me to be a lifelong learner at a

university today? And what does it say when most university students may not regard themselves as lifelong learners; a term more commonly ascribed only to part-time students and adult education classes? What does it say when lifelong learning and lifelong learners may be more of an administrative construct than an academic construct in higher education landscapes currently?

LIFELONG LEARNING AS CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

Curriculum renewal continues to be an important focus of the academic project in the Faculty, given the imperative to respond to the changing nature of the schooling system, professional practice of teachers and technological advances in education. There is an urgent need for concrete change in curricula to reflect attributes such as scholarship, critical citizenship, lifelong learning, creative thinking, academic literacy and self-directed learning, (Lawack, 2021, p.63).

Revisiting my own teaching portfolio for the purposes of this paper's current exploration into lifelong learning as critical pedagogy, I had written down the following reflections as of 16 January 2020 regarding my teaching experiences in my adult education classes both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels:

What are my teaching beliefs?

For the increasingly diverse student groups who currently enrol for our adult learning qualifications and courses, already I have a sense I could do more in placing a transitioning and somewhat hybridized adult learning student identity at the centre of my considerations when drawing on learning theories to guide my teaching. Striving, therefore, to provide the students within my charge with the best possible educational experiences is the key

motivator for reflecting on how I teach currently and refining what ought to be informing my teaching beyond what I already bring. Learning about the self as teacher can also be a complex emotional exploration (Fitzpatrick & Spiller, 2010) and the emotional complexities at play as part of my own learning journey appear to be influencing my thinking and my attempts at developing my teaching portfolio mainly along the following lines, as encapsulated by these questions:

Do my teaching beliefs demonstrably inform my teaching practices?

In which ways are my teaching beliefs and practices interesting and useful research areas?

How do I understand my field, and changes within my field, within the context of a transitioning higher education ecology?

Informed by the work of Freire?

As insightful and as attractive as the next excerpt may at first appear to be, what does it really mean for me as a teacher in a higher education setting decades away from the experiences that might have influenced Freire's philosophy of teaching at the time?

"Whoever teaches learns in the act of teaching, and whoever learns teaches in the act of learning." (Freire, 2001, p. 31).

I appreciate these insights, and in a sense my teaching philosophy is informed by the work of scholars, such as Freire, who emphasise the importance of educators, acknowledging that teaching is a human act, that all students need to be respected, and that the knowledge and resources that all students possess in varying ways should be drawn on in order to make learning as meaningful and as respectful as possible to all involved in the teaching and learning situation.

A lifelong learning philosophy?

What do I mean by specifically foregrounding lifelong learning as the learning principle informing my teaching?

And why might the ethos of lifelong learning best inform my approach to flexible provision?

I would like to state at the outset that I understand lifelong learning to be a contested term within and beyond higher education contexts, as well as within our own institution, where it may not be entirely clear what we understand as a “working definition” of lifelong learning institutionally. The widespread contested nature of lifelong learning as a construct for meaningful human development is worth considering, and it is also important for me to say in which paradigm I might be locating myself: through my personal beliefs and my teaching, do I promote a social justice perspective of lifelong learning, or a neoliberal view of lifelong, and in reality is it really that unproblematic perceive these belief systems as a dichotomy?

At the level of our institution, I believe that it is entirely possible to re-imagine the ethos of lifelong learning with the view to learning what kind of educational provision would best serve each and every student on our campus. In other words, what is institutionally emblematic about lifelong learning on our campus, and what may be aspirationally inscribed into the new student mosaic connecting formerly ‘traditional’ and ‘nontraditional’ students for the first time as UWC’s lifelong learning students, as opposed to lifelong learners?

In one sense the notion of flexible provision of teaching and learning may rank among the most evident forms of

lifelong learning for all students at the university, and not merely for students commonly perceived to be adult learners or part-time students.

In other sense, a lifelong learning ethos at our university may serve to promote scholarly engagement and critical enquiry in areas that may not be commonly associated with undergraduate teaching and learning. For example, I would like to find ways of encouraging some of the students I teach to consider writing for undergraduate student journals by themselves and with their peers. So what form of lifelong learning would I be promoting as an individual in society and also as a teacher at a university? In my view, lifelong learning is an orientation that makes possible creative and inclusive kinds of learning for many kinds of people, in formal and informal spaces, and particularly for people for whom formal learning may not have been intended. Lifelong learning institutionally is so much more than scheduling classes after-hours for students who happen to be working and studying at the same time. It is an orientation that should be geared towards the educational success of every student at the university.

Both as an adult education student and educator, I have longstanding scholarly attachment to the work of Peter Jarvis, internationally known for his book *Lifelong Learning and the Learning Society* as well as for his chief editorship for several years of the *International Journal of Lifelong Long Education*. Particularly as a university-based lecturer in adult education I have felt supported by his clear and insightful contributions within the ambit of lifelong learning.

