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Enacting Critical Pedagogy in an Emerging South African Democracy: Narratives of Pleasure and Pain
Juliet Perumal

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Abstract

"Education Before Liberation" became the mantra of the struggle against apartheid oppression in South Africa. Apartheid policies predestined the Black majority to servitude and dehumanization. The advent of democracy heralded a plethora of transformative curriculum policies with the express intent to counter the destiny that the Apartheid regime had envisioned for the Black majority. The current curriculum canon which is premised on the tenets of critical pedagogy espouses the ideals of social justice and democracy, and embodies the intent to educate for liberation and social transformation. This article addresses the central question: How do the material tensions of enacting critical pedagogical tenets manifest in post-apartheid South African education through the narratives of educators as transformative intellectuals? In responding to this enquiry, in this article I will (a) sketch an analysis of teachers' identities as enshrined in retrospective and current curriculum policies; and (b) draw on data from a qualitative study conducted at schools in Johannesburg, South Africa, to explore educators' personal and professional narratives of pleasure and pain as they persevere in

[1]University of Johannesburg, South Africa

Corresponding Author:
Juliet Perumal, Faculty of Education, Department of Education Leadership and Management, University of Johannesburg, Kingsway Campus, Auckland Park, Johannesburg 2006, South Africa.
Email: julietp@uj.ac.za

being transformative intellectuals within disadvantaged school communities in an emerging democracy. This article argues that if the ideals of democracy is central to the curriculum for students, then the education system needs to ensure that the personal and professional wellbeing of teachers should form an integral part of the human rights discourse.

Keywords

transformative intellectual, democratic education, critical pedagogy, disadvantaged communities, educator narratives

Introduction

Apartheid policies that were intended to disenfranchise South African Blacks were manifest in the racist, classist, gendered, and generally exclusionary curriculum of the country. The fabric that knit the Apartheid curriculum canon aimed at ensuring the domestication and subservience of the Black population. This curriculum canon was given credence through Christian National Education, a curriculum which was notorious for ignoring the rich religious, linguistic, cultural, ethnic, and racial demographics of South Africa. Tabata (n/d) recalls that the official apartheid ideology as crafted by Verwoerd, the architect of the Bantu Education Act of 1953, was formulated as follows:

> When I have control of Native education I will reform it so that Natives will be taught from childhood to realise that equality with Europeans is not for them. People who believe in equality are not desirable teachers for the Natives. Education must train and teach people in accordance with their opportunities in life, according to the sphere in which they live. (p. 3)
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> ….
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> My department's policy is that education should stand with both feet in the reserves and have its feet in the spirit and being of Bantu society. There Bantu Education must be able to give itself complete expression and there it will be called upon to perform its real service. There is no place for him in the European community above the level of certain forms of labor. . . . [f]or that reason it is of no avail for him to receive a training which has as its main aim absorption in the European community. Until now he has been subject to a school system which drew him away from his own community and misled him by showing him the green pastures of European society in which he is not allowed to graze. (p. 4)

In an attempt to counter Verwoerd's social engineering blueprint that pre-destined Black South Africans to servitude, the advent of democracy heralded a plethora of transformative curriculum policies, namely, Outcomes Based Education, the Revised Curriculum Statement, and the Continuous Assessment Policy Statement. Cumulatively, these education policies are geared toward creating:

> A prosperous, truly united, democratic and internationally competitive country with literate, creative and critical citizens leading productive, self-fulfilled lives in a country free of violence, discrimination and prejudice. (National Curriculum Statement Overview, 2003, p. 8).

Furthermore, the policy statements (Department of Education, 2003) explicitly describe the *kind* of teacher and learner that the new curriculum will "produce," namely that,

> teachers and other educators are key contributors to the transformation of education in South Africa. The National Curriculum Statement Grades 10-12 . . . visualise teachers who are qualified, competent, dedicated and caring. They will be able to fulfil the various roles outlined in the Norms and Standards for Educators. (p. 5)

and learners

> . . . will be imbued with the values and act in the interests of a society based on respect for democracy, equality, human dignity and social justice as promoted in the Constitution . . . Learners . . . must . . . have access to, and succeed in, lifelong education and training of good quality; demonstrate an ability to think logically and analytically, as well as holistically and laterally; and be able to transfer skills from familiar to unfamiliar situations. (p. 5)

To realize the intent of the new curriculum canon, the first decade of South African democracy has seen unprecedented financial injections into the educational sector coupled with a plethora of some of the most progressive educational policy reforms. The Report of the Ministerial Committee established to review the curriculum in 2000 gave a wide-ranging critique of the curriculum. It argued that while there was overwhelming support for the critical pedagogical principles of the curriculum, which had generated a new focus on teaching and learning, implementation has been confounded by

> (i) a skewed curriculum structure and design; (ii) lack of alignment between curriculum and assessment policy; (iii) learning support materials that are

variable in quality, often unavailable and not sufficiently used in classrooms; (iv) policy overload and limited transfer of learning into classrooms; (v) shortages of personnel and resources to implement and support C2005; (vi) inadequate recognition of curriculum as the core business of education departments; and (vii) inadequate orientation, training and development of teachers. (Chisholm, 2003, pp. 3-4)

While several South African scholars, notably Jansen (1999), Kruss (1998), Taylor and Vinjevold (1999), critiqued curriculum content, and resources and teaching methodologies, Jansen (2001), in particular, turned the critical gaze toward teachers' personal and professional identities and its resultant impact on curriculum interpretation and implementation. Jansen's argument addressed the dissonance between the material tensions that emerge in attempting to enact critical pedagogical tenets in post-apartheid South Africa, in relation to the demands placed on teachers whose personal biographies and professional training are rooted in a deficit apartheid dispensation. This argument relates to point (vii) that was acknowledged in the Report of the Ministerial Committee of 2000. However, it is an issue that has received marginal attention.

