

IN PURSUIT OF SOCIALLY JUST PEDAGOGIES IN DIFFERENTLY POSITIONED SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

This article concerns itself with socially just pedagogies in South African higher education. It outlines key elements of new materialist and socio-materialist views on education, and how these views portray knowledge and learning. It briefly outlines what socially just pedagogies in higher education might mean within this worldview. The data on which the study is based comprise interview transcripts with ten lecturers at each of two higher education institutions one historically advantaged and one historically disadvantaged, in the South African historical and political context. The transcripts are discussed as an encounter between the author and the data, with an emphasis on those elements that produce an affective reaction. Institutional influence is discussed in relation to assemblages including: dimensions of space, time, discourse on teaching and learning, and material artefacts. The article concludes with a consideration of what agency, responsibility and freedom might entail under these conditions.

Key words: socially just pedagogies, new materialism, socio-materialism, higher education institutions, lecturer interviews

INTRODUCTION

Towards achieving socially just pedagogies

The phrase ‘socially just pedagogies’ applies to a wide range of concerns and phenomena. It applies to the process of learning, as well as to the outcome. It applies to the work conditions and opportunities to flourish on the part of the lecturers, as well as to the conditions for learning on the part of students.¹ Socially just pedagogies entail being able to criticise the injustices of the past and present – a point well made by writers within critical pedagogy, (see Apple, Au and Gandin 2009); to unlearn (Kumashiro 2000); to disrupt binaries and settled worldviews (Fenwick and Edwards 2014) as well as to envision socially just futures in an affirmative manner, where the focus is on ‘the transformation of negative into positive passions’ (Braidotti 2010, 214). More than to encourage a student to envision a just future, a key requirement of a

socially just pedagogy is to support a student to become effective in their professional and private journeys, thus one could argue that one wants to support them to achieve a measure of compassion or social solidarity, confidence or belief that one ‘can do’ as well as competence in the technical and strategic domains.

Discussions or research into higher education which are based on the notion of fairness or equality of opportunity to flourish for students or lecturers from differently resourced backgrounds and at differently resourced universities frequently begin with assumptions that are too deterministic or replete with victimhood (‘they/we can’t get it right because of the poor resources’); or denying of the constraints imposed by lack of resources (‘sure, it is difficult, but if they were to exercise agency they will be able to do it too – so and so managed, so why can’t they?’) One of the reasons for these views is the lack of comparative work, in the sense that one cannot easily understand the role of materiality and resourcing by focusing on one institution or one type of institution only. This is because in well-resourced institutions the resources are taken for granted, they are mute and their role is not explored; in inadequately resourced institutions materiality and resources are assumed to play an important role, as limiting and constraining via their absence, but the condition of lack and absence is totalising, and not explored within the larger web of relations in which learning and teaching takes place.

In this article the aim is to use data from two very differently resourced higher education institutions to surface what is absent or silent when looking at one type of institution only. The article will demonstrate how using more than one institution while using a social, feminist materialist research lens allows us to consider socially just pedagogies in a manner that is: critical, historically informed and ecological, with a strong sense of ethical responsibility. The socio-materialist lense brings to the fore the co-constitution of the material and the discursive, the role of agency as distributed throughout the intermingling of the various elements, and possibilities for disruption and renewal.

SOCIO-MATERIALISM AS A MEANS TO INVESTIGATE INSTITUTIONAL INFLUENCES

A significant view of how professional learning amongst academics occurs describes academic activity, including learning to teach, as a practice (Boud and Brew 2015). This approach sees learning as social and distributed. Practices include the social and the material, including time, space, discourse and artefacts. Fenwick and Nerland (2014), who write about professional learning and who draw on a socio-material perspective, argue that the responsibility for learning extends beyond the purview of the individual, both to the collective, and more importantly, to what they describe, drawing from Latour (2005), as ‘heterogeneous assemblages’ (Fenwick and

Nerland 2014, 3). Although practice based approaches draw from a fairly wide range of philosophical and theoretical positions (Gherardi 2012), the new, feminist or socio-material perspectives provide a strong foundation to investigate the role of institutional contexts, and of the material, in particular.

