



The State of South African Education:

A Critical Exploration of Distributive and Epistemic Injustices

By Gift Sonkqayi | Peer Review

Abstract

The quest for a just education has, since the existence of education systems, been a part of humanity's central concerns. The impetus for this is due to the fact that schools and many other institutions of learning exist as miniature societies which mirror that which happens in broader communities. Educationists have, in many ways, been preoccupied with the question of whether institutions of learning are engaged in the 'undesirable' process of reproducing inequalities. This has further resulted in the question of whether such

inequalities are a by-product of systemic injustices or are mandated by our natural abilities (i.e. how the world is in and of itself). In this article, I provide a historical account of education in the context of apartheid and its legacies. I further argue that attempts to address distributive injustices are not subject to 'extreme' contestations, while attempts to unravel epistemic injustices are dominated by innumerable incongruities. Thus, I maintain that only knowledge that is rooted in mind-independent truth stands to liberate future citizens.

Introduction

'The crisis in South African schooling is not new. It predates the achievement of democracy in 1994 and has been an ongoing refrain in public discourse since 1994. What is new is the emerging consensus on its dimensions and causes. Since the 1990s, both the government and donors have invested substantial resources in understanding what exactly the problems may be.' (Chisolm, 2011: 50)

It is well encapsulated in this extract that it remains a fundamental conundrum to divorce the education defies faced by the post-apartheid South African government from the effects of colonial and apartheid edifices, despite their official wrap-ups. The impetus for this is that both colonisation and apartheid are to blame for setting up Black people for failure, as this article will later elaborate. This also brings us to the question of not only distributive but epistemic injustice, as often argued against by the proponents of indigenous knowledge systems (e.g. Odora-Hoppers, 2005; Green, 2008; Le Grange, 2018; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018). Since the beginning of democracy, a number of debates on whether *knowledge* depends on who is in power have surfaced in different academic disciplines. This has led to *knowledge* being perceived as a social construct, resulting in questions such as:

'how much of knowledge can be ascribed to sociological influences and whether this applies to all disciplines equally: are mathematics and science 'human constructs in the same sense as the legal apparatus is a human construct?'... Not everything can be ascribed to the 'social distribution of power' since reality places constraints on the human freedom to construct an explanation.' (Wrigley, 2017: 6)

This delineation conspicuously depicts that not all knowledge can be assumed to be a by-product of social factors. In essence, true knowledge is capable of emancipating the knower since it describes the world as it is and not necessarily how it is thought to be. Simply put, true knowledge or knowledge *that* is rooted in the mind-independent reality allows the knower to not conflate ontological entities (i.e. the world as it is) with how human beings have come to epistemologically conceptualise such entities. Thus, universal knowledge, secular knowledge, or scientific

knowledge is necessary in cultivating democratic citizens who ought to shape democratic processes (see Gutmann, 1987). Furthermore, universal and/or propositional knowledge allows individuals to be critical thinkers and meaningfully participate in their respective capacities as constituents. It is against this backdrop that this paper contends that, outside of distributive justice, there needs to be a strict focus on how knowledge in the context of education is decolonised. The impetus for this is because some forms of epistemic decolonisation are not redemptive and are potentially damaging since they tend to turn indigenous people/communities into immutable localities. Therefore, education that is not rooted in the universal conception of knowledge should be deemed oppressive since its recipients would be indoctrinated into thinking that the world is as it is thought to be as opposed to it being what it is independent of our thinking of it. In addressing both distributive (resources) and epistemic injustices, this paper is structured as follows. First, I recapture the South African education from the apartheid era as well as in post-apartheid South Africa. Then, I locate the crisis in South African education within Kuhn's notion of *paradigm shift*. Last, I set out an argument on what should constitute knowledge for decolonisation (i.e. epistemic injustice).

