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Articulating a space for critical learning with a social justice orientation in an adult education programme

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This article reflects on work as a radical-feminist adult educator and as part of a group of academics from 10 universities who have developed new national qualifications in the Adult Education Community and Training Sector (ACET) for Higher Education in South Africa. The qualification will respond to the training needs of Adult Education Community lecturers and practitioners, and thereby indirectly contribute to the education and training needs of the communities, unemployed adults and youth who require skills to find employment. In the design of this qualification we sought to ensure the inclusion in the qualification of the new policy requirements, critical transformative educational practices, and perspectives from community educators, as well as recent demands from students for a decolonised curriculum. Sometimes these frameworks are in contradiction to one another, particularly in a neo-liberal context in which education has a strong focus on the workplace. I provide evidence from a qualitative study on student motivations to study further that shows that whilst there is a concern with education for skills development to grow the economy, there are still present strong political motivations to learn on the part of students and therefore it is imperative to teach from all these standpoints.

Keywords: context; critical learning; education policy; social justice orientation; student motivations

Introduction

This article reflects on my work as a radical feminist adult educator working in University of Cape Town's (UCT) Adult Education Unit, and as a member of a group of academics from 10 South African universities, who met to conceptualise and develop a curriculum framework for the Advanced Diploma in Adult Education Community and Training Sector (Adv. Dip for ACET), as well as the Advanced Diploma in Adult and Community Education and Training Teaching (Advanced Diploma ACETT).

The development of new qualifications in the post school sector is in direct response to national and local priorities of improving the quality of teaching and training in both the formal and non-formal 'classroom.' The qualification will respond to the training needs of Adult Education Community lecturers and practitioners, and thereby indirectly contribute to the education and training needs of the community, unemployed adults and youth who require skills to find employment.

While developing this framework and designing the curriculum for the UCT Adv. Dip for ACET qualification, we sought to include in the curriculum the new policy requirements, critical educational practises, perspectives from community educators as well as recent demands from students for a decolonised curriculum. Sometimes these frameworks are in conflict with one another, in particular in a neo-liberal context, in which education has a strong focus on the workplace. This dilemma is in synergy with the theme on developing a decolonised curriculum, and a social justice orientation and pedagogy that seeks to chart new socio-political and economic developments for South Africa through education.

Historical Background of the Current Adult Education Policy

From the 1980s through to the early 1990s, adult education in universities in the Western Cape was generally about professionalising a field of practice that was largely non-formal or informal. Walters (1998:436) offers comprehensive definitions of these terms, where formal learning is institutionalised and certified; non-formal learning is planned, short-term and not certified; and informal learning is often unplanned and incidental, occurring in everyday life or in social action. Many adults who came to study part-time and after hours were from progressive political movements and civic organisations and were involved with education for social justice. Adult education during the anti-apartheid struggle from the 1960s through to the 1980s was used as a rallying point against apartheid and it carried the hopes of many for redress, in particular regarding access to a good quality education (Aitchison, 2003:126).

During the period between 1994–2000, a new adult education policy was formulated under the democratic government, which aligned itself to shifts in the global economy that linked education to market outcomes. Included in the new policy was an emphasis on adult education and training, as well as lifelong learning through the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), which promised flexible modular learning and upward career movement. The emphasis in the policy was on professionalism and emphasised education, training and development roles for adult educators.

In addition, the establishment of the Sector Education Training Authorities (SETAs) linked work to skills development. A National Skills Fund was established into which employers paid a levy of 1% towards further skills development of staff which was reimbursed if staff underwent training. This was seen as serving the

country's progress towards reconstruction and development and necessary for competing in a global market economy (Ismail, 2008).

Students were optimistic about the new qualifications structure (NQF) and lauded the policy of entry to formal institutions via recognition of prior learning (RPL) and life-long learning. This was regarded as a form of redress for those who were formerly oppressed and denied formal education (Informal discussions during RPL assessments).