Retrospective and Prospective South African Teacher Identities

The retrospective/historical image of South African teachers was shaped by Apartheid curriculum principles and philosophies. Teachers were expected to be subservient functionaries of the Apartheid State. Teacher-centered, transmission-centric pedagogies that were reliant on textbooks authored by social agents who were the custodians of a divisive national agenda ensured the silencing, misrepresentation, erasure, and evasion of alternative ways of being, seeing, and doing curriculum. Although this national profile characterized the identities, roles, and responsibilities of teachers within the apartheid dispensation, Carrim (2001) and Perumal (2007) caution against homogenizing teachers. They argue that the complexity of teacher identity needs to be framed within the various identity markers in terms of race, gender, geographical location, union membership, political affiliation, religion, language, and so on. During the Apartheid dispensation, there was a cadre of teachers who forged transgressive identities against the normative sociopolitical expectations of the regime. By performing transgressive identities, they risked retribution by the apartheid regime (see Wieder, 2008, for the biography of Richard Dudley). The liberatory pedagogic and epistemic ideals of such comrade, activist teachers served as a catalyst for the redress intent of

post-apartheid education policies which urged the interpretation and enactment of curriculum as a contextualized social process that is cognizant of the socio-economic, geo-political, and historico-cultural permutations of South Africa.

Current educational policies recast teachers as transformative intellectuals tasked with promoting the Constitutional values of the South African rainbow nation, as opposed to being state functionaries. This requires them to champion the values of deep democracy, social justice and equity, non-racism and non-sexism, ubuntu (human dignity), an open society, accountability (responsibility), respect, the rule of law, and reconciliation.

Giroux (1998) contends that teachers have the potential to be transformative intellectuals because they can combine scholarly reflection and practice in the service of educating students to be critical thinkers who participate in an informed democracy. Transformative intellectuals critically examine political and educational institutions that maintain social inequalities with the intention of transforming them. Educators who see themselves as transformative intellectuals are identifiable by their subscription to critical pedagogies. Critical pedagogues agitate for a critical analysis of the cultural, economic, political, and historical nexus of schooling to acknowledge the asymmetrical power relations that obtain from race, class, and gender differences (Apple, 2007).

Understanding the historical, cultural, economic, and political dynamics of the current South African educational landscape is crucial to making sense of the status quo. Hence, casting South African teachers as transformative intellectuals is writ large in the ideological, philosophical, and theoretical impulses of post-apartheid curricula. South African teachers' pedagogic persona is premised on the tenets of critical pedagogy.

There are several proponents of critical pedagogy, each elaborating, clarifying, or extending the discourse. Giroux (1992), for example, argues that critical pedagogy has the potential to lead educators toward exposing and dismantling repressive capitalist, racist, classist, sexist ideologies. Shor (1992) identifies 11 values of empowering education, namely, participatory, affective, problem-posing, situated, multicultural, dialogic, de-socializing, democratic, researching, interdisciplinary, and activist. Darder (1997) conceives of critical pedagogy as an act of love, and recommends that the project of democratic education be undertaken only by educators with a commitment to advancing the ideals of freedom and social justice, thus serving as role models for their students to discover their personal power, social transformative potential, and spirit of hope. hooks (1994) echoes similar sentiments, through her advocacy to teach an engaged, transgressive pedagogy. She calls for teachers to be living testimonies who through their commitment to their personal spiritual, emotional, and

physical wellbeing exemplify self-emancipation while confronting and dismantling forms of oppression, racism, classism, patriarchy, and hetero-normativity. Her work is ensconced with a critical hope that oppression can be subverted by conscientizing both the privileged and unprivileged to engage in self–other emancipation through love that transcends resistance and eventuates in transformation. Marcos (1995) counsels that

> . . . the struggle for justice requires one to march with love and pain, simultaneously; and to make this march alongside those with nothing, for the eternal losers, those without names, without faces, is to stand for the dignity of everyone. (pp. 168-169).

In light of this portrayal of the transformative intellectual, Yoon (2005, p. 727) observes that the discourse on critical pedagogy is grounded in forms of moral and ethical sensibilities predisposed to alleviating the suffering and struggles of the disenfranchised. The discourse solicits teachers' identification and internalization of feelings of passion, appreciation, and reward that should accompany their support, care, recognition, and salvation of students. Such pedagogic philosophies and enactments should eventuate in an emancipated student identity. In expounding the moral and ethical characteristics of an emancipated identity, Brantlinger (2010) contends,

> Whether the target student is from a privileged or disadvantaged background, the ideal of a universal subject who has an emancipated identity should be the goal of critical understanding. Such individuals would eschew social bias and hierarchy as they endorse a social reciprocity moral code. Recognising their own and other's innate human worth and interdependence, difference would not be equated with inferiority. Individuals with an emancipated identity would use their transformed (democratically and equity-focused) agency to fight oppression and improve world circumstances. (pp. 336-337)