South African Education in the Apartheid and Post-Apartheid Eras

In his article entitled *Bantu Education*, Hartshorne (1974) articulates that education exists to serve the social, political, and economic structures of different regimes. In the context of Bantu education, education was driven by the aim of politically separate governments (Hartshorne, 1974). Further, there are seven pivotal axioms framing Hartshorne's explication of the state of Bantu education between 1955 and 1973, namely: primary education, secondary education, teacher training, Trade, Technical and Vocational Education, population growth, compulsory education, and finance. In noting many ways in which Bantu Education can be beheld, three points are worth reiterating in Hartshorne's argument:

- First, in its conservative component, education is rooted in that which makes up the broader community and this includes the traditions and cultures of the population it serves. A practical

example was the use of mother-tongue, social studies, the study of the environment, etc;

- Then, education needs to be progressive by aiming to address the needs and desires of people to aid in preparing them to take up their place in the contemporary world. Thus, in its imaginative component, education is principally occupied with opportunity, training, adaptation. In concrete terms, this comprises the teaching of subjects such as commerce, mathematics, science, and technical education;
- Last, education is ethically obliged to provide a platform for self-actualisation. The impetus for this is to allow the individual to make use of their potential and become a 'whole man'.

Hartshorne further used the aforementioned seven axioms to show that, when the Bantu Education Act came into effect, the apartheid government took charge of what was a dual mission/provincially controlled system in 1955. This means that the apartheid government was in charge of 5,700 schools, 21,000 teachers, and 86,9000 pupils. Hartshorne posits that their initial target was that all children should have access to four years of education. However, this proved to be infeasible despite the fact that enrolment increased to almost 3–4 million. The failure to reach their target was due to population growth. Hartshorne further noted that in secondary schools in 1965 onwards 'successful candidates qualifying for university entrance increased from 1 013 in 1970 to nearly 1 800 in 1972 – a further 1 100 gained Senior Certificate passes' (1974: 2518). In addition, there was also an increase in terms of the number of teachers:

“ Respondents interviewed for the case studies discussed how the storytelling process had increased their levels of empathy and supported greater levels of understanding, which helped to resolve negative emotions and even improve relationships at work. Church members observed that WYS was an 'eye-opener' in changing their perceptions about other people.

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'about 4 100 primary school teachers qualified at the end of 1972, over 4 500 at the end of 1973, and 5 500 will qualify at the end of 1974. The long-term target for 1980 is 8 000 per year' (Hartshorne, 1974: 2518).

There was also an increase in the number of applications for Trade, Technical and Vocational Education. Compulsory attendance was deferred particularly because of the view that countries with compulsory education were mostly those who were able to manage their population and this is something that South Africa was grappling with. In terms of literacy rate, it was stated that 'our statistics show that ± 60% of the Black population below the age of 45 years is literate...as schooling increases, therefore, problems with the younger workers in this field should be very limited' (Hartshorne, 1974: 2519). Additionally, 'in the 1973/4 financial year a total of R109 million is being spent by the State on the education of the Blacks: an average of R32 per year for every Black child in school, and twice the figure for 1969' (Hartshorne, 1974: 2519). Despite some of the aforesaid positives, I will later highlight some of the challenges which are historically traceable to the advent of apartheid (or even before) and the enactment of the divisive Bantu Education Act. Hence, according to the Bantu Education Act:

The Minister may from time to time make regulations—

(d) prescribing courses of training or instruction in Government Bantu schools and the fees, if any payable in respect of such courses or any examination held by or under the supervision or control of the department;

(e) prescribing the medium of instruction in Government Bantu Schools;

(g) relating to the admission of pupils or students to, the control, and the treatment of pupils or students at, and the discharge of pupils or students from, any Government Bantu school (Bantu Education Act of 1953: 272).

It was in light of the detailed Bantu Education Act commanding guidelines that the apartheid regime took it upon itself to ensure that people of colour received an inferior education which placed them at the bottom of the ladder (Christies and Collins,

1986). According to Naicker (2000) education during the apartheid era was designed to reproduce racial, class, gender and ethnic inequalities. I note that this was done at the expense of perceiving the individual as a sovereign being or a centre for suffering and responsibility. In a way, people suffered and prospered not because of their capabilities but because of their identification with a certain race, gender, or class. Furthermore, it is important to highlight 'the fiscal allocation in terms of race, where 'white' education enjoyed more funding...This included: quality of teacher training, level of teacher training, resources at schools, location of schools, support materials and almost every aspect of educational service delivery' (Naicker, 2000: 1). It is worth putting it forward that the Bantu Education Act was an aspect of many other apartheid laws of which some are mentioned in the following table.