The new materialism, derived from work in philosophy (see discussions on Nietzsche, Bergson, Merleau Ponty and others in the Coole and Frost (2010) collection), feminism (Haraway 1991) and the natural sciences (Barad 2007; 2003), is an ontology in which human understanding is not central, but part of the discursive and material entanglements that constitute our coming to understand the world. In this ontology several persistent humanist dualisms and cartesian ideas have been called into question: the human as the centre of the universe, as possessing agency and acting on or using the material; the separation of knowing and being; the subject as viewing the world or activities from a distance and from outside, as able to judge and interpret; of cognition involving rational as opposed to embodied and affective responses; of boundaries around objects, such that there is an outside and an inside; of processes having a clear end and beginning. The new materialist ontology has important implications for understanding how we come to learn, know and conduct research, and for understanding the ethical responsibility of the researcher or the teacher.

Within the intra-action of life forces, discourse and discursive practices are more dynamic and active than mere language or mere text. In their entanglement with the material they ‘constrain and enable ... what can be said’ (Barad 2003, 819). They are highly influential, and ‘produce, rather than merely describe, the “subjects” and “objects” of knowledge practices’ (Barad 2003, 819). Thus the subjectivities of academics are influenced by their engagement with the material and the discursive.

The renewed interest in the material is not solely an ontological issue. Bruno Latour’s account of how to understand the world is similar in important aspects, but his focus is more on objects and in particular, artefacts, rather than the broad terrain of the ‘material’. Latour (2005) writes about ‘things’ that they are neither fully determined nor determining, but that they may ‘authorise, allow, afford, encourage, permit, suggest, influence, block, render possible, forbid, and so on’ (Latour 2005, 72). Within a network of relations, any point in the network that can make a difference is an ‘actor’.

Latour (2005) argues that any object, situation or phenomenon is itself the outcome of a network, circulation or a ‘circuitry through which masses of entities begin to circulate – between the original intention and now’ (Latour 2005, 196). The example he gives, which is highly relevant to this article, is of a lecture hall, that was in the past designed by an architect with specific intentions of the functions it would serve and of how a lecturer would teach. This

testifies to the historicity of any aspect of the material or discursive, being the outcome of previous relations, technologies, actions and intentions. It also testifies to the manner in which matter, for example space, time or artefacts are co-constituted with the discursive. Thus what a lecturer can do in a lecture hall is influenced by what the room was intended for, but the lecturer can change the hall, or ignore its constraints and enablements and teach outside of what is expected, or be part of a movement that request the institution's architects to design halls differently in the future.

We tend to take matter for granted. According to Coole and Frost (2010, 7) 'its "bruteness" seems so self-evident and unassailable'. And often it is only when there is a breakdown in the functioning of any actor within an assemblage (Latour 2005) that matter is evident as an actor within the assemblage. This is why it is useful to discuss two very differently resourced institutions, where matter and especially artefacts and material resources, exist in different proportions and within different configurations, and having different effects on the phenomena under study.

In the work of Fenwick and Nerland (2014) it becomes evident that the material – and including in particular artefacts – play a significant role in how people learn, more significant than has before been appreciated. Matter, including time, space and artefacts, is bound up with the social in assemblages. Within this understanding, learning is itself a social and material and embodied process, affected by matter, and affecting matter in turn. Fenwick and Edwards (2014) extend the understandings of learning into the domain of higher education. They criticise the cartesian or humanist approaches to knowledge as 'out there' or as the object that the subject views from above, as it were: 'in higher education there is much emphasis on learning as knowing through (re)presentation of the world "out-there" to the mind "in-here"' (Fenwick and Edwards 2014, 42), and of representations of past facts or past accumulations of authoritative concepts. Rather, they argue, learning should engage students' in multiple ways of knowing, in destabilising and decentring, experimenting and intervening and imagining what the world could be like. Knowledge which is distributed in 'heterogeneous assemblages' (Fenwick and Edwards 2014, 37) 'brings forth actions, subjectivities and ideas' (2014, 36). One can assume that this would influence knowledge practices and subjectivities of both academics and students.

