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CONTENTS

EDITORIAL NOTES	3
ARTICLES	7
Linda Chisholm	7
The textbook saga and corruption in education	
Laurence Wright	23
Towards 'Discourse 4': Re-orientating research discourse to	
address a key aspect of South Africa's education crisis	
Francois Cleophas	38
A historical exploration of physical education at Wesley	
Teachers' Training School, Cape Town (1915-1966)	
Lesley Powell	59
A critical assessment of research on South African further	
education and training colleges	
Doria Daniels and Margaret Philip Mwingira	82
Is access inclusion? Exploring understandings of girls'	
inclusion in a Tanzanian secondary school	

Gabriel Nzizeyimana and Ruksana Osman First-year university student teachers' beliefs about teaching and the teaching profession: The case of Rwanda	98
Gerard Guthrie1Prevalence of the formalistic paradigm in African schools	121
Wayne Hugo and Volker Wedekind1Six failures of the pedagogic imagination: Bernstein, Beebyand the search for an optimal pedagogy for the poor	139
Lew Zipin 1 Starting from pedagogical zero in 'developing' contexts? Let's re-imagine!: A response to Hugo and Wedekind	158
Wayne Hugo and Volker Wedekind1The ordering principles and operating principles of pedagogy:1A reply to Zipin1	167
SACHES MEMBERSHIP SACHES membership form and information	6

SARE

Contents of previous issues of SARE177Notes to contributorsIBC

The ordering principles and operating principles of pedagogy: A reply to Zipin

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Abstract

Debate amongst peers in the field of pedagogy can be divided into tactical disagreement around the most effective approaches to an accepted end goal and a foundational disagreement over what the actual goals should be. The second kind of disagreement points to a conflict over what the ordering principles of pedagogy should be. This is a complex form of dispute, as different ordering principles have different measures of worth. Methods of negotiating this complex terrain are discussed and illustrated through the debate generated by Zipin's critical response to our article 'Six failures of the pedagogic imagination' (p. 139). Two different ordering principles are examined – 'deep everyday knowledge of a community' and 'specialisation' - and rules of conduct are suggested that assist forward movement. We argue that even disputes over fundamental 'ordering' principles of pedagogy still have to use similar 'operating' principles of pedagogy, and that it is in the elaboration of the operating principles of pedagogy that Zipin and ourselves can find some common ground on which to test each other. One such test could be an exploration of how conceptual integration of everyday and specialised knowledge works. Even though we disagree over what the ordering principle of pedagogy should be, we must still, as peers, work together on elaborating what the operating principles of pedagogy are.

Introduction

When a response to a conceptual article like 'six failures' (p.139) comes as quickly, passionately and cogently as Lew Zipin's (p. 158) does, an opportunity arises to extend and clarify views and debates often left hanging as half-articulated positions in the mind of the reader. There is also cordite in the air – the whiff of battle resulting from the cut and thrust of attack and defence. Readers who have worked through 'six

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failures' and Zipin's response turn to this reply with anticipation (we hope) to see if the defence mounted is worthwhile. A jury of peers is summoned by the very act of a reply to a response, and all of this is to be celebrated in the cause of strengthening our own education field.

A number of options open out for us. We were tempted to engage in an autocritique, and use Zipin's response as a basis for our own critique of the article. Inevitably we have already in part moved on from the arguments in the article and we are critical of various aspects, including the conditions of emergence that led to the fallacies being expressed in the sequence and manner that they are. But this would not be respectful of Zipin's response. We could also have unpacked Zipin's arguments in some detail and addressed what we feel are some serious misreadings of the article. This is a type of engagement we have both attempted at different points (see Hugo 2005, Wedekind 1995), and it has its merits in terms of clarifying arguments and basic accuracy. However, it also runs the risk of getting into detail that does little to help clarify the broader debate as it focuses on the differences between us.