Although differences exist in their analyses, proponents of critical pedagogy are united in their belief that any sincere pedagogical practice necessitates a commitment to social transformation in solidarity with disenfranchised groups (Riasati & Mollaei, 2012, p. 229). However, the discourse on critical pedagogy, and by extension the portraiture of the transformative intellectual, has had to contend with dissenting voices. Critical feminists, scholars of color, and scholars with hyphenated identities, for example, Asian-American scholars, have registered their disenchantment at the racist and gendered bias of the critical pedagogical regime of truth. Further criticism has been mounted against the discourse for its preoccupation with theoretical abstraction. However, as an ardent proponent of critical pedagogy, I found the critique

forwarded by Jansen (2001) and Yoon (2005) sobering in that it highlighted the tensions that emerge when the theoretical tenets of critical pedagogy are translated into cold face practice. The material tensions of enacting critical pedagogy in disadvantaged South African educational contexts are rendered all the more poignant when teachers themselves emanate from and function within contexts that are debilitating. Of particular significance to the discussion in this article is Yoon's (2005) observation:

> Examining the discourse itself can illuminate how critical pedagogy constructs particular ethical and pathetic stances for readers to internalize by appealing to affect—specifically, their affinity to "noble" sentiments. These rhetorical effects compel our active and passive support and affiliation, or in words more commonly used in critical pedagogy literature, our "commitment," "devotion," and "faith." Indeed, noble sentiments permeate critical pedagogy's discourse through such phrases as the "language of possibility," the "politics of hope," a "critical citizenry," "emancipation," "participatory democracy," along with references to "healing," "salvation," and "transformation." (p. 717)
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> ….
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> Critical pedagogy discourse is laden with language designed to elicit and signify emotions. Critical pedagogy's noble sentiments work at the nexus of Aristotle's rhetorical appeals: *logos, ethos, pathos.* However, the scholarship has not yet fully accounted for critical pedagogy's appeal to *pathos.* The discourse of critical pedagogy works both implicitly and explicitly in disciplining teacher affect, which I see as a central, if not constitutive, part of the ethical substance of teacher self-styling. (p. 718)
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> ….
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> These technologies, like ideological interpellations, are not simply coerced, but work through imparting subjects with a kind of agency that can be effected through and on his or her body, soul, conduct, and being. These self-styling techniques target the "ethical substance" of teachers" the gestures, postures, and attitudes which are in need of disciplining or styling. These generally affective stylings are geared toward a "telos" established by the discourse, or the kind of being to which we should aspire (that is, the transformative intellectual. (p. 720)

Yoon (2005, p. 727) continues that the discourse on critical pedagogy urges teachers to denounce feelings that render them weak in the face of hardship or feeling overwhelmed by the complexity of transformative teaching. Instead, teachers as transformative intellectuals are encouraged to embrace

such difficulty as an excruciating, but exhilarating joy, and to remain resilient by dismissing or downplaying the personal and professional struggles they might face. It is against this self-sacrificing and self-denying pedagogic drama that Yoon (2005) highlights the importance for educators to understand how such narratives are taken up as part of an investment *of feeling, pleasure*, and *desire*, which is an investment in emotionology. Stearns and Stearns (1985) define emotionology as " . . . the attitudes or standards that a society, or a definable group within society, maintains towards basic common emotions and their appropriate expressions . . . " (p. 813).

Sketching the Research Sample and Context

While conducting research on the *Women Leading in Disadvantaged Education Contexts* project, I was struck by the ethos and the pathos that characterized the participants' narratives. This project explored, *inter alia*, school leadership as a conceptual narrative that is shaped by biographical, cultural, contextual, and temporal complexities that demythologize a priori conceptions of the rights, roles, and responsibilities of the school leader, and the implications for the development of academic programs in leadership and management. Many times I had to turn off the audio recorder because of the pain that these educators reflected on during the interviews. Less often, they would laugh through their tears as they reflected on the joy, triumph, and pleasure that they derived from their work. It is the tensions that accrued from their tentative and tenuous understandings of how to respond adequately, appropriately, and urgently to the myriad challenges that are associated with enacting a transformative intellectual persona in disadvantaged education contexts that inspired this article.

The data were drawn from 90-minute-long individual interviews that were conducted with a combination of teachers and principals at schools in Johannesburg. Their ages ranged between 30 and 55. The sample comprised teachers from countries ravaged by civil unrest and economic meltdown. They included seven refugee teachers (two males and five females) who had escaped from Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Zimbabwe. These refugee teachers narrated harrowing pre-flight, flight, and settlement experiences as well as the xenophobic harassment that they have to endure within the South African public schooling system and broader society (see Perumal, 2013), for an extended analysis of the refugee teacher experience within the South African educational context). The rest of the sample comprised South African participants, four male principals and seven female teachers. All the South African participants were people of color who grew up, were schooled, and graduated from higher education under the apartheid

regime. The South African curriculum was regulated and censored; and in some cases the presence of security police on school and university campuses ensured that anti-apartheid political and ideological sentiment was not allowed. The participants recounted first-hand experiences of race, class, and gender discrimination. Given the brutality of the Apartheid military regime, many submissively accepted the tyranny of Apartheid oppression; however, only two participants reflected on their anti-apartheid activism. These two participants admitted that apart from fear of being apprehended by the police; they participated in anti-apartheid activism clandestinely because their parents would not have endorsed civil disobedience. However, all the South African participants recalled growing up with the messianic mantra that education was their key to liberation. To protect the identities of the participants, they are referred to by pseudonyms. The schools are referred to by the names of the suburbs in which they are located.