Table 1.1: Timeline of Apartheid Legislation

<p>1950: The Immorality Amendment Act: Extends 1927 Immorality Act, this act made it illegal for people of all races to have sexual relations with other races, especially with white people.</p>
<p>1950: Population Registration Act: A central register was developed which separated the population into White, Native or Coloured (subdivided into Indian, Griqua, Cape Malay and Chinese).</p>
<p>1950: The Group Areas Act: The entire population had to live in separate residential areas</p>
<p>1953: Separate Amenities Act: Separation of whites and non-whites in all public places and vehicles – which need not be equal.</p>
<p>1959: Extension of University Act: Which segregated tertiary education. Repealed 1988.</p>
<p>1970: Bantu Homelands Citizenship Act: Africans were not regarded as citizens of South Africa since their citizenship was legally tied to their homelands.</p>

(Source: Glücksmann, 2010)

As with many other forms of injustices, the apartheid laws and regulations did not manage to create a complete generation of docile citizens within the Black community. Consequently, marginalised students and their communities were engaged in countless protests rejecting the imposed colonial-apartheid education which aimed at nothing but cultivating them into menial labourers (Christies and

Collins, 1986). In tertiary education, the apartheid government created separate institutions of learning. The impetus for this was to cement its ideology of racial segregation with white people at the very top while Africans had to battle for the crumbs at the bottom (Christies and Collins, 1986). This was done through the 1959 Extension of University Education Act which, in many ways, paved the way for the apartheid government to unequally distribute resources and content (Beale, 1992). Indubitably, these disparities amongst universities had severe consequences and some, if not most, of these are still evident even in the post-apartheid era. As Keswell (2005: 1-2) succinctly puts it: 'the social engineering via race and language that occurred in the sphere of public education, with the introduction of the Bantu Education Act of 1953... sought to prescribe differential access to education based on race'.

I now turn to education in post-apartheid South Africa. Notwithstanding character wars through the enactment of the Bantu Education Act of 1953 and the Extension of University Education Act of 1959, the ramifications of apartheid policies and laws are yet to be overhauled. For instance, more than 50% of South Africans are yet to have access to clean water – the majority of whom continue to languish in the unbearable conditions of informal settlements (World Bank, 2018). In a 2018 World Bank report titled *Overcoming Poverty and Inequality in South Africa: An Assessment of Drivers, Constraints and Opportunities*, it was detailed that:

'black South Africans consistently exhibit the highest poverty rates. In 2015, 47 percent of the households headed by black South Africans were poor. This was very high compared to 23 percent for those in households headed by a person of mixed race (colored), a little more than one percent for the population in households headed by an Indian/Asian South African, and less than one percent among those in households headed by white South Africans' (2018: 13).

These numbers depict a structural puzzle which is yet to be solved by existing forces of power or, in extreme *avant-garde* cases, the marginalised majority themselves. Such unorthodox methods of inequality would, as already pointed out, be mandated by the mind-independent reality of a high rate of inequality.

The said inequalities and legacies of apartheid laws and policies are mirrored in the post-apartheid education system, which is imbued with inequalities. A comprehensive report on the discontents of post-apartheid education by Amnesty International (2020) highlights the following:

- Corruption, as evidenced through the Zondo commission on State Capture and Corruption, affected the availability of resources in government.
- Communities and their relationship continue to suffer from political and economic hindsight of decisions made during the apartheid era.
- It was put to the fore that not less than 60% of teachers work in schools that have more than 10% of learners whose first language is not that of instruction, compared to 21% whose mother-tongue is English.
- Learners in the top 200 schools attain more distinctions in mathematics than children in the last 6,600 schools combined.
- More than 75% of children who are in the 4th Grade (9-year-olds) cannot read for meaning. In provinces such as Limpopo this is as high as 91% while this is just about 85% in the Eastern Cape.
- More than 9 million learners (77%) benefit from school-based feeding-schemes.
- Out of 100 learners who start school, 50–60 will make it to the 12th Grade, while 40–50 will pass, and only 14 will further their studies in university.