We have chosen to take another route, that is to engage with overarching issues raised by the debate. In our reply, therefore, we elaborate on three areas: how we negotiate conflict between peers over the ordering principles that give worth to education; how we theorise absence of pedagogy without falling into a deficit trap; and how we see conceptual integration of deep everyday knowledge with specialised knowledge working. This pushes us towards an articulation of the need for our own community to specialise itself in the working dynamics of pedagogy.

Ordering principles and operating principles

Zipin clearly and honestly articulates the residue of feeling 'six failures' left him with:

I would define the quality of my reaction as 'ethico-emotive', with thought-content along the lines: How do these two South African scholars, who express concern for social-educational justice, against reproduction of power inequality, arrive at such an acutely **deficit** perspective? (p.159)

He is not the only person who has articulated this deeply-felt ethical and emotional response to our arguments. In corridors after presentations we have had similar responses, often with anger and hurt attached. It is as if some kind of breach has taken place that ruptures a shared sense of mission. Zipin tries to put his finger on the point that causes pain:

... I diagnose how the authors, in their arguments, do not appear to share a 'Freirean' regard for the deep learning value of life-based cultural knowledge... and how substantive differences are implicated in terms of ethical as well as epistemological valuations of what knowledge has worth, for what social purposes. (p. 159)

As a doctor of education, his diagnosis points in the right direction towards the fundamental cleavages that result from ethical and epistemological disagreement around the purpose of education. We feel he is partly wrong in the specifics of his judgement around our valuation of life-based cultural knowledge, as he is about us having a deficit perspective, but before we substantively address these claims we would like to flesh out why we take Zipin's 'ethico-emotive' response so seriously. This revolves around 'orders of worth' (Boltanski & Thévenot 2006), where critical engagement shifts from procedural questions about how to reach a common goal to the nature of the goal itself.

If an education community shares a set of higher common principles about what is of most worth, then this deep alignment results in a shared vision where tactics may differ but guiding principles hold a common endpoint in sight. But what happens when it is precisely the guiding attractors that are in dispute? We would like to suggest that these kinds of disputes are rife in the education field and that we have to grasp its dynamics, not to force us all onto one path, but to enable us to negotiate fruitful and productive ways through the conflict between peers over ends. Put more concretely, Zipin seems to have a different higher common principle ordering what is worthwhile in education to us. We cannot reconcile based on the fact that we want the same thing – 'social educational justice' – because it is precisely the substance of what this means that is in dispute. The question of how peers negotiate disputes over higher ordering principles comes to the fore.

Conflict amongst peers – what a tough and exciting place to be. Peace amongst peers is sweet and familiar – things run smoothly, with the only risk being boredom and the occasional tussle over which way is more efficient. Not so when equals square up for a principled fight; there is no clarity as to who the victor will be, especially when it is ordering principles at stake – different ordering principles have different measurements of success and failure. How do you negotiate a terrain where two equals appeal to different ordering mechanisms – how do you order ordering mechanisms? Is there a higher court of appeal that judges between ordering mechanisms? Do we need such a court of appeal in Education, where different orders of worth abound? For some, education is about producing a critically minded citizenry; for others about specialisation of function; for yet a third it is about traditional values that will give you a solid moral base; for a fourth it is about skills you can use for a lifetime of learning as technology changes; for a fifth it is about finding your true creative self; and for a sixth it is about establishing a network of contacts that will see you through all your enterprises (and that is just a first stab at it). This is not a philosophical question about ethics or morality; it is a sociological question about the conflicting ordering regulative principles of our field, often condensed in the name of one figure who articulated the principles most convincingly. Freire is such a figure (critical citizenry), Bernstein another (specialisation), Arendt a third (family values), Gagne a fourth (skills), Eisner a fifth (creative imagination), Collins a sixth (intellectual networks); and these names as carriers of principles go back to Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Rousseau, Spencer, Dewey and Durkheim, and forwards into the current articulators of market-driven principles, creative freedom and generic skills. It is not the place of this article to detail