For many South Africans, these policies signalled their "faith and optimism in education to transform lives and bring about social and economic prosperity" (Barr, 1999:8). However, the optimism was short-lived as the resource allocation (both financial and in staffing) for adult education was minimal in tertiary institutions, in night schools and in communities (1% of the education budget) (Aitchison, 2003:29). Together with this was the underfunded and insecure nature of employment in the development and social movement sector, initially due to donor funding being shifted away from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to government, and then to a decrease in overseas funding to both government and NGOs (Ismail, 2012).

Despite the government's stated commitment to adult education and training as documented in the White Paper No. 3 (Department of Education, 1997), resources to adult education remained inadequate and generally the many SETAS proved to be ineffective and inefficient in their task of skills development in the workplace (for further discussions and link between SETAS and adult education see Cooper & Walters, 2009).

In 2015, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) published new qualifications for Adult Education and the Post School Sector (The Policy on Minimum Requirements for Programmes Leading to Qualifications for Educators and Lecturers in Adult and Community Education and Training); and in addition moved Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) to DHET away from the Department of Basic Education. Alongside this new institutional types were launched i.e., the Community Education and Training (CET) Centres/Colleges, which replaced the Public Learning Centres.

These policies implied the need for a bigger cohort of lecturers who are appropriately qualified to teach in the newly established CET colleges. These colleges were also developed to provide qualified professionals and to cater for the provision of second-chance learning opportunities for out-of-school youth and adults. The CET colleges will offer both non-formal and formal programmes.

However, it appears that the new policy has not received the required budget allocation and

staffing and reports from managers of the CET colleges suggest that often salaries are not paid and that the centres remain underfunded and therefore cannot offer non-formal programmes (Anonymous, 2017, pers. comm). DHET has acknowledged that most centres do not have their own premises or full-time staff (as quoted in Harley, n.d.).

The new adult education qualifications structure has impacted many adult educators, who are under pressure to become certified and registered as professional educators. In addition, there is an increased economic imperative to become a professional adult educator, which means that their curriculum choice is in part directed by the new context which emphasises workplace learning. Furthermore, educators have to teach school qualifications and increasingly conform to standardised curricula, which meet the requirements of the workplace (Ismail, 2012).

This trend of linking education policy directly to economic development is not peculiar to South Africa and is well recognised in the first world amongst radical and feminist adult educators. Barr (1999) and Thompson (2000) reflect on how the agenda for adult education for social change shifted in Britain in the 1970s and 1980s to more individualistic goals, as the country's economic policies became more conservative under neoliberalism. Torres (2006) argues that globalisation is having an impact on educational policies throughout the world, and that regulation of education is part of influencing the ideology of 'performance' and for training people for homogenous markets.

A Changing Student Body

At the University of Cape Town, the Adult Education Group situated in the School of Education has offered adult education programmes at both an undergraduate and postgraduate level for over 20 years. Our definition of adult education is informed by the international context and encompasses formal, non-formal, and informal learning. We define adults as people who have life experience and responsibilities, and adult educators are those who teach or manage adults in adult education programmes.

I coordinate and teach adult education students in the Advanced Certificate for Adult Educators (ACE) at UCT. This is a two-year part-time after-hours programme. The programme aims to enable adult education practitioners to critically reflect on their practice through different theoretical lenses and to improve the quality of their practice. It is a postgraduate, professional qualification and allows students who obtain a distinction to access the Master's Programme in Adult Education. In the new qualification framework this is no longer possible, as ACE students have to proceed into a Postgraduate Diploma. This

conforms to the framework for teacher qualifications.

Students on the ACE programme come from a wide range of fields – development projects; social movements; the trade union sector; adult basic education and training (ABET); workplace training; human resource development; health education; educators within libraries, museums, art schools and the state and corporate sector; and more recently, lecturers from both private and Further Education and Training (FET) colleges. There are usually about 20 students on the programme, more women than men, who access the programme via multiple routes through recognition of prior learning (RPL). In 2009, colleges were incorporated into higher education, which contributed to bringing in a new group of students who were industry-based trainers in workplaces and in the Further Education Vocational Colleges. In 2015, another cohort of lecturers from the community colleges whose main focus is to offer school leaving certificates entered the programme.