This brings us finally, to the depiction of agency, responsibility and freedom within a socio-materialist account. Barad describes our responsibility for the world, and thus speaks of an 'ethico-onto-epistemology' (2007, 185). According to Barad agency is a process rather than an 'attribute', and is located in neither the material nor the discursive, but in the entanglement itself. Put differently, humans are neither purely determining nor determined, but part of the

entangled phenomena, which is ‘the capacity for action in life’ (Grosz 2010, 140). Freedom, like agency, is not an attribute of a person or a thing. In her discussion of Bergson she writes:

Materiality tends to determination; it gives itself up to calculation, precision, and spatialisation. But at the same time, it is also the field in and through which free acts are generated through the encounter of life with matter and the capacity of each to yield to the other its forms and forces, both its inertia and its dynamism. (Grosz 2010, 150).

Thus habit and automatism, or freedom as the capacity for seeing life otherwise are the potential outcomes of the entanglements of the discursive and the material. The striving should thus be not so much for equal recognition (for example men and women, teachers and researchers) but ‘to enable more action, more making and doing, more difference’ (Grosz 2010, 154). The implication of this for teaching and learning is for freedom in the interaction, such that lecturers, or students, become more active, have more capacity for acting and imagining otherwise.

Important implications of this account of knowing and being in the world, are, firstly, that this allows for a greater focus on the empirical world and on the local, and secondly, that this focus on phenomena rather than the ‘immediately givenness’ (Barad, 2003, 824) of the world allows us to look for openings for freedom and transformation. As Barad writes, ‘the future is radically open at every turn’ (Barad 2003, 827). She maintains a focus on agency is made possible when it is viewed as ‘material-discursive’, as this requires us not to see the human as given, pre-formed or fixed: “‘Humans’ are neither pure cause nor pure effect but part of the world in its open-ended becoming’ (Barad 2003, 822).

Barad’s account of ethico-onto-epistemology has profound significance for what is meant by socially just pedagogies, since it implies both responsibility for the world, but also that learning is about being part of the world, not about being apart from it and learning about it through language and text. She writes:

We do not obtain knowledge by standing outside of the world; we know because ‘we’ are *of* the world. ... Onto-epistem-ology – the study of practices of knowing in being – is probably a better way to think about the kind of understandings that are needed to come to terms with how specific intra-actions matter. (Barad 2003, 829).

RESEARCH DESIGN

The data discussed in this article was collected as part of a larger research project on the influence of the socio-economic and geographic contexts of higher education institutions on teaching and learning and academics’ intentions to participate in professional development.

Concern with socially just pedagogies – and with fairness of opportunity in differently resourced institutions – lends itself to critical and new materialist approaches, as these trace the

relationship between political forces, and the everyday. According to Coole and Frost (2010, 28/29) critical materialist approaches:

situate citizens, ideas and values (as well as theorists themselves) within the fields of material forces and power relations that reproduce and circumscribe their existence and coexistence. They trace the various logics of, and interrelationships between, broad political and economic structures and critically interrogate the complicated causalities that link them to everyday experiences.

The everyday processes of teaching and learning are imbricated within historical and political forces, which have a historical dimension (Ahmed 2010; Latour 2005). In order to demonstrate the historical and political dimensions of the everyday, two South African institutional settings have been selected. They are pseudonymically referred to as Orangerie and Douglasvale. A brief description of relevant information about the two institutions suggests why an interest in materiality and equality of opportunity was sparked by the data from these two contexts.