all the conflicting orders of worth - that would take an extensive research project and a book – but it can focus on the question of what sits at the heart of the principled difference between Zipin and us. For Zipin it circulates around our overvaluation of specialised knowledge and undervaluation of the deep everyday knowledges of both learners and teachers. Note that he does not deny the validity of specialisation (nor we the validity of deep everyday knowledge); it is a question of what principle does the ordering. If specialisation is the highest ordering principle, then all the other features of education come into alignment based on its logic. Teachers have a state of worthiness based on how specialised they become at taking learners through the process of specialisation. Teachers find human dignity in pedagogic activities that take learners beyond their current located existence into a specialised world through the process of education. Their identity rests on their professionalism and expertise, on their ability to perform specialised tasks no-one else can do, and this is what they are judged on and rewarded for. Specialisation does not deny deep everyday knowledges, but it backgrounds them, because that is what specialisation does - it takes you beyond deep everyday knowledges into codified heights that have formalised operating principles with no natural home in the everyday. This is not a denial of everyday knowledges; it is an ordering of them, a placing of them in a system that moves through and beyond.

At this point Zipin is entitled to come in and question the validity of specialisation, not as something worthwhile (which we are sure he supports), but as an ordering principle for education, especially in a developing context.

Is this [rarefied power/knowledge of the 'disciplines'] what groups who were marginalised from opportunity in South African schooling before and since 1994 most need in the present and verging future? My argument for curriculum that recognises *deep everyday knowledges*, and their curricular/pedagogic potentials, circles back to Freire's recognition that, although materially-historically devastated, Guinea-Bissau had rich cultural resources by virtue of which educational reconstruction did 'not start from zero'. This includes potential for teacher development – which the authors, drawing on Beeby, portray as the prime locus of pedagogical 'absence'. I argue below that rich cultural resources in the lives of *both learners and teachers* are what is un(der)valued in the prime stress on 'specialised' knowledge. (p.162)

And he has a point that comes from his own extensive experience in working with the fecund potentials of deep everyday knowledge for learners, teachers and the communities they live in. Is this not the fertile soil from which specialised knowledge grows, and is this not the place specialised knowledge returns to, and is this not what should be stitched into specialised knowledge all along the educational path to ensure contextual richness and relevance? If you cut off connection with your roots, how are you supposed to grow? There is no denial of specialisation here; rather it is a placing of its functioning within a principle that takes the local community as the measure that orders worth.

If specialisation is your education ordering principle then you are going to draw a distinction between those who are not specialised and those who are. It is going to be about the presence or absence of a specific set of skills/knowledges/dispositions and it

will make value judgements about the state of worthiness of those who should be specialised (the teacher), those undergoing the process of specialisation (the student), and the worth of knowledge (specialised knowledge is of the most worth in educational institutions). It will see the usefulness of everyday knowledge, but it will move through it to a place where specialised knowledge holds itself pure in its own logic and functioning. Specialisation as a regulating principle is not simply about knowledge; it carries moral and emotional force – it is a regulating principle. It carries a specific way of viewing our roles and responsibilities, it carries with it disciplines of the self and disciplines of the professional communities you eventually enter.

How do you negotiate such a struggle between ordering principles? Is it about the academic communities that support different principles each rolling out their respective armies? There is some truth to this aspect of academic life and we do not think it is about to go away. But, there is a good fight that is not only about what is 'the good', but also about how we conduct ourselves in this kind of fight with our peers.

The first rule of conduct in 'the Good Fight' would be that peers (equals) recognise what their own ordering principles are and how these play out in their professional lives. An ordering principle accords higher and lower states of worth, it has its own forms of dignity, its own types of subjectivities, its own types of objects, its own pleasures and sacrifices, its own tests as to what works and what does not, its own forms of evidence and modalities of knowledge. Those familiar with the work of Boltanski & Thévenot's *On Justification* (2006) will recognise their influence on this formulation, but it is not necessary to rush off and read the next generation of great French theorists – these are self-evident practices.

The second rule of conduct is that peers take the different ordering principles of their peers seriously when engaged in critique. Ordering principles carry emotional, ethical, epistemological and ontological weight that cuts to the very heart of our professional lives and this needs to be respected.