These policies have resulted in a more diverse student body in terms of ideology, race, class, academic ability and sites of practices. This has implications for the curriculum and pedagogy.

Including Motivation in the Design of Curricula

I go beyond a psychological study of motivation to a more interpretive framework and include social and historical factors (Scanlon, 2008; West, 1996). Motivation can be read as ‘learner needs,’ which are to a large extent socially constructed. I agree with Ayers (2011) that this is a function of a complex social process. In this study, I have taken into account how socio-economic and political conditions impact on motivation. Most of the literature on motivation is written from a middle class Western perspective (West, 1996), and I agree with West (1996) that to understand this issue properly we need to understand how knowledge and power function. From feminist perspectives, Patricia Hill Collins (2000) argues that motives are often articulated as a speech act, but they are also a conversation and a dialogue that is ongoing; while hooks (1994) emphasises that motives are gendered and racialised, for example, women may articulate their motives to study so that they can break away from patriarchal relationships (Ismail, 2012:181).

Recent literature on motivation (Field, Merrill & Morgan-Klein, 2010; Stevenson & Clegg, 2013), which takes into account economic and political factors focuses on autobiographical studies, and explores how the current economic crisis shapes future aspirations. There are connections here with my own research. Stevenson and Clegg’s (2013) research illustrates how the complexities of race, age, class, and gender may affect transitions of mature learners into higher education in the United

Kingdom (UK) and how these learners orientate themselves to the future by interrogating their past and present identities. They interrogate life stories through the use of Archer’s (2007) four forms of reflexivity and conclude that students do not have fixed identities, that there are multiple stories, that social mobility is strongly tied to personal values and that adult students need to have opportunities to reflect on what their possible future selves may look like. The researchers emphasise student agency and acute awareness of constraints in their possible futures.

Field et al.’s research (2010) focuses on biographical narratives to explain why some adult students remain whilst others drop out of higher education. They use three concepts to explain their research findings. The first is Bourdieu’s concept of habitus for looking at how working class adult students cope with the symbolic and intellectual capital of the university. Secondly, they employ the dialectics of agency and structure to argue their case for an ongoing negotiation of identity to cope with university life, which they term a ‘transitional space’ for working out new identities. A third concept of recognition is utilised, referring to when an individual strives for recognition through developing relationships of self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem in the family, civil society, and the state.

In a similar study in South Africa, Linda Ronnie (2008) explores mature students’ reasons for returning to study, and their coping strategies. She also draws on Bourdieu’s concept of habitus to illuminate how class is significant in shaping reasons to study, negotiating identities, attaining support, and creating expectations. Kerfoot (2008) also uses Bourdieu’s concepts of field, habitus, legitimate language, and reflexivity to explore how an adult education programme can contribute to increased agency in a development context. She concludes that agency is dependent on context and reflexivity and does not always emerge as transformative.

In a study emerging from the Australian context, which is critical of the dominant discourse on motivations and aspirations, Zipin, Sellar and Hattam (2012) explore youth aspirations in a climate of economic downturn. They offer a sociological framework, drawing on Bourdieu, Williams, and Appadurai for understanding aspirations as complex social-cultural phenomena, and argue that in the current economic crisis many working class youth have to temper their aspirations or else face ‘cruel disillusionment’ if they are to be optimistic about their future.

In the South African context, we have seen student struggles around a decolonised curriculum, where students argue for their histories and experiences to be taken into account to make the curriculum more accessible, and to include more

literatures and philosophies from Africa and the South.

I think that Vanessa Andreotti's (2011) definition of a decolonised curriculum speaks directly to student motivations and demands by calling for the removal of colonial images, a critique of institutional powers, and emphasises epistemic solidarity. Andreotti links knowledge to action, affirming the view that knowledge is political, and allowing for critique and challenges to the normative project. These ideas link strongly to the radical tradition in adult education.