With reference to his sharing as an adult educator, in the excerpt below, had Jarvis invited me to write down a lifelong learning experience of my own, it would have been along the following lines: this creative assignment would have taken me back to my own professional space at the university in the mid-2000s and specifically to our staff’s bulletin board where, already as part of the furniture, there was an old lifelong learning leaflet pinned down in the top righthand corner of the board, with the

heading: *A Working Definition of Lifelong Learning*, for all to see.

As an adult educator I had a number of experiences in the early 1980s that sparked off my interest in learning, but the one which actually began my research was unintentional. I was invited to speak at an adult education workshop about the relationship between teaching and learning. In those days, that was a most insightful topic to choose since most of the books about teaching rarely mentioned learning and most of the texts about learning rarely mentioned teaching. I decided that the best way for me to tackle the topic was to get the participants to generate their own data, and so at the start of the workshop each participant was asked to write down a learning experience. (Jarvis, 2009, p. 22).

I remember mostly informal collegial conversations with reference to this “working definition” of lifelong learning, and wondered about lifelong learning being an “ethos” and an “approach” towards ensuring the educational success for all students. I also remember feeling that I was possibly part of a very small group of lecturers on our campus who might intentionally consider lifelong learning as part of their professional identity. Even though lifelong learning featured prominently in our University’s mission statement and graduate attributes, there didn’t seem to be anything emblematic about it for staff and students, beyond the espoused flexible provision of programmes and courses, to make it the lifeblood of the university. On one teaching occasion, I also remember asking of my undergraduate adult education classes whether or not they considered themselves to be lifelong learners. While an appreciable number replied that they did, more preferred to be called students, as

lifelong learners in their view seemed to connote a kind of student who was just starting out at the university and who was not a ‘proper student’ yet.

Therefore, the lifelong learning experience that stands out for me is having a past picture of myself feeling uncertain and somewhat surprised that unexpectedly few teaching staff and students might positively identify themselves as lifelong learners even they may readily agree to be part of lifelong learning as a daily occurrence. This makes realise that they may need to be more frequent and explicit connections in my teaching regarding the University’s portrayal of lifelong learning, and as frequent opportunities for critical reflection particularly where lifelong learning frames certain graduate attributes of the University.

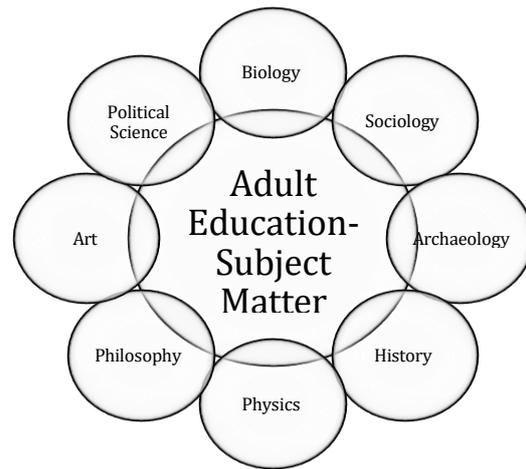
“One cannot be a lifelong learner unless one absorbs a whole discourse of pedagogy. To become a lifelong learner is to learn a pedagogy. Pedagogy isn’t simply the means whereby a curriculum is delivered: a person has to live a whole ideology so that one must “acquire the self-image of a lifelong learner” (Knapper and Cropley, p. 49). This auto-pedagogy (a pedagogy of the self, a pedagogy of coping) is, then, the distinguishing feature of what currently passes for lifelong learning,” (Hinchecliffe, 2006, p. 97).

When lifelong learning is in danger of becoming so broadly interpreted so as to lose its currency, the problems posed by Hinchecliffe take on a significance and urgency for educators to address:

I now wish to consider how the pedagogy of lifelong learning can be further strengthened in respect of its “domain” – practical knowledge. What conditions are needed so that this knowledge itself

is constantly problematised? This is clearly required if the pedagogy is to successfully address the phenomena of risk and change. I want to suggest that the conditions which bring into being the problematisation of knowledge are also those which will help (but not guarantee) convergence amongst participants in situations with respect to situational understanding. The aim, then, is to recast lifelong learning as a critical pedagogy – a pedagogy that acknowledges a social dimension at the heart of its discourse and that is more than a set of prescriptions directed at discrete bearers of labour commodity. (Hinchcliffe, 2006, pp. 105-106). And it would seem that, from my view as an educator, lifelong learning as problem-posing with the view to societal healing may have a place as part of the envisaged ethos and framework of lifelong learning as critical pedagogy. There is another matter warranting much discussion for me as a university-based adult educator. That is to say, is adult education a discipline or field of study, or both, and why should this matter?

In addition to being a professor of philosophy, Stanage is also known for his work *Adult Education and the Phenomenology of Research* (1987), and in his view adult education research should ideally be driven by the following four questions: *Who am I? What can I know? What ought I to do? And what may I hope?*



Central to his thesis is that when adult education of person is the subject matter then phenomenological investigation is an appropriate if not the most appropriate approach to research and analysis. If we consider that quantitative and qualitative findings are a form of education to both the researcher and those who consume this research, it is therefore easy to see how person is a part of all sciences in one form or another. (Zacharakis, 2014, p. 617).