Table 1: Summary of conditions in two contexts

Orangerie	Douglasvale
Urban	Rural
Historically advantaged	Historically disadvantaged
Students drawn from middle class and private schools	Students drawn from rural and working class schools
Research oriented	Teaching oriented
Four campuses	Three campuses
27 694 students in 2010	11 074 students in 2010
Lecturer-student ratio was 1: 28 in 2012	Lecturer-student ratio was 1:34 in 2012
Established in 1881	Established in 1916
Pass rate was 84 per cent in 2009	Pass rate was 79 per cent in 2009
Has an academic development/teaching development centre	Has an academic development/teaching development centre
Did not have a postgraduate diploma in teaching and learning in 2012	Has had a postgraduate diploma in teaching and learning since 2004
Formerly Christian and supportive of the government during the apartheid era	Located in the former in homelands system and had history of student resistance

These indices are of teaching and learning in the near present, i.e. 2010–2012. In terms of historicity (seeing the object now as it has been constituted by historical processes (Ahmed 2010) one is referring to the manner in which Orangerie was supported financially, as well as with pride, by the Apartheid government. Douglasvale was always provided with less funding and resources, and seen as inferior by the same government. This state of affairs has not have abated post-apartheid: the alumni of Orangerie have continued to support that institution financially and morally; research organisations have continued to invest in projects at Orangerie and wealthy as well as academically successful students help make Orangerie an easier context in which to teach and reach a comparatively successful graduation rate. A final point with

regard to the maintenance of these differences is that by being located in an impoverished rural area (Roberts and Green 2013), there are less material resources on which Douglasvale could draw, less resources that would attract academics to stay there over long periods of time and hone their skills as teachers.

The data sets utilised comprise one hour long audio-taped interviews with ten academics at each institution. The interviewees were selected on the basis of their having completed an online survey on participation in professional development activities. To this extent they represent individuals who are committed to teaching and to their own learning to teach. The questions in the semi-structured interview focused on the lecturers' views on teaching, their participation in professional development activities, and their views on the conditions that support and hinder their teaching and their learning to teach. Sections of the interviews contained what MacLure (2013, 661) refers to as data that 'glow', in that they provoke an affective response. These were sections where the lecturers discussed, directly or indirectly, their beliefs about teaching and the resources for teaching to which they had access. These sections provide evocative glimpses of the lecturers interacting with their environments – and of the entanglements of the discursive and the material. A useful concept from posthumanist approaches to educational research is that of research as an 'encounter' (Springgay 2015, 76), where the preconditions of the research are not set in advance, and the encounter does not maintain the separation of the human subject from the encounter. In the current research the non-human is the research data, which activates the encounter.

An important concept that Barad develops, based on the work of Haraway (1992, 300) is that of a 'diffractive pattern'. It does 'not so much map where differences appear, but rather where the *effects* of differences appear' (Barad 2007, 803). For this reason the emphasis is on the differences in the entanglements that might have an effect on lecturers' and students' participation in the phenomenon of 'learning and teaching'.

The idea of 'hyper-reading' of texts or even landscapes in which activities are performed is suggested by Gough (2015, 162). In this instance the landscapes are mainly classrooms – let us call them 'class-scapes', and the stories are told by human subjects as informants. However, this does allow us to consider more carefully what is being told about the intertwining of elements in the class-scapes.

THE CLASS-SCAPES

In this section the class-scapes, as narrated by the lecturers, is discussed.

Discourses on teaching and learning

The understandings of the academics or their coherent and structured ways regarding teaching and learning, i.e. their discourse on teaching and learning, would be one of the forces in the class-scapes. In most cases teaching and learning was understood as transmission and ‘(re)presentation’ (Fenwick and Nerland 2014, 42): the passing of knowledge, cognitive and static, a product, from one individual or group to another, via the medium of language or text. Most lecturers were concerned that students should hear them, and that they should have the notes accessible electronically or on paper. Orangerie2 equated teaching with passing concepts across into students’ brains:

I’ve always try to use multimedia. Over the years I have tried to use even more multimedia to enhance my teaching and bring across concepts, videos, sound, animation because I realise what kind of student I am working with that they really need multimedia to get concepts in their brain.