In the context of this study, *disadvantage* refers to the socio-economic status of schools. These schools lack adequate

1. physical infrastructure, that is, classrooms, learning material, recreational space, sanitation, electricity, and
2. human resources, that is, they have un/under-qualified staff and/or inadequate staff;
3. this study also recognizes the anomaly between the quintile ranking according to which schools are classified as either fee-paying or non-fee paying. Quintile ranking is a pro-poor policy that was introduced in 1998 under the provisions of the National Norms and Standards for School Funding (NNSSF). It aimed to improve equity and resource allocation in public schools. Quintile 5 represents the least-poorest schools and Quintile 1 the poorest schools. The policy requires that 60% of the available resources be distributed to the poorest 40% of schools. The assumption is that schools that serve less poor communities will be able to raise their own funds and would thus require less State support (Giese, Zide, Koch, & Hall, 2009, p. 37). The quintile classification is based on the annual socio-economic survey that the Department of Education conducts 10 days after the commencement of the South African academic year. Some of the schools in the study are classified as privileged because they are located in areas that are socio-economically "well-off"; however, these schools serve students who are "bussed in"/transported from socio-economically depressed areas. Thus, the school population is not reflective of the socio-economic status of the location of the school. This anomaly is alluded to in the following data excerpts:

The Department of Education looked at do you have running water? Do you have electricity? Is there a tarred road going to your school? According to that they ranked your school. They didn't go into the community and look at what the real situation is. (Presley)

. . . in the past, the Norms and Funding Model was determined based on the houses around the school . . . and not the school community in terms of learners who attended the school . . . there has been a lot of debates that this model was skewed and flawed . . . because when they looked at the demographics of the school and the 10-day statistics—this gives feedback on where learners travel from . . . in terms of migration, they are finding out that lots of learners travel from outlying, underprivileged areas and therefore there is a discussion now for the funding to be determined in accordance with that. (Dylan)

The research was conducted in the suburbs of Yeoville, Berea, Soweto, Eldorado Park, and Laudium, in Johannesburg. Yeoville was proclaimed a suburb in 1890 (4 years after the discovery of gold led to the founding of Johannesburg). The area was designated as a sanitarium for the affluent in which the air was purer because it was on a ridge overlooking the polluted mining town that had sprung out of the Highveld. However, the rich did not buy into the suburb. Instead, it became a multiclass area, in which many poorer people living below the ridge in Doornfontein aspired to live. As in the past, today Yeoville continues to attract many waves of immigrants that come to South Africa seeking a new life (Smith 1992).

In the hey-day of Apartheid, Berea, in downtown Johannesburg, was an affluent city that boasted the economic wealth of the *city of gold*. However, over the years, inner-city Johannesburg has fallen into deterioration and squalor, and the attendant maladies of crime; domestic, sexual, and gender violence; poverty; housing scarcity; HIV/AIDS plague the community. Many of the learners attending the schools in Yeoville and Berea are refugees and illegal immigrants from across the African continent (Perumal, 2009). The refugee teachers in this study are employed predominantly at the schools in these areas.

Soweto is the abbreviation for South Western Townships. It refers to the urban settlement, which was earmarked for the marginalized African migrant workers. Beall, Crankshaw, and Parnell (2002) trace the current spatial patterning of Soweto and Eldorado Park to developments at the beginning of the Fordist period, when Johannesburg was characterized by a residential division that followed the demarcation of the central business district into a southern manufacturing sector and a northern service sector. The basic spatial order was reinforced in both racial and class terms. The apartheid government forcibly relocated most Black residents from inner-city areas in the north and west to suburbs in the south. The Fordist period saw the expansion of the northern suburbs, which were characterized by home ownership and commuting by

motorcar. In contrast, low-cost state housing, rental tenure, and commuting by bus and rail distinguished the southern suburbs. The post-Fordist era, which saw the withdrawal of state housing provision for the poor, contributed to residents in the southern suburbs such as Soweto and Eldorado Park becoming poorer as unemployment rose and increasing numbers of people were forced to live in shacks. Today, large sections of the townships of Soweto and Eldorado Park struggle to divest themselves of this socio-economic legacy.

Laudium, north-west of Johannesburg, was originally reserved for White residents. Laudium was created by the Apartheid government as part of its Group Areas Policy aimed at moving ethnic groups out of Marabastad and central Pretora, which were zoned as "White Areas." Laudium was proclaimed an Indian township in 1961. Shanta described the current community as follows:

> Laudium a very rich community because I have heard . . . most residents have BMW's and Mercedes Benz. However, we have many indigent learners . . . when we take them on excursions, we pay for them. They get a discounted rate on school fees or maybe they do not pay the school fees. Just surrounding the school is "White Blocks." It's a very poor . . . very low socio-economic area. You get a lot of drug dealers. The parents are very poor. If you drive around, you'll find the kids on the streets, because there are no amenities for them. Parents work very hard for long hours doing menial jobs . . . the kids are basically left to themselves. Mainly Indians live there but there's quite a bit of Coloreds. I think there are Blacks moving in because . . . some Black kids say they live in Laudium. I would say their parents are probably staying in as domestics and the children attend school here.