It is in this context that I empirically tested whether the ACE curriculum met the expectations of adult education students. In addition, an important consideration was to explore whether student responses included motivations for a critical decolonised curriculum and radical pedagogy, which could inform the new Advanced Diploma in ACET curricula.

Methodology

I used a qualitative methodology and gathered data from focus group and individual interviews. Interviews were conducted with a random sample of 37% of students from a total of 62 students from three different ACE intakes (2004–5; 2006–7 and 2008–9) and from the 2015 community lecturer cohort. In all the different data-gathering activities, the rationale for the research was explained, and permission was requested beforehand for participation in the research. Confidentiality was retained by not naming participants. The data was analysed thematically, and each theme is presented with similar statements from students across the different sites/fields of practice, differing statements from various sites and independent views.

Redesigning a Critical Curricula which is Responsive to the New Context and Different Needs

Generally there is broad agreement that Adult Education is contextual, because adults learn from their lived experience and context shapes their learning.

The ACE curriculum changed in 2000 and again in 2009 to reflect the new higher education policies and economic changes in the country, and to align itself with the more diverse student body. The curriculum over two years currently includes the following courses: Adult Learning and Teaching; Professional and Policy Studies; Adult Education and Development; a choice between Adult Education and Social Transformation and Adult Education and Workplace Learning; and an Evaluative Research Project.

These courses take into account the response of adult education to development needs in the country and transformative projects linked to social movements. The curriculum also takes into account reforms in the workplace; South Africa's entry into

a global market by including learning in the workplace; project management and assessment practices. In this way, it tries to be socially responsive to the ideals of equity, redress, social justice and economic concerns, such as building the capacity of adult educators in the community and in the workplace. Together with these changes, we offered a new module on Professional and Policy studies in order to include the changing roles and identities of adult educators. This module mediates their new identities and their changing roles as professionals. Previously this identity was gained through activism rather than academic study as many adult educators pre-1994 taught without formal accreditation (Thomas, 2005:2). The evaluative research component of the curriculum aimed to provide students with an introduction to research practices and allows them to make links between research and teaching through evaluating educational programmes.

Thus, within a new political context with policy changes in higher education that reflected global and local changes and a diverse student body, the new curriculum brought together informal, non-formal knowledge from development and social movements, and formal knowledge from the institutionalised sites. The pedagogy was interactive, allowing for a problem-posing methodology, and encouraging students to raise issues or questions with which they were grappling. Different theories (Popular and Feminist Pedagogy, Transformative learning and Situated Learning) were mediated through small group work and regular dialogue was encouraged. Through this programme, students were exposed to how knowledge is constructed, and how ideas about knowledge are changing and located differently in diverse cultures, settings, and personal histories.

Findings and Discussion

Curriculum as Motivation

My study explores how the adult education curriculum can be constructed on a knowledge base that takes into account knowledge and skills required for adult educators in a global context, but which is also responsive to students' personal intellectual resources and the political and social interests that they bring with them. Such a curriculum would at the same time engage students to think critically about their aspirations and to act on them.

The majority of students across the different sites cited the following theorists as important for their understanding of their practice and meaningful for their own learning.

Many of them acknowledged Malcolm Knowles, saying, 'to learn about the difference between pedagogy and andragogy was critical' as 'now I know that I have to teach adults differently to children'; or 'I can take into account that I do not

have to discipline my students as they attend voluntarily and are self-motivated' (Student interviews, 2010).

Mezirow's transformative learning (perspective transformation), which allows students to reflect on their belief systems and changes in the self, resonated with students who reflected deeply on their own learning and how they would now position themselves in relations to their own students. There were many journal stories of how students could link Mezirow's theory to their own development and changes in career trajectories and lifestyles.

Paulo Freire was a significant theorist for students in NGOs who were working with poor communities and in social movements struggling for resources from the state or those advocating or lobbying for human rights. But some in the industry sector were also 'attracted to Freire, as my work is very industry-based, I was motivated to learn more about popular approaches' (Student interviews, 2010).