What explains such tragically unequal educational outcomes? There is a multitude of underlying reasons that serve as the impetus for inequalities in education. Most schools lack the necessary infrastructure and this, unfortunately, impacts negatively on educational outcomes. For instance, according to the Amnesty International report (2020), South Africa has about 23,471 public schools: 86% of these schools did not have any laboratory; more than 77% did not have a library; 72% were with no internet access; 42% did not have sports facilities; 19% were still using or had illegal pit latrines for sanitation; and at least 37

schools did not have sanitation facilities. The Amnesty International report (2020) further noted that, in South Africa, most learners tend to walk longer distances and this impacts negatively on their studies (not less than 230 000 in KwaZulu Natal alone). Therefore, some learners may be too tired to study or even concentrate. Correspondingly, 239 did not have electricity. There is also an increase of violence (e.g. gangsterism and burglary) within and outside the schooling context (Amnesty International, 2020). This was further compounded by teacher absenteeism, as well as unfilled teaching posts in provinces such as the Eastern Cape and Limpopo (Amnesty International, 2020). Such failures by the South African government do not only impede the immediately realisable right to basic education under section 29 (1) of the South African post-apartheid constitution, but also the right to life, equality, a safe and clean environment, as well as section 28 (2) which stipulates that the interests of the child are of paramount importance. It is against this backdrop of legal imperatives (and many others, such as the South African Act of 1996), that the issues of distributive injustice become less contentious when compared to epistemological deliberations.

In tertiary institutions, due to historical injustices, a large number of Black students leave immediately after their first degree, since they need to provide for their families. As a result, this leads to a shortage of Black South African academics and even those who are left behind are poorly remunerated as compared with their white counterparts (see Higher Education South Africa, 2014). The number of learners from public schools reaching institutions of higher education has increased since the advent of the democratic government. Nevertheless, the ratio of success is still a cause for concern when compared to those who matriculated in affluent private schools, as this paper will later show. I now turn to Kuhn's notion of *paradigm shift*. I will now focus on indigenous knowledge. This is not to ignore the distributive injustice question, as it has been fairly addressed in the subsequent sections and by a number of scholars (e.g. Fleisch, 1995; Chisolm, 2011; Ramdass, 2009).

Locating the Crisis in South African Education within Kuhn's Notion of Paradigm Shift

In the context of decolonisation, it is worth locating the crisis of South African education within Thomas

Kuhn's (1962) notion of *paradigm shift*. Kuhn, an American philosopher of science, argued that there are two conflicting segments in the history of science: *normal science* and the *scientific revolution*. This already suggests the idea that science always goes through different phases. Moreover, Kuhn believed that normal science refers to a form of knowledge that is initiated for the purpose of supporting certain theories. Kuhn further highlighted that *anomalies* may arise within normal science, leading to a challenge in the paradigm and thus leading to the emergence of new ideas, propositions, and theoretical frameworks. What this means is that: 'In the course of normal new phenomena may be discovered that cannot be explained using resources of the paradigm such problems are anomalies' (Kuhn cited in Bird, 2000: 24). Bird noted that this process is known as a scientific revolution or a paradigm shift. Kuhn contended that science is not a stable acquisition of knowledge; instead, it is a sequence of passive intervals interrupted by violent revolutions whereby one conceptual framework is defeated by another.

Kuhn refers to these views as 'paradigms' which can be demarcated as theoretical frameworks of any type. Irez and Han (2011: 253) highlight that 'one important aspect of Kuhn's paradigms is that the paradigms are incommensurable—that is, it is not possible to understand one paradigm through the conceptual framework and terminology of another rival paradigm'. What can be inferred from this quote is that as one worldview is overthrown, it then becomes impossible for anyone to use that particular paradigm at the same time with a new paradigm. In short, opposing paradigms describe the world inversely. Kuhn maintains that 'normal scientists' are often faced with confusion when the internalised paradigm gets dethroned. Thus, they decide to lean on what they have learned despite evidence pointing otherwise. It can also be argued that educational reforms that are often introduced at a larger scale can be perceived to resemble scientific revolution (Irez and Han, 2011). In this case, the proposed change in African education by Dei (2008) will be interrogated.