Despite the dismantling of the Group Areas Act, the schools in the study, with a few exceptions, are still largely racially segregated and bear the structural impact of apartheid spatial and socio-economic engineering. Amsterdam (2006) recalls that in 1993, on the eve of democratization, the annual education expenditure per learner was as follows: White, R951.00; Indian, R889.00; Colored, R765.00; non-homeland Black, R328.00; and homeland Black, R311.00. The current migratory patterns and increased enrollment patterns of learners at schools that are better resourced is attributable to the fact that these schools were the beneficiaries of the apartheid funding disparity.

Narratives of Pleasure and Pain

Narratives of Pleasure

Educators who conceived of their job as a calling were the ones who shared narratives of pleasure. They equated leadership with service and servitude, and reflected on their endeavors to teach with love, passion, and compassion

(Collay, 2010, pp. 221-222). These teachers derived much joy when their students excelled academically and when they heard testimonies of their students graduating with university entrance passes. Against this backdrop, Robbie commented on the high student drop-out rate from Eldorado Park schools, indicating that only 20% of students graduate from high school.

> A few of them actually finish matric and we get their results and names from the high schools that we have a relationship with. But a number of students, we see them in the community, they have fallen out along the way. That is saddening and I believe it should become all of our focus to get them back; or get them equipped so that they don't have to leave school.

These teachers also celebrated the cultural and social successes of their students, for example, when their students were selected to play in the national rugby squad, or when their students won competitions, or displayed entrepreneurial skills at the market day events, or participated in school and community concerts. Spending time with their own families and engaging in postgraduate studies were also sources of pleasure for them.

Visions to uplift the child and the community is encapsulated in Lee's excerpt:

> . . . as a school leader you're not working for a boss, you're not working for the Department of Education. You're working for the surrounding community and you need to have a passion to say that I would love to take this community even two steps higher from where they are before I get out of here. You need to have that courage to say I'm gonna take on a project and it looks impossible but I can see that it can be done.

Many of the participants felt passionate about their jobs and were driven by a moral obligation to intervene positively in the lives of the children. They wanted to provide a school environment that would serve as a reprieve from the unconducive living conditions and lifestyles that the children were exposed to. For children whose home environments were unsafe and unstable, Francis explained,

> . . . what I am trying to do is to make the school an oasis so that the children get a meal, even if it is one or two meals for the day. They feel safe. There are no factors from outside influencing them so they can be relaxed and be themselves for the few hours at school before going back to the hectic situation at home.

Despite the Department of Education introducing the National School Nutrition Program in 1994, Pat's reports from Soweto schools of students collapsing from hunger was a stark reminder that food insecurity

is a disturbing reality among many students in these communities. Critical pedagogy emphasizes that transformative intellectuals infuse their teaching with love, compassion, and kindness. In trying to interrupt the children's untenable home environments by attending to their nutritional and psychological needs, educators, such as Lee and Francis, do not balk at the intensification of their job description which sees them assuming the role of social workers. In fact, the Norms and Standards for Educators expect teachers to assume pastoral and community-caring roles.

However, their dreams and visions to uplift the community do not come without costs. They are part of the emotional wage that Schell (1998) identifies as "psychic income," which she defines as

> . . . the perceived personal, social, and cultural compensation that a job brings to an individual above and beyond wages. Psychic income is a powerful lure for workers seeking validation of their intellectual or service contributions. Thus fair compensation can take second place to self-perceptions of an altruistic ethos.

Psychic income keeps educators in general, and women educators in particular, tied to the exacting demands of nurturance pedagogies. This psychic income has bolstered the idea of "the calling" to the teaching profession, and has justified the profession's cultural devaluation and relatively low pay. The economic and cultural devaluation of the profession obtains from the emotional labor that educators perform which remains invisible and goes unrecognized and unrewarded. These noble acts of service reinforce teachers' faith and desire and commodify their experiences as powerful and joyful critical pedagogic romances, even if they are difficult to enact.

Narratives of Pain

The participants reflected on the pain they felt about their students' traumatic circumstances as well as their own personal and professional circumstances.

Students' pain. Recollections of the pain that students endured revolved around the familiar narratives of unemployment, teenage pregnancy, high divorce rates, absent parents, child-headed households, HIV/AIDS-related deaths, and the challenges that these circumstances engender. Freda indicated that she receives up to five applications per week for social grants. Leslie provided the following description of the socio-economic context:

> Our school is situated in Eldorado Park between Extensions 1 and 3. If you go to the police station and ask them to arrest somebody in Extension 1 they will

tell you we first need backup before we go in there . . . Socio-economically, lots of fathers because of unemployment have nothing else to do but *spin. Spin* means you do whatever you need to do to get some bread on the table. So it is drug infested. There is a lot of gambling and alcohol abuse. You can see it in the neglect of the learners.