Feminist popular pedagogy found favour amongst women students who were working in NGOs associated with HIV/AIDS, teenage pregnancy and domestic violence.

One of the most common reflections was that the learning theories gave them a lens with which to view and reflect on their teaching. They said, 'I could think about the theories in terms of what I was doing'; 'I was able to apply the theory to my practice which made it so relevant'; 'ACE gave me a theoretical framework with which I can view the world and ties in with my philosophy and values as I have a strong value system based on justice and empowerment which is reflected in the curriculum and teaching of popular education' (Student interviews, 2010).

Students felt that in the adult learning and teaching module, the exercise of keeping a reflective journal made them understand their own ways of learning, which also led to improved understanding of the self and opened them up to be more attentive to different ways of learning.

However, there were exceptions as indicated by some, where they noted 'I hated the theories with a passion but enjoyed Knowles and didn't enjoy writing the reflective journal' (Student interviews, 2010).

Others felt that they had different expectations of university education and expected more intense work on one or two theorists; they did not find an overview of different theoretical traditions very useful (Student interviews, 2010).

Evaluative Research was also cited as important. The reasons given were that that this module related more directly to their situation as adult educators or else challenged them intellectually and brought innovative ways of thinking.

For students in the NGO sector the modules which addressed the process of empowering people stood out, as well as 'understanding neo-liberalism, globalisation and the anti-globalisation social movements' taught in the Development and Social Movements Modules (Student interviews, 2010).

Most students found that they enjoyed that, 'the curriculum was not taught from a neutral position.' One student said, 'I found the political orientation exciting,' while another said, 'I loved the project on resistance art; a world away from the unit standards forms of assessment for outcomes-based education' (Student interviews, 2010).

These responses indicate that students value a curriculum that helps them make sense of their world and helps them to act upon it, and change it for the better (Martin, 2006:14). These sentiments reflect agency and a social justice orientation, which link with definitions of decolonisation that I discuss later on.

Pedagogy as Motivation

Students unanimously said that they were motivated by the pedagogy, which gave them a 'whole new perspective on teaching' and affirmed methods used. Many said that they discovered that there was more to teaching than just knowledge transmission. Many found 'particularly useful was the social mode of the pedagogy' as students worked in groups and found sharing experiences useful. Those who valued dialogue rather than transmission were from the NGO and social movement sector. Others wanted more engagement with practical work and a few students argued for more didactic teaching and less group work.

Two critical findings were that students learnt that the pedagogy was an attempt to offer a model away from the standardised format, and one which took into account their diverse contexts, where the pedagogy's aim was to link education to social action.

Motivations for Work and the Marketplace

Learning for work was a strong motivation from most students across all sites of practice, as many students said that they hoped the ACE would provide education and skills that could be used in the market place. For example, the students who work in the colleges wanted a programme that gave them insight regarding how to design their own curricula so as to enable them to train their students for the art industry, as this quote indicates: 'I teach students to become competent artists and be industry-ready.' For students in Community Learning centres, it was important 'to improve the literacy skills for workers so that they can get jobs'; for those students in NGOs it was to provide skills to the unemployed to set up informal trade. For those in the industry, it was to upskill workers for their sectors. For students who worked in human

resources and staff development, the course helped them to design appropriate assessment methods and to do evaluative research of their training programmes.

Students in the formal context felt that improving the role of education and training in their institutions was linked to 'mastery of skills, creativity and learning theory.' In the social movement sector, intellectual resources were sought to build an active citizenship and self-reliance within communities. For some in the development sector, it was to improve the role of education and training within their own organisations. Quite a few students were concerned with teaching skills to unemployed communities to set up informal trade for small-scale businesses. Therefore, it was important for them, 'to create platforms within organisations, to share information as a collective and to help staff reflect on long standing practices within the organisation and to take on new challenges' (Student interviews, 2010).