The third rule of conduct is that peers need to work out ways of justifying their position that takes into account the probability that their usual modes of justification will not hold at the level of conflict over ordering principles – because different ordering principles have different modes of justification. Negotiation is needed between peers to establish what the legitimate types of tests are that straddle the two ordering principles, otherwise each will retreat to their own lager and shout from inside to no-one but themselves that their own tests prove their own worth.

If you do take your peers seriously, then you will find that they are engaged in the same field (otherwise they are not your peers), except their ordering principle has twisted the field in ways unlike yours. It is incumbent on both of you to make clearer what *the rules of transformation of the field* are (in its own terms) as well as the different ways these rules of transformation are twisted by different ordering principles. There is a difference between ordering principles and operating principles.

This might sound strange, so please allow us to attempt a demonstration by taking the ordering principle of Zipin (funds of community knowledge) and (one of) our ordering principle(s) (specialisation) and show how both work with the same field and work with its operating rules of transformation in different ways.

Funds of knowledge (FoK) is a ordering principle that starts from a fundamental recognition that 'people are competent and have knowledge, and their life experiences have given them that knowledge' (Gonzalez & Moll 2002: 625 cited by Hogg 2011: 670). If you go into disadvantaged communities and their households you will find several different kinds of funds of knowledge that assist their survival and development, their functioning and wellbeing. To refuse to recognise the value and importance of these FoK is to risk falling into a deficit perspective where all you see are what these communities do not have, rather than what they do. It also cripples your ability as a teacher to be effective, because you do not take advantage of the rich set of skills and knowledges already present in the community and the classroom. This can result in increased alienation and failure, which is blamed on the community and the student when all that has happened is a double form of discrimination, first in the community and then at school. To avoid this, both scholars of education and teachers in the classroom must come to these communities with respect for what they already have and how they are living their lives in the given set of conditions and use the already existing FoK as powerful aides to learning and living.

FoK as an ordering principle of pedagogy has specific effects. Firstly, there is a recognition that certain ways of organising pedagogy will harmonise better with the set of family and community habits already deeply ingrained in students. Linda Hogg (2011) provides a useful overview of these pedagogic strategies. Here are some examples:

In the Hawaiian Kamehameha Early Education Project, teachers found that when they reduced their use of directed questioning, and insistence on turn-taking, students increased their use of the familiar overlapping conversational style of 'talk-storying'. The changed classroom pedagogical practice led to improvements in participation levels and reading comprehension (Au 1980). Fitts (2009) notes that it is important for older students as well to incorporate pedagogies which counter-balance 'Anglo-centric perspectives and practices' (p. 102). She reports greater inclusivity for Latin students when the teacher switched from the Initiation Response Evaluation discussion format, unfamiliar to students from Mexican schools. (Hogg 2011: 673)

Secondly, there is a recognition that certain family pedagogies in specific communities are effective and worthwhile. For example, studies of Mexican households by Moll & Greenburg (1990) and Velez-Ibanez & Greenburg (1992, as cited by Hogg 2011), showed parents actively creating a zone of learning for their children that developed 'resilience, confidence, and an ability to problem solve'. Parents did this by being 'patient, tolerant and encouraging of error' (Hogg 2011: 672). Of course this opens up the possibility that there are family types of pedagogy that are not conducive to effective learning.

Now those of us that use Specialisation as an ordering device deal with precisely the same questions of how to align family pedagogy with school pedagogy and what the different modalities of pedagogy are that work best with different types of communities, but because specialisation is foregrounded the question is how to use this everyday knowledge to get beyond it and, more important, what the different modalities of pedagogy are for different kinds of specialised knowledge structures. But that should not stop either us or Zipin working on what the rules of transformation of pedagogy are in its own terms, because these are the operating principles we both depend on, and it is this language that needs strengthening and clarification, for it gives us the field we both twist according to our organising principles. What are the forms of family pedagogies across the world? What are the pedagogic ways of working between deep funds of everyday knowledge and school knowledge? What are the impacts of different knowledge forms on pedagogy, especially as the knowledge forms differentiate and become more specialised? The more we understand the transformations of pedagogy in their own terms, the more we secure the field in the heat of battle. Debate around ordering principles should not happen at the cost of operating principles; indeed, such debate should strengthen and clarify the operating principles of pedagogy that sit at the heart of the field.