Freda reported on the abduction of two students, and Leslie proceeded to report on episodes of violence that rocked the community:

Five weeks ago a Grade 1 learner's mother was brutally murdered by the father. Stabbed with a knife. He also tried to kill himself but was unsuccessful. He was arrested and was in ICU in hospital under police guard. This past Saturday, we went to another funeral, also a mother of one of my learners. The father choked her to death. He was arrested in the week. So can you see more or less the domestic violence in the community . . . We don't know the specifics but that is the kind of domestic situation that learners find themselves in. Look at the scenario: The mother was killed; the father is in jail . . . what happens to the children? Community institutions and the police give some counseling to the learners. Normally, parents would not send the child to school while the child is grieving. The department's workload is heavy so we go to where we get an immediate response and organize counseling for the learners. We also find out who are the caregivers of these children because we may need to assist them with paper work in terms of foster care and foster grants. Our work is much more than just education at school.

Apart from the general violence that plagues these communities, learners are also exposed to sexual exploitation en-route to school. Many of the schools in the study play host to students who travel long distances. Racial desegregation has resulted in a migratory pattern that sees children from former Black communities commuting via buses or taxis to former Indian and/or Colored schools, and Indian and Colored children enrolling at previously White schools. This student migratory pattern has been linked to the increased funding and resource allocation made possible by the National Norms and Standards for Funding policy. There is the perception that the quality of education was superior at these former White schools; hence, parents of color, in their quest to provide their children with a better education enroll their children in schools that were associated with race privilege in Apartheid South Africa. Given that the children do not reside in the vicinity of these schools, participants expressed their concerns about reports of sexual harassment of young girls commuting unsupervised on the same taxi with older boys. Over-crowded taxis result in the girls sitting on the older boys' laps. Apart from the sexual harassment, Mally expressed concern about road safety issues, the fatigue factor, and food insecurity that some of these children experience. Mally confided,

> . . . what disturbs me is I see children are taken from one taxi in the main road to another. That is dangerous for the children. They perhaps exchange taxis because they are going to different schools. The children come from different areas and they bind. Some of these children must be leaving home as early as 06:00; our school starts at 07:45. I'm not sure that they have rested enough; some of them haven't eaten a proper breakfast. Parents would rather sacrifice and send their children to these schools where, in their minds, they feel that their children get a better education.

The harsh reality is that for these children, the right to education comes at a high cost. The narratives of the children's pain may partially explain low learner achievement and pass rates (Amsterdam, 2006).

Teachers' pain. The discourse around teachers has historically foregrounded their roles and responsibilities, but has been silent about teachers' rights. Preoccupation with their professional minds has trumped acknowledgment of their spirits, souls, and bodies. The teachers' personal and professional narratives re-imagine teachers as fully human.

Gerda reflected tearfully on her tragic personal circumstances. After enduring years of physical and verbal spousal abuse, her alcoholic husband refused to move out of the house despite their divorce. He continued abusing the children and her, and refused to support the family financially. He eventually committed suicide. She confided,

> Yes, it did have an impact on me because as an educator, you got to teach and you've got to have that rapport with your kids. If you have something worrying you . . . it's going to impact your work; but you have to stay strong.

Rachael described her circumstances as a single parent of a special needs child, as follows:

> It's a pity you don't see me at home [laughs]. Yo, it's hectic. It's hectic my dear for the mere fact that I have a special needs son. He is 9 and I also have a 6 year old. The special needs boy is in Grade 3 at New Hope School. I wake up every day at 4 a.m. I have to prepare myself and I have to prepare him too. It affects me a lot because I have to see that he is well and sometimes during the middle of the night he just cries. So it's hectic for me. He is in a wheel chair and mentally challenged. He's not okay but he is improving because that school has physiotherapists, psychologists, occupational therapists, and speech therapists. He was born like that but now I'm happy because with this new technology at least he's trying to walk and you can hear some of the words.

> So I am up at 4 a.m. preparing the children. Then I have to wait for my sister to come to help my sons catch their transport to school. At 5.50 a.m., I leave for

school. I'm taking public transport—one taxi from home to town and one taxi from town to Laudium. Tired as I am, when I enter that school gate, I tell myself: "*You know what Madam, you are now here at work. Even though you are tired, ignore it. The learners are waiting; you have to teach the learners. Paperwork for your department is waiting. You have to check the files, you have to this and do that; there's a meeting at 2.15 p.m.; you have to attend a workshop.*" There and then I have to forget about my tiredness, about all I do at home and focus on work. At some point I'd like to work closer to home. This is what I need most. Really it's taking a toll on me to get up at 4 a.m. I return home between 5.30 and 6 p.m. I have to cook, do school work, and housework. I go to bed sometimes at midnight and then at 4 a.m. I have to wake up. It's life. What else can we do?

The experiences that these two participants shared require a self-styling that translates into emotion management. They mask their physiological and emotional states to fulfill the role of critical transformative intellectuals who instill and exhibit dedication, faith, and joy despite their personal circumstances. Emotional management is emotional labor, which Hochschild (1983) defines as

> . . . the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display; emotional labor is sold for a wage and therefore has exchange value. Emotional labor requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others. (p. 7)

Gerda's and Rachael's narratives highlight the material and practical considerations that what and how to teach involve not only commitments of the heart, but of time, energy, and the attention of the body and mind. Therefore, the call of critical pedagogy to affect is a call to labor, because pedagogic performances require artful disguises and self-denying to service and promote the spiritual, mental, and physical wellbeing of others even when one's own world is falling apart.