Dei contends that African education is experiencing challenges due to it being stuck in a colonial paradigm of what constitutes education. In other words, African education has failed to *redefine* itself on its own terms. Challenges in the current paradigm of education can

then be referred to as anomalies according to the Kuhnian lexicon. What this means is that, due to the colonial foundation, African education is unable to meet the needs of its own people. In line with this, Dei believes that:

'education is about equipping learners with knowledge, skill, and resources that allow them to improve their own conditions and to contribute to building healthy, sustainable communities. As a community we are successful in these undertakings because we believe in the existence of quality education' (2008: 230).

It is clear that Dei is of the view that education should serve the needs of Africans in order to sustain African communities. Dei further posits that African education and Western education seem to be in disagreement. In simple terms, African education struggles to achieve its goals while it remains stuck in a Western paradigm of defining education. This can be summed according to Kuhn's notion of incommensurability: one paradigm cannot coexist with the other since they are underpinned by different conceptual understandings. Thus, Dei is of the view that African education cannot coexist with Western education. In short, Kuhn's notion of incommensurability shows that reconciling African education with Western education is an impossible task, as argued by Dei. The two education systems differ significantly in terms of understandings of what constitutes education or makes schooling.

To further drive this discussion, in line with Kuhn's notion of *paradigm shift*, Dei is of the view that there is necessity to move from the system of education (paradigm shift) that is Eurocentric since it tyrannises, eliminates, and marginalises African children in education. Dei believes that the prevalent Eurocentric education system is responsible for societal inequalities. Additionally, Dei believes that the educational crisis is due to being in an education system that creates racial and class separations which aid the marginalisation of local people. To put this into context, Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) (Howie, Combrinck, Roux, Tshele, Mokoena, and Palane, 2016) showed that literacy tests of about 13,000 South African learners displayed that almost 78% of learners in the fourth grade were unable to read for comprehension in any language tested.

Thus, South Africa was the lowest out of 50 countries that were part of the test. In addition, it was reported in 2015 by the Department of Higher Education (2015) that 47.7% of students in universities dropped out and that Black students were leading in terms of dropping out. Only 5% of African and coloured youth in South Africa completed tertiary education (with Africans having the lowest success rate) (Department of Higher Education, 2013). This implies that the South African education system is in crisis, as pointed out by Dei. What this means is that the colonial paradigm fails to bridge the gap between race and class. Dei articulated that the colonial paradigm of education is not in line with the experiences of African people and thus it portrays an incorrect and inconsistent image of the African identity. Dei clearly demonstrated that African education is trapped in a paradigm shift, since learners are taught in one paradigm only to live another.

Dei believes that ‘transforming’ or ‘reforming’ education will not solve the crisis – rather, a *paradigm shift* needs to occur. However, Dei highlights that:

- There is a need to think and theorize first.
- We need to look deep into our own forms of education as Africans in line with our lived experiences.
- Indigenous knowledge promotes valid African experience by validating African ways of knowing.
- There is the need to recognise the plurality of human experience.

It is not clear whether Dei is only using Kuhnian language or subscribes to the Kuhnian ideas as well. Nevertheless, I do not agree with his line of argument. Therefore, it is noteworthy that as in a paradigm shift, education reforms that are done at larger scale are often accompanied by new objectives and views on how individuals acquire knowledge, which demands the adaption to new teaching and learning strategies, materials, etc. (see Irez and Han, 2011). This means that a new paradigm, as proposed by Dei, will mean that teachers will have to forsake all that they already know and embrace African education. Irez and Han (2011) further noted that in implementing any educational reform, it would be expected that

teachers understand and reflect the new prerequisites of the reformed education. However, numerous teachers who are educated within the theoretical frameworks and standards of the defeated paradigm would, like a normal scientist who worked with an old paradigm, debunk the paradigm shift. This ‘cannot be expected from an experienced teacher, just as the normal scientist experiencing a paradigm shift, to comprehend and adapt himself/herself to the new world that is introduced by the educational reform’ (Irez and Han, 2011: 253). Gage notes that:

‘in the natural sciences, because the results of research in those sciences were unambiguous enough, consistent enough, and stable enough to compel the surrender of one paradigm community to another. But in the human sciences the results were not that unambiguous, consistent, and stable.’ (1989: 9)