A specialised zero is not a funds of knowledge deficit

The fallacy that got Zipin most worked up was the presence of pedagogy fallacy. An FoK principle means that teachers 'never start from zero', they always bring deep everyday knowledges to both their training and their classrooms. At one level, we agree with Zipin – teachers do bring a rich contextual set of knowledges with them, and these are worthwhile and important in the practice of teaching – but in no way does this qualify them as teachers. What does qualify them as teachers is precisely the specialisation of their consciousness and practice into the logics and forms of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. They might use these specialised forms in conjunction with their deep everyday knowledges, but the nature of specialisation has its own logic that builds up from its own principles and you have to be inducted into this. This induction enables you to use your deep everyday knowledges, and those of your students, but in ways that work from the principles of pedagogy, and these principles are not found in fully articulated and rigorously worked out forms in the local community - these come from the specialisation of education. You have to enter into this specialisation, and when you do, in terms of the specialisation, you start at zero. This does not mean that you cannot bring all sorts of life experiences to the fore as a teacher, but if you do not understand the principles of pedagogy and the knowledge structure of your discipline then the chances are strong that you are going to get things mixed up and do damage to the structuring of learning. No amount of deep everyday knowledge is going to replace the need for teachers to give precise feedback about what students are doing correctly and incorrectly in their subjects. To do this, teachers need

to be specialised in the content of their subject and the principles of feedback. When, as a part of our research into teachers' pedagogic practices in KwaZulu-Natal (Hugo et al. 2010), we found almost zero evidence of any forms of feedback to learners, either in their classroom teaching or in their workbooks or their tests, then we have grounds to talk about a zero in terms of the requirement that teachers, as specialists, should give feedback. When we then tested the teachers and asked them to provide possible reasons why the learners made the mistakes they did, and they could not do it because they did not know where the possible roots of the mistake might stem from, then we can use a zero, not in terms of the rich everyday knowledges teachers bring to school, but in terms of their inability to do one of the basic requirements of the specialised act of teaching – which is to help a learner who has made a mistake in a subject to correct it with some understanding of why she made the mistake.

Is our position on this a deficit perspective? A facetious response would be to say no, because a zero is not a minus, it is a zero. But it's not a mathematical zero we are really talking about here, more the absence of the specialised acts of teaching. Accusations of 'deficiticity', if we may turn the adjective into an afflicted condition, abound in FoK circles. It is what they define themselves against. Theirs is a model of presence against deficit theorists who blame underachievement on deficiency in the cultural background, or family background of the student, or even on deficiencies in the language, attitudes and dispositions of the student themselves. We are not deficit theorists of this ilk, but the use of specialisation as an ordering principle means that, no matter what the funds of everyday knowledge are, these are not what specialise you as a teacher. And if we are not clear on what it is that specialises a teacher as a teacher, then we may as well throw away the qualification and the claim to a profession. Ours is a model of presence, the presence of the specialised act of teaching and what its possible modalities are.

Freire vs Beeby

One of the most interesting criticisms Zipin makes of our work is a technical one of some subtlety.