Drawing on Stanage, Zacharakis (2014) also aligns himself to the view that adult education, whether a discipline in its own right or a field of study, necessarily touches on *every* subject matter affecting the lives of adults. This would suggest that, for lifelong learning to be recast as a critical pedagogy *successfully*, conversations across various subject matters would need to inform its critical pedagogical ethos.

It is noted from Willis (2001) that the “...outcomes of phenomenological reflection, like that of any other inquiry, are thoughts, discourses and written texts”. Accordingly, I was engaged in phenomenological reflection in which I attempted to engage with the lived-experience, and experiences which in turn

have been critically reflected upon. (Willis, April 2001, p. 5).

With the benefit of hindsight, it would serve educators well if our self-review portfolios ideally remained living documents through which our critical reflection could inform our pedagogy, and to work towards building a culture of dialogue around the key matters raised in them. More importantly, it seems necessary for interdisciplinary dialogue to be a regular feature of healthy teaching and learning arrangements, in order for our “*life libraries*” to be usefully stocked for our future-focussed challenges in education and our world.

AFRICAN PHENOMENOLOGY, MY EDUCATOR “LIFE LIBRARY” AND LIFELONG LEARNING

To speak of an African phenomenology in contemporary African society is to theorise about human dispositions toward their realities and how the understanding of their lived experiences can promote a better awareness of their challenges and aid a meaningful response to these challenges, (Sanni, 2021, p. 2).

My educator “life library” continues to address personally complex matters such as: which Africa? whose centre? And: does Afrocentricity provide a meaningful synthesis? (Lebakeng, 2021, pp. 156-157). I also reflect on how Africanity may provide a core agency for addressing the challenges faced in African societies (Lebakeng, 2021, pp. 140-144).

For the purposes of my self -study, I note that African philosophical responses to everyday realities, according to Sanni (2021, p.3) could be divided historically into three main schools or traditions, and he draws on the following scholarly sources in each case in support of this assertion: universalism (Hountondji, 1973), particularism (Gyekye, 1995; Wiredu,

1997), and eclecticism (Kanu, 2013). However, and by using of the Cameroon as a case in point to highlight appreciable complexity evident in the African philosophical stances just mentioned, Sanni argues that it is also necessary to continue searching for phenomenological approaches that optimally bring into view and address the realities and lived experiences of those who live on the African continent:

The task of African phenomenology therefore is to let the situation speak through an effective investigation and engagement with the context. The real burden of African philosophy is the noise that distracts and blocks the ability to listen to our context without presuppositions, an agenda or an audience that risk an accurate engagement with our context, (Sanni, 2021, p. 5).

It would seem an important opportunity is being presented to explore Sanni’s assertions in relation to the UNESCO call for building meaningful learning societies and lifelong learning identities. Particularly so for me as an educator in search of authentic forms of lifelong learning for our continent, and even more so if lived experiences have currency as part of innovative and inclusive curricular content.

South Africa exhibits shockingly low education attainment by any measure: less than half who undertake the final National Senior Certificate (the school leaving/exit qualification) qualify to move on to tertiary education (M&G 2020). The vast majority of students who fail are poor, and youth unemployment levels are soaring (Stats SA 2020), while the government doubles down on supply side labour market

interventions despite a deindustrialised formal economy that exhibits low job growth (Vally and Motala 2014; Allais 2020). And yet, the platitudes of “work hard to make it” and “become a lifelong learner to get a dream job” are ubiquitous in South Africa, (Black, 2022, p. 678).

However, scholars such as Nafukho (2020) continue to believe in social imperative of lifelong learning and the potential it has to increase citizen participation:

In the African context, lifelong learning is also a driver of political stability and social inclusion. It is a powerful way to promote democracy and protect against political instability.

It is noteworthy Nafukho also believes that universities in Africa are endowed with the “the human, technological and financial resources necessary to promote and sustain lifelong learning,” (ibid).

CONCLUSION

Fundamentally, it is the person who learns and it is the changed person who is the outcome of the learning although that changed person may cause several different social outcomes. (Jarvis, 2009, p. 24).

Understanding how to make lifelong learning thought of as a pedagogical place might indeed make me a changed educator, and perhaps the undertaking might also entail piecing insights of lifelong mosaics together, one at a time, and to achieve the kind of lifelong learning that could usefully contribute towards UNESCO’s globally espoused learning cities and learning regions.

Furthermore, if problem-posing education is meant to be usefully

understood as ‘revolutionary futurity’ and if the point of departure must always be with us ‘here and now’ (Freire, 1972, p. 57), then it would be important to know what kind of lifelong learning most appropriately assumes a pedagogical place for us and educators and the students we serve. And fittingly so in the words of Sanni (2021,p.3) we may have a lifelong learning obligation to give ourselves on the African continent the best possible “present and ... desired future.”

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