In the health sector, students sought to learn more about 'how knowledge is transferred and how this knowledge leads to changed behaviour' as they were working on the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS), tuberculosis or drug, alcohol, and other health-related programmes. Those working in correctional services had similar aims i.e., to rehabilitate and teach skills to enable ex-prisoners to integrate back into their communities and to find jobs.

These statements indicate that adult education is an important resource for skills development, workplace learning and to build communities. Some students felt that the ACE did not impact on their work, but gave them enjoyment and a better sense of self-realisation regarding what they ought to focus on.

Students complained that places of work do not provide institutional support; there were no policies or frameworks to recognise part time study; and 'work does not provide practical things such as bursaries and time off and it's left up to the individual to make his/her own way.'

Skills and Knowledge Acquired on ACE that They Used at Work

Research skills and academic writing were important skills and most students valued the academic support from the Writing Centre, expressed as: 'I come from a practical world, so I had to fall in love with academic writing and now I see that I can expect more from myself and therefore I expect more from my students.'

Many said that their facilitation, project management and assessment skills improved.

Students said that the soft skills like perseverance 'helped me push through difficult times

at work' and 'I developed the capacity to work under pressure.'

On reflection, they said that their listening skills were enhanced as they had to listen to lectures, to students, in group discussions, during presentations; and often they had to listen without interfering or advising others.

Influence of New Polices and Legislation

Some students were motivated to attend the course by the legislation, which only accredited institutions if the lecturer had a certain level of qualification. In particular, students from private colleges said 'to have continued employment meant working towards higher qualifications.' This motivation was expressed as: 'My decision was driven by necessity for my job as I needed higher exit level qualifications than my students.' Students from the community centres said, 'Pure desperation, to keep my job, if I didn't have that piece of paper then somebody else gets my job' (Student interviews, 2010).

Social and Personal Motivations

I also considered the influence of curricula to raise social awareness around human rights issues, social development and social justice. Students in the development sector and health sector said they were influenced by the need to learn knowledge and skills to enable them to do advocacy work on human rights or to do health promotion around HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis, and to institute research projects to evaluate the efficacy of vaccines and anti-retroviral (ARV) treatment. These motivations reflect that education is still viewed as an important tool for social justice and to build democracy.

Personal motivations were expressed as 'the need for intellectual stimulation and personal development was significant,' and 'at work I felt stagnant as an educator and in a closed circuit of reflection' (Student interviews, 2010).

Others said, 'I just wanted to advance and empower myself'; 'I wanted to actualise my understanding of adult education as in my work there is a general interest in literacy teaching'; 'I will do absolutely anything that will have personal meaning for me and I believe would make me a better teacher' (Student interviews, 2010).

Another key reason was that some students saw the qualification as a route into the Master's programme, they said 'Yes, I plan to register for my masters after this course' (Student interviews, 2010).

For those who were previously not able to attend UCT because of apartheid racist admission policies, finances or admissions criteria, UCT was a beacon of light; 'a fulfilment of a dream' (Student interviews, 2010), and they were excited to be part

of the UCT fraternity. For them, the discourse on life-long learning was valuable, and helped them make sense of their own learning.

Those who had come from a Technikon education felt intellectually excited, but nervous, at first. Those who had come from another previously disadvantaged university felt disorientated by the different academic environment. A few noted that the general climate was stimulating, and as it was the first time that they had the freedom to explore a topic of their own choosing. Many commented on the invaluable student support they received from the writing centre.

Analysis and Conclusion: Implications for the Design of the New Advanced Diploma in ACET

Most of the student motivations from the ACE cohorts in this study who had returned to learn were influenced by the dominant ideology i.e., that the role of education is for functional reasons and for economic development. The overall emphasis across all the sites was to educate and train adults for the marketplace as entrepreneurs or small businesses or for professional development and self-sustaining livelihood activities. Legislation and the changing field with emphasis on professionalisation to become lecturers and service providers were cited as significant factors for entering higher education. The research has indicated how these motivations are linked to the changing field, as well as the new political and global context. These motivations signalled a shift from previous times, when the role of adult education was strongly linked to social justice. These findings are similar to Kerfoot's (2008) conclusion in her review of an adult educators programme in the Northern Cape, with similar aims that the curriculum does not always have the ability to shift student motivations to bring about social transformation.