They say: 'There is a difference between establishing the presence of a line (0/1) and the line having to be strong'. That is, once the line from pedagogical absence to presence has been crossed, it is then possible to play with variant 'weak' and 'strong' permutations of Bernstein's eight pedagogic variables. They continue: 'We have the example of Freirean pedagogy in developing contexts, where weak pedagogic lines are clearly established and integration [weak framing] rather than separation [strong framing] is the explicit rule'. ... [O]n what empirical grounds can they attribute presence of a (weak) line to Freire's Guinea-Bissau and Chile, but no presence of a line in Beeby's Western Samoa, or South African township areas? I suggest there is something arbitrary, indeed tautological, in attributing a 'weak line' to contexts of Freirean effort, i.e. if education gets traction in these efforts then 'the line' must be present. (p. 164)

It is an excellent observation whose import we take to be the following: Freire, in Chile and Guinea-Bissau, was working in much the same conditions as Beeby in Western Samoa, but with Freire there are weak lines, and with Beeby there are no lines. How is that possible? Is it not that Freire was able to see the presence of pedagogy where Beeby saw none? And surely then, Freire, and by implication Zipin, are correct, and Beeby and ourselves incorrect?

Well ... no.

Freirean pedagogy is predominantly directed at adults, and involves a pedagogy of, with and for the oppressed – mostly in the context of literacy campaigns that take on a political dimension of developing an active and critical citizenry. This kind of pedagogy can be pushed into schools and the education of children, but this is a highly risky endeavour because the education of adults (or citizens) is very different from the education of children, and we as specialists in education should know the difference. In the context of adult education in a developing context involving literacy campaigns, Freirean pedagogy is a radically open pedagogy that is crystal clear about the need for 'weak' classification and framing (to use Bernstein's terms). Because it is working with adults in the context of their own rich FoK it is possible to establish open lines, indeed it is crucial that this happens. Freirean pedagogy is a specific pedagogy for specific conditions, and owing to these particular conditions it is able to establish open pedagogic lines. If, however, the context is primary schooling and the need to establish the grounding basics for mathematics, natural science and social science, as Beeby concentrated on, then the very real possibility of teachers not having these pedagogic skills presents itself, as does the real difficulty of training such teachers. We should have made these distinctions more clear. What the above discussion indicates is that we, as specialists in the field of education, need to be able to understand when a Freirean pedagogy has most purchase, when it risks being poisonous, and, most importantly, what its pedagogic structure actually is, so we can get a handle on its power and limits. We need to be able to distinguish its organising principle from its operating principles.

The specialised act of conceptual integration

As specialists in the field of education, one of the skills we need to develop in our teachers and ourselves is the ability to work out when the act of integration between a specialised element of knowledge and an everyday element of knowledge works and when it does not. It is not enough to call for the integration of deep funds of everyday knowledge with specialised knowledge, or to lovingly describe it, as the FoK tradition does so well (given its roots in social anthropology). The test here for us (as specialists in education) is the ability to analyse when the conceptual integration works and when it does not. Here is an example of a test on which both Zipin and we could come to some agreement – the working of conceptual integration between everyday knowledge and specialised knowledge. When does it work, when does it not work, what are its identifying traits, what are its rules of operation and transformation? Contestation

around whether strong everyday knowledges should be integrated with specialised knowledge only indicates the weakness of a field that is unable to get into the details of the actual integration and work out, through its inner operations, whether the act was successful or not. As Zipin (p. 165) puts it, 'it might be timely for pedagogic imaginations among educationists in South African universities to consider more robustly the possibilities for curricular interplay between *strong* 'everyday' and 'specialised' knowledge'. This insightful call does not go far enough – we need to get into the micro fibres of conceptual integration between everyday and specialised knowledge – partly because this is what is needed in our current context, but most importantly because, as education specialists, we should understand the inner workings of conceptual integration. That is Zipin's job, and ours.

Conclusion

This brings us back to one of the first points we made – as a community we need to make clear what the operating rules of transformation of our discipline are, for it is these that give us a 'golden line' through the twisting brought about by different ordering principles. We might disagree over how much influence deep everyday funds of knowledge should have on the process of specialisation, or whether it is even specialisation that is most important, but it should be non-negotiable that all of us understand what the pedagogic logics of specialisation are, what the logics of integration between everyday and specialised knowledge are, what the underlying logics of adult pedagogies are in contrast to pedagogies for children. The good fight over ordering principles is not enough; we need to agree, and then elaborate, on what the fundamental operating rules of our discipline are. That is where the test lies.

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See page 157