Racism and xenophobia haunt the very fabric of South Africa. Celine, a refugee teacher who works as a substitute teacher in Berea, illustrates how her professionalism and pedagogic expertise are trivialized because of the images that are associated with her embodiment—the color of her skin, her race, her nationality, and her command of the English language.

> Honestly, I think some parents don't like their children to be taught by Black teachers . . . especially English. You get that feeling . . . they don't trust you. There was a day when we gave out reports, one of the parents said to me: "Oh, you are the Black teacher my child was talking about." You don't even know what that means. It could be positive but I don't know. . . . that is the thing,

Black teacher. They shouldn't see any color. It's not that I'm not proud to be Black but . . . because of all the connotations that get attached to it.

. . . the last term we had a comprehension exercise on Robert Mugabe. When we read the exercise most of them will be shouting "Yeah, Zimbabwe!" knowing so well . . . I am from Zimbabwe. I would join them in their jokes. If you get cross then you won't be able to handle it. I don't get cross. There is a word they use—*makwerekwere* (foreigners)—I always tell them I'm here by choice. I'm here because I'm qualified and I'm proud to be a Zimbabwean. I would never lie to you that I'm South African. I don't regret what I am. I always tell them . . . not in a manner which is rude or showing that it hurt me. In fact it doesn't hurt me any more. The problem is with learners when you are a foreigner . . . especially when you are from Zimbabwe they think you stay in a shack . . . They think the worst because what they see on TV, those squatter camps . . . that's what they associate you with. During the first days, honestly, it would affect me. These people don't even know you also have a life. I told myself I will never get angry.

Celine's disclosure about how her embodiment and psycho-social experiences impact her pedagogic persona is reminiscent of Yoon's (2005, p. 743) lamentation that racial melancholy contours our emotional landscapes. An examination of the intersection between Celine's multiple heterogeneous subjectivities (being Black, female, non-English speaking, refugee) and critical pedagogy's call to affect and social transformation to promote the ideals of democracy are rendered complex and contradictory discourses. Critical pedagogy's call for teachers to be transformative intellectuals is a call to be citizen extraordinaire, in the face of political and social minoritization.

Govender (2004, pp. 270-273) observes that South Africa has a long history of teacher unionism. Historically, teacher unions were also divided along racial lines. The National Professional Teachers' Organisation of South Africa—which had predominantly White members—espoused a traditional "professional" approach in dealing with the education authorities, relying primarily on consultation and persuasion, while repudiating militant and "political" action. In the 1980s, several progressive teacher unions emerged, notably the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU). They adopted a strong unionist approach in agitating for educational change. They constituted themselves as non-racial and allied themselves with organizations (notably the African National Congress) that spearheaded the struggle for political liberation. A chasm developed between the new progressive unions and the older, professional associations. The latter were labeled apolitical and conservative, and prioritized the learner, whereas the former regarded themselves as radicalized workers and engaged in industrial action. The discourse

around whether teachers were workers or professionals became symbolic markers of political difference. Although currently teacher unions enjoy a closer relationship with government, the tensions among unions persists, primarily over industrial action that disrupts the rhythm of teaching and learning. The situation is exacerbated when school districts convene meetings during school hours. These ill-timed meetings leave teachers conflicted about their responsibilities. These issues are highlighted in the following excerpts:

> When we had the transition into the merging of all the unions into Black Unity Movement for teachers, I found there was a need for a real unified front. I thought at the time the union had the right direction because there was still this political revolution that had to take place. But as I progressed and also perhaps through my studies I realized that we were losing the plot in terms of our purpose as a union. Teachers were becoming more conscious about the political aspirations rather than about teacher development. That's what started getting me a bit more despondent. Personally, as the union is going, I'm concerned because those who did not benefit from quality education are losing out even more now because of the disruptions. I was very much in favor of strikes, marches, and going on protests but I don't believe that we should be disrupting education any longer at the expense of the learners because of our own ambitions—be it remunerative positions or labor positions. I certainly wouldn't like to leave the so-called progressive unions because I think I would suffer from a conscious of being a sell-out; but sometimes I think that other unions are doing more for teacher development than SADTU. (Dylan)

> Unions are supposed to be encouraging quality teaching and learning; instead, they are protecting their members against losing their jobs or being reprimanded. I've personally been approached because I would not allow teachers that go on strike to sign in as if they were present at school. My name has been called at union meetings as one of the principals that should be sorted out. SADTU members are not up to standard and don't allow me into their classrooms. (Phillip)

Toward a Vision of Perseverance

Against this backdrop of pleasure and pain, the narratives of teachers' and students' pain far outweigh the episodes of pleasure that education in disadvantaged communities bring. In agitating for the promotion of a love of deep democracy, Kesson and Henderson (2010) expound the importance of ethical perseverance in education. They write,

> Without educators who can sustain their ethical perseverance over a long period of time, there doesn't seem to be much hope for the future of democracy

in education. Are today's educators being prepared to be "marathon runners," or are they only becoming constructivist best practice "sprinters?" What kinds of changes might we see in education's purposes and practices if educators were challenged to be concerned about the long-term ethical consequences of their work? (pp. 221-223).