Orangerie1 also described teaching as cognitive and rational:

If it's developing the mind, it means that you increase the capability, the capacity and the competence of the mind to be able to deal with ... amongst other things, problems ... and by solving that, it is about thinking, primarily, the other stuff comes afterwards.

Orangerie1 suggests that learning can be structured, but not so much so as to confine learning, – as captured in the writing of Deleuze and Guattari as ‘confinement’ and ‘territorialisation’, rather than as ‘rupture’, or ‘line of flight’ and ‘deterritorialisation’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 9):

I think you just need to try and push, push the boundaries, but it would be nice if it can be in a structured way, though. But then if it is too structured, then thinking is sometimes confined. (Orangerie1).

In the account of Orangerie1 learning is more active and exploratory, but it remains a cognitive activity, belonging to the mind rather than to both mind and body.

At Douglasvale the concern with transmission was evident from the frequent mention of the absence of facilities that makes communication of content, concepts and ideas, through text, possible:

I can actually show you the workbook that I did last year and so I give them lots of notes and stuff that they can follow in class. So, if they can’t see the board or they can’t hear me, they’ve still got the notes in front of them. (Douglasvale3).

If there is so much concern with transmission of knowledge, what are the materials used to convey knowledge, what role do the material resources play, and do they in any way influence the transmission, or vice versa? In the next section the role of artefacts and the design and

upkeep of physical spaces for teaching and learning is considered.

Spaces and physical facilities

Physical space in which to teach was a source of a difference that makes a difference (in the sense discussed by Barad (2007) or Latour (2005)). At Orangerie several lecturers mentioned the existence of physical resources as a positive influence on their teaching.

I can say in the Physics Department I've got no complaints about the environment in terms of teaching. Our labs are well equipped, as you can see our lecture halls are well equipped and I think we've got a very good platform and things can actually only get better from here. So no, there's nothing in my immediate environment that hinders my teaching. ... Orangerie University offers a fantastic environment for us as lecturers. It gives us the opportunity to be ... to reach out and touch the most recent technology. (Orangerie3).

This questions the assertion by Coole and Frost (2010) or Latour (2005) that materials and resources are only noticed when they become absent or dysfunctional. Orangerie4 also appreciated the physical resources to which she had access for learning and teaching, but in her case she compared what she had, to that which was better, which she experienced in the United States:

The department is supportive of new things and of doing things differently, but everybody has got his own way of doing it. ... I would love them to sort of spruce up the technology. I know it's been done somewhere over campus, but not here in the Swartz building. I remember being in America where they've got three different screens that you can sort of swap and look between. I had a ball, because I would put stuff up here, do this and talk to those people. (Orangerie4).

But Orangerie 3 and 4 were exceptions, being the only two out of ten lecturers at that institution, that mentioned the physical resources and material conditions that were available. For the rest, the resources were indeed taken for granted and thus mute.

At Douglasvale absence or dysfunctionality in relation to the physical conditions of lecture halls and the facilities such as sound systems, were mentioned by five of the academics:

some of our venues are really not conducive to teaching and learning. ... I am thinking about the test centre, for instance. ... you can't even set up a data projector. ... They can't see it either. You have, you know, the pillars (gesturing), it is just the venue. (Douglasvale 8).

The physical conditions did not appear to determine the teaching and learning mode, but to influence or allow (Latour 2005). There is a suggestion in Douglasvale3's comments that the lack of a microphone influenced her to become 'stricter', and to focus her attention on her transmission:

From a classroom management perspective, I've also just become much stricter and because I

have problems with voice projection in large classes, I end up circling the lecture venues, so that everybody can get to hear me at some point in time. (Douglasvale3).