I am of the view that in the new context, this is a challenge, and in the design of new qualifications, it is important for radical educators to elicit personal aspirations and motivations so as to continuously challenge students to think critically about their aspirations and social justice issues. It would be important to draw students' attention to the South African literature of Kgobe and Baatjes (2014), who argue that education on its own cannot solve deep economic and social problems, and that commitment to social justice requires the redistribution of wealth and a consideration of the historical conditions, which produce inequalities. Vally and Motala (2014) extend this argument with empirical research.

The students were also motivated by the curriculum, by learning new teaching and learning theories, assessment methods, teaching methods, and learning academic skills, such as writing and presentation skills.

Social influence factors and personal meaning were important motivators for further study. But many students also viewed adult education as a strategy for social, political and personal development.

The research provided insight into how to further strengthen transformative pedagogy and to keep it critical by linking personal goals to societal issues. The research confirms the views of most adult educators cited in this article that taking account of student motivations is central for adult learning, and should be included in the curriculum. The variety of motivations and the diversity of students indicates the importance of a flexible curriculum that is responsive to context.

Many of them valued the critical skills learnt and a more politicised curriculum. These responses indicate that students' motives involved a mixture of personal professional development and social goals. The findings show that there is an overlap of motivations as the literature suggests (Scanlon, 2008). Motives can be seen as expressions and choices of action based on personal histories and circumstances (Scanlon, 2008). In the South African context, this can be read as giving educators a 'horizon of possibilities' (Scanlon, 2008:30) as framed in the new democratic dispensation (a better life for all), the NQF and in the discourse of lifelong learning. Linden West (1996:216–217) cautions us not to think that the stories we have to tell about our students are ever complete.

The study has shown that students are significantly motivated to have a space to articulate critical ideas and the findings have indicated the importance of learning and being offered a curriculum and pedagogy that goes beyond the hegemonic ideology and is empowering.

Student responses reflect some of the aims and objectives of the programme and confirm that we need to continuously allow students to reflect on the goals of adult education. These goals need to be critical of dominant ideologies and emulate Newman's notion of 'teaching defiance' (2006) to highlight and return them to the challenges of economic and social redress. Carpenter and Mojab (2013:163) ask us to explore what is 'critical' about critical adult education and pedagogy and "to include not only a description of the world but to interrogate it with our students, we should explain the source, function, expression, and operation of the contradictions that constitute our social relations."

Similarly, Maldonado-Torres (2007:263) is of the view that 'the decolonial turn involves interventions at the level of power and knowledge,' implies a shift away from a reliance on the Western canon and production of knowledge and 'to restore indigenous knowledge systems as well as to recognise that those who were excluded from

participating in formal education have gained valuable knowledge through social activism' (Ismail, 2014:315). So, in the redesign for the Advanced Diploma ACET curriculum, we need to have distinctive responses to context and motivations. These could include the influence of African intellectuals such as "Franz Fanon and Steve Biko who both brought ideas regarding decolonising the mind and society together with Freire's notion of conscientisation" (Cooper & Luckett, 2017:17). In terms of feminist pedagogy, to include authors such as Sheila Patel, Pregs Govender, bell hooks, and Richa Nagar, who write from a perspective of teaching with love and courage to transgress, stress that the personal is political, recognise the power dynamic in the pedagogic relationship, and connect students with their own agency.

The article concludes that within the global discourse of adult education there is present in South Africa amongst many adult education students a political and personal motivation to learn. There is also a strong motivation to learn for the experience and for the knowledge gained as well as "to be passionate, idealistic and engaged adult educators on the side of social justice" (Foley, 2001:76).

In presenting this research I hope that I have illustrated that in the design of new qualifications, curricula and pedagogy important consideration should be given to context, student motivations, and the goals of socio-economic transformation and the importance of decolonising adult education.

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