Kesson's and Henderson's romantic exposition regarding the roles, responsibilities and dispositions expected of teachers return us to the sobering critique leveled by Jansen (2001) and Yoon (2005) in which they agitate for a re-visitation of the tenets of critical pedagogy in the light of teachers' personal and professional biographies and circumstances.

While teachers labor under the yoke of untenable circumstances, many of the participants mentioned that they commenced their school day with religious and spiritual practices, such as devotional time; interceding with prayer requests of teachers and students; quiet, spiritual nourishment time; reading motivational literature; praying for wisdom and guidance; and for calm to handle the day. South Africa is a secular country. In the school curriculum, religious education has been replaced with religion education. However, given the exacting demands that educators have to navigate when leading in disadvantaged communities, Rae recounted,

> One of the educators would open up in prayer. People would share some of the prayer requests that they do have. We start the day with just being thankful for a number of things, where people would share, "*I'm thankful for these three things today*." That seemed to have encouraged people just to have hope. We would also share, for example, about children that are not well or children that are doing well and some success stories where a teacher has visited a learner's home and they would share what is happening there. This time is ended off with prayer. We all stand, join hands, and pray together every morning.

Janice offered this piece as her motivation for seeking spiritual guidance in leading her school:

> After being interviewed by the school administration,
> the prospective teacher said:
>
> Let me see if I've got this right.
> You want me to go into that room with all those kids,
> correct their disruptive behavior,
> observe them for signs of abuse,
> monitor their dress habits,
> censor their T-shirt messages,
> and instill in them a love for learning.

You want me to check their backpacks for weapons,
wage war on drugs and sexually transmitted diseases,
and raise their sense of self-esteem and personal pride.

You want me to teach them patriotism and good citizenship,
sportsmanship and fair play,
and how to register to vote,
balance a chequebook, and apply for a job.

You want me to check their heads for lice,
recognize signs of anti-social behavior,
and make sure that they all pass the final exams.

You also want me to provide them
with an equal education regardless of their handicaps,
and communicate regularly with their parents
in English, Spanish, or any other language,
by letter, telephone, newsletter, and report card.

You want me to do all this with a piece of chalk,
a blackboard, a bulletin board, a few books,
a big smile, and a starting salary that qualifies me for food stamps.
You want me to do all this
and then you tell me . . . I Can't Pray!

Conclusion

Yoon (2005) argues that there are worse things than to model critical pedagogy's incitement to pedagogies of possibility or hope. However, one cannot help but express disenchantment with the variant of democracy that is unfolding in South Africa, this especially in the face of the weight that is placed on educators to promote the tenets of democracy. The present moment in South African education is characterized as a multifaceted "crisis in democracy" exacerbated and accelerated by the prevalence of political corruption, partisan political skirmishes, xenophobic attacks, escalating crime, poverty, and violence. This crisis in democracy is a remnant of the structural inequalities of apartheid which are felt all the more poignantly in disadvantaged school communities where the materiality of democracy is limited to idealist slogans. South African policy makers preoccupy themselves with technocratic curriculum reform. This renders the task of educators as transformational intellectuals daunting, given that professional training of most educators falls short of preparing them with the knowledge, dispositions, and capacities to both understand the depth of the crises and to respond to the challenges

with democratic wisdom. Justifying teachers perseverance in the name of democracy and citizenship, along with the personal sacrifice and pain serves to further keep teachers in a denigrated position, weighed under by intensified emotional labor. Reversing this situation calls for sincere and urgent attention to ensure that the psycho-social and economic conditions under which teachers work is addressed so as to alleviate the pressure on them to be social workers and to rather focus on being transformative intellectuals. Perhaps when social justice and equity become mainstream and are rescued from the idealism of sloganism, then the carnival of joy, pleasure, and promise as encapsulated in Quinn's (2010) synopsis of critical pedagogy can become a reality:

> . . . the call of hospitality in our curriculum labours, is the call to joy, a return to . . . heart of the life of the mind. We own the fact that the place we really want to dwell in is possibility, which is also a place of pleasure, promise, and play. . . . Laughter, putting us into our body, implicitly utters the wisdom of an embodied mind, body, and spirit. To describe hospitality is to describe the delightfulness of being human. . . . The question of hospitality may help us at least invite ways . . . to more fully dwell in this deliciousness, even and especially amid difficulty. (pp. 107-108).

A review of the critical pedagogy's ideals as encapsulated in Quinn's synopsis within disadvantaged schools in the South African context is not intended to re-image the persona of educators or the ideals of a democracy respectful of social justice, but rather to be sensitive to the challenges—as highlighted by Jansen (2001) and Yoon (2005)—that teachers have to endure when teaching in disadvantaged contexts. It implies the urgency for educational stakeholders and partners to provide the material, emotional, and spiritual support requisite for educators to service their pedagogical calling with ethical fidelity. Attention not just to the minds but to the body, soul, and spirit of teachers and their holistic wellbeing should constitute an integral part of continuous teacher professional development and care. Perhaps then this noble call for teachers to be citizens extraordinaire and to perform pedagogic carnivals of compassion, pleasure, promise, and play could be rescued from romantic idealism.

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Author Biography

Juliet Perumal has taught at school, adult education and various universities throughout South Africa. She has published in the field of language and gender; critical feminist pedagogies; transformative curriculum, democracy and human rights; educational leadership; and qualitative research methodologies. Her work is framed by a strong social justice agenda.