At what expense she focused on her transmission, is not evident from the comments. The question then arises, why are the lecturers so concerned with the transmission of resources? Is it because the facilities are deemed inadequate to allow this transmission to occur, that lecturers focus on it, or is it because of a concern with transmission in the first place, that lecturers mention the state of the facilities? An answer suggested by a feminist material approach might be: neither and both. Barad (2007, 66) writes about causality: 'Notice that the notion of a "causal" account need not entail singular causes or linear relationships or even postulate causes separable from their effects'. The discursive and the material co-constitute each other. Further, in her discussion on discourse in relation to Foucault and Bohr, Barad writes that:

... agential realism's posthumanist account of discursive practice does not fix the boundary between human and nonhuman before the analysis ever gets off the ground, but rather allows for the possibilities of a genealogical analysis of the material-discursive emergence of the human. (Barad 2007, 150).

The reference to a 'genealogical analysis' is useful and yet paradoxical. While according to Barad neither the human nor the material is prior, this is meant in relation to causality, rather than chronology. There is indeed a sense in which the dynamic co-constitution of the discursive has a history, but that history itself is an entanglement of the material and the discursive. Latour's (2005) example of a lecture hall that is the outcome of a 'network' or 'circuit' of entities is relevant here. The classrooms described by lecturers at Douglasvale were built by builders using bricks and mortar, but designed by architects using architects' soft pencils and paper, and constructed during the colonial era for the black elite, but maintained with funds allocated more recently during the apartheid and post-apartheid regime. Today the pillars constrain visual and verbal communication, the lack of upkeep of facilities, including of data projectors, constrains visual communication.

The class-scape that is Orangerie is also an outcome of history, as indicated in the section on 'setting'. However, the class-scape as described by Orangerie4 includes as actors the students, who are mostly middle class and often wealthy, and who bring cellphones or laptops to class. The lecturer does not see the students' actions as a problem and potential distraction. Rather, she learns to see them as an advantage and to believe that the students use the instruments to take notes:

Some of [the students] say but they need their cell phones because they actually make notes on their cell phones while I'm talking, and I think they are using their cell phones. But they say, 'No, we don't. We just use the technology.' So I have to sort of accept that and think of ways of how

that is actually adding value to the class. (Orangerie4).

But what is equally interesting about the micro context she describes, is that she is provided autonomy to use her budget as she chooses, by a wealthy and non-interfering administration:

Instead of handing them three sets of paper, which half of them leave in the class and then they say, 'Oh, you must put it on Web CT' and then they print it, I give them a CD and everything is on there ... But otherwise I don't think there's anything that they can really do by changing the physical. It depends on the people. And that's what is nice about here, if I want to do something and I can source it, I can do it. There's not a lot of restrictions on us. I think that's why I like the job so much. If you've got a good idea, you can run with it. (Orangerie4).

On the surface of it, then, it would appear that at Orangerie there is more autonomy for lecturers to act, based on a comparatively well resourced environment – up to a point, however. Lecturers at Douglasvale also make choices and respond to their contexts. Douglasvale3 responded by creating a workbook. Douglasvale9 responded by getting her mature students to work in groups:

... it was such a big class and we had them in ... that test venue, I realized there's no way that I'm going to be successful here. ... the first few weeks, I would try to out shout at them. Then I realized this is not going to work – and this is part of an article I'm trying to get published at the moment. I then thought to myself, these are adults, so why don't we form cooperative learning groups? In other words, I identified those stronger ones, made them the teacher within that group. So I would then teach a short while and then have an activity where they, within their groups, would actually learn from each other. This whole peer learning system I purely did because I knew I was not going to manage and I needed the learners in the class to help me, but this was a very practical experience for me. (Douglasvale9).

From a learning point of view the outcome of her initiative was potentially productive in that she distributed the opportunity for learning to occur, for it to be more collaborative. She was also able to learn from the initiative, 'this was a very practical experience for me', from which she then attempted to publish.

OTHER ACTORS IN THE ASSEMBLAGES

How the lecturers' subjectivities were being produced and reproduced was influenced by other actors within the networks (Latour 2005). Some of these actors were prevalent discourses at the universities. One of these, frequently mentioned by lecturers at both universities and more often at Orangerie, was a discourse about the value of teaching being lesser than the value of research:

when you start at this university, when I started at least I mean it was, the message was very clear to us that we should become researchers and ... I won't say they said teaching is secondary but teaching was important, but research was, I would say, was more important, it's important for promotion I think also. (Orangerie2).

This message was not determining for lecturers who agreed to be interviewed, in the sense that

they remained committed to enhancing their teaching, but it could certainly have led to a view that what one is committed to is not high status, or that as a committed teacher one is less appreciated than other lecturers at the university.

A significant actor in higher education assemblages, or class-scapes, is that of time. At Douglasvale, where there was a far higher lecturer:student ratio, and less financial and administrative support for academics, time and workload was mentioned much more often than at Orangerie. Time is 'co-constituted' in the sense that it is the managers or administrators that heap too many responsibilities onto academics, and it is this very same time (time as in 'overload of work responsibilities', as in 'time to prepare' or 'time to participate in professional development opportunities') that in its turn, influences academics' working lives. Douglasvale⁹ was not able to take up further studies to develop professionally due to lack of time:

The workload at departmental level, definitely, because you just, I haven't embarked on any further studies because I feel that I can't. I wouldn't be able to do it justice and be a part-time student. So at that level, it has hindered [my professional development as a teacher].

She also felt unable to manage all aspects of an academic's portfolio and more:

I want somebody to share my teaching job. I can do, instead of four courses, let me do two courses. I would then be able to do research, community engagement and many other areas I would be able to do. ... at the moment still, I'm trying my level best, but I'm not sleeping enough. My social life is affected, my personal life is affected. So the quality of my personal and social life has gone down in order to maintain the quality of teaching.

She had participated in professional development opportunities, but was constrained in implementing all that she had learnt, due to her workload:

I would say, yes, [I have implemented what I learnt] but one gets swamped by all, once you get back to your office, all you have to go on with. ... So sometimes you take things on, I think one would selectively take things on when the situation requires you to apply the knowledge that you've just learned.

Time and lack thereof as an influence on professional development is part of an ecology that includes the lecturer:student ratio, the constraints posed by inadequate lecture hall facilities, and a discourse emphasising teaching and learning as the transmission of knowledge through text:

I spend a lot of time making my notes and getting them printed and following up with ... the note making. I try to put them in a way that is easily understandable. I spend a lot of my time on that and if I had more, if I didn't have to really do all of that, in other word if students could see the board, ... I wouldn't have to give them as comprehensive notes and then I could actually spend time on research and my own professional development.

RESPONSIBILITY, AGENCY, AND FREEDOM

Responsibility to effect change or disrupt the canons of teaching and learning that we have access to via these accounts – if teaching and learning should indeed be different, as Fenwick and Richards (2014) suggest – is far wider than the individual lecturer. It is also distributed in time. It reaches to the past – to architects of apartheid and unequal education; to architects of the individual buildings. It reaches to the present – to maintenance staff that maintain the buildings and facilities; to the administrators that apportion heavy teaching loads; to the lecturers and how they expose themselves to new ideas or try out these ideas; to colleagues and how they support each other; and so on. And it reaches into the future, that is, how can we envision teaching differently?

Change and socially just teaching can be seen as teaching that is attuned to all aspects of the assemblage and for the lecturers to be able to make do, or be creative with this:

‘Responsible’ action emerges in the sociomaterial mix, in being attuned to possibilities available in this mix at any moment, and in being sufficiently resourceful to improvise with these possibilities. (Fenwick 2014, 167).

Responsible action, for lecturers at Orangerie and Douglasvale, is not about learning precepts of good teaching and applying these. In any case, precepts that might have purchase at Orangerie might not be applicable at Douglasvale, where conditions are quite different. Socio-materialism and posthumanism allows us to consider responsibility as profoundly ethical and agentic. Rotas (2015) captures this well:

In re/thinking the classroom as a relational ecology that is always already performing, teachers open their classrooms to unscripted moments that potentially alter how we think and act *with* and *in* environments. Therefore, ‘how’ we learn is not determined by best practices, but rather ‘how’ we learn becomes an emergent praxis that desires collectivities, new knowledges, and differences that perform change. (Rotas 2015, 96).

Contingency and vitality, two key concepts within a posthumanist ontology signpost the manner in which freedom is inherent in the entanglement of the material and the discursive. Freedom is performed, in ‘free acts’ (Grosz 2010). It can be conceived of as a ‘persistent capacity of the natural world to surprise’ (Bennett 2010, 49) – where humans are part of the natural world. A socio-materialist ontology allows educationists not to see the world as determining or totally free, or to see lecturers as free agents or victims of their contexts. It sees important spaces for disruption or unscripting.

How does this square up with a notion central to practice theory, that practices are sedimentations or ‘regularised’ (Fenwick and Nerland 2014, 3). This is necessary, since

regularisation provides rules that can be seen as ‘resources for action’ (Gherardi 2012, 150). When is a regularisation or a rule a constraint, and when is it a resource for action? Perhaps regularities and a measure of predictability are useful, but there is a need for both regularity and contingency; for predictability and surprise.

CONCLUSION

These class-scapes have been presented as they were accounted for by the twenty academics, and as they made an impact on me as the researcher, while I have simultaneously been reading about socio-materialism and posthumanism, and what these may mean for socially just pedagogies. In addition to being limited by the focus on the narratives of committed teaching academics, this study is limited by the focus on lecturers only, i.e. not other human role-players such as administrators or students. Nonetheless, they provide an evocative account of the manner in which history, power, the material and the discursive, co-produce teaching and learning to teach in higher education.

What becomes evident from these accounts is that in both institutions there is an assemblage of elements, a web, intra-action or class-scape, comprising the discourses on teaching and learning, the space, materials, artefacts and time. Traditionally, matter is either taken for granted, or it is seen as a lack that will determine teaching and learning. We might take matter for granted, if at Orangerie. Or we might complain about it, and how it hampers our work, if at Douglasvale. Having accounts from universities from very different socio-economic settings is one way to have the importance of the material surface and become evident. Looking at all aspects of the interaction together is also important for another reason: it allows us to see the discourses on teaching and learning as resources, and both how important they are, as well as how they intra-act with the material. In educational research all too often one tends to downplay either the discursive, or the material. How these co-constitute each other allows us to consider change differently. Disruption would of necessity and by definition, affect all aspects of the intra-action.

Understanding teaching and learning as an ecology, where responsibility and agency are distributed, has several important implications for understanding change in relation to teaching and learning. It implies that change cannot easily be legislated or driven by a-contextual precepts for good practice. It cannot be predicated on the individual lecturer, divorced from considerations of matters such as time, space, artefacts and discourses. Above all, it requires a sensitivity to the encounter at any moment and a sensitivity to what is possible. Above all, responsibility for change is collective.

A socio-material and posthuman ontology situates the ordinary, everyday world of

teaching and learning within a profoundly political and ethical maelstrom of forces. It highlights the possibilities for socially just pedagogies, and the limitations of striving towards this. It points to the important role played by the material, and yet simultaneously allows for an examination of the discursive and human. It points to the complicitness in all aspects of the web of entanglements that produce the teaching moment – a complicitness that stresses the importance of an ethical and responsive approach to teaching and learning, on the part of all involved.

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NOTE

1. This alignment between the processes of teaching and learning is outlined in detail in Leibowitz and Bozalek (2015).

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