Here, Gage acknowledges that in the social sciences we are directly dealing with people’s attitudes. Consequently, it becomes a challenge to have a paradigm shift. In addition, Kuhn’s (in Stemhagen, 2014) notion has been critiqued for the failure to acknowledge the fact that science can converge on the truth. For the purpose of this paper, the reconciliation of what is assumed to be a different paradigm is attempted in the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) (Department of Basic Education, 2011) whereby both what is presumed to be Western scientific and indigenous knowledges are assumed to be working together to enhance learner understanding. Nonetheless, Sonkqayi (2020) rejects such presumptions on the basis that it confuses indigenous knowledge with knowledge that is true only to indigenous people. I will return to this discussion of Western or indigenous knowledge in the following section.

The argument made by Dei which assumes that Western scientific education leads to racial and class segregation actually falls into the trap of ethno-philosophy (see Hountondji, 1983). In essence, Dei regards Africans as a collective singular, undermining the fact that differences are also evident in African communities too. In other words, African education as proposed by Dei will not lead to equality as he had thought. Le Grange (2007), Horsthemke (2015) and Horsthemke and Enslin (2008) have continuously

argued that universal knowledge (true knowledge) that includes some elements of what is assumed to be indigenous knowledge is possible. Due to enormous debates on epistemic decolonisation, it therefore becomes necessary for the following section to engage with the notion of indigenous knowledge as a tool for the decolonisation of education in South Africa. Additionally, I will critically explore how this would take place, provided that it is underpinned by the ideals of democratic education.

Indigenous Knowledge (Everyday Knowledge) vs Western/Scientific Knowledge

Horsthemke (2004) posits that indigenous knowledge is often perceived as knowledge that is local and the opposite of Western knowledge, which is assumed to dominate South African and African education in general. Horsthemke (2004: 21) further mapped out a distinction between three kinds of 'knowledge':

- knowledge-that or factual knowledge,
- knowledge-how or practical knowledge; and
- knowledge of persons, places, or things or knowledge by acquaintance.

On the basis of the above, Horsthemke argues that indigenous knowledge cannot be indigenous and factual at the same time. More to the point, he contends that it can only make sense if it aligns itself with the second and third tenets of knowledge. Knowledge is underpinned by: 'Justification, knowledge is necessarily valid, legitimate, warranted. There simply could be no other knowledge, i.e. knowledge that is invalid, illegitimate or unwarranted. It would not be knowledge then' (Horsthemke, 2004: 25). By contrast, Green (2008) acknowledges that it is difficult to define what makes indigenous knowledge indigenous. She does not concur with Horsthemke's (2010) universalistic approach to knowledge; rather, she opts for knowledge diversity in order to advance understanding. Green (2008) is of the view that the failure of scholarship to provide clarity on what makes indigenous knowledge indigenous does not mean it does not exist. More to this, she argues that people differ in how they see the world depending on the purpose at hand and indigenous knowledge should not be looked at from a strictly realist position, since

it can help advance understanding. For example, how an astronaut and solar scientist look at the sun is not the same since their purposes differ. Furthermore, Green contends that there should not be a line drawn between knowledge and beliefs when it comes to indigenous knowledge since it is not dependent on Western knowledge.

Horsthemke (2010) argues that it is almost impossible for anyone to gain an understanding of anything without the necessary evidence of truth. He further suggests that knowledge cannot exist without truth. He rejects the idea of diverse knowledge systems since it insinuates that there is a diversity of 'truths':

'according to Green, 'all knowledge, including Newtonian physics and Palikur astronomy, is produced with relevance to specific contexts and questions, and it is within those contexts of use that knowledge, along with the cognitive devices such as models, laws, narratives and metaphors, must be evaluated' (Horsthemke, 2010: 329).

Horsthemke (2010: 329) counters the above avowal by Green by arguing that 'all knowledge claims are made within specific contexts. Truth itself is not context-dependent'. What this means is that knowledge is underpinned by facts which are backed up with evidence and scope (Elgin, 2004: 12; cited in Horsthemke, 2010). It is against this backdrop that I argue that multiple forms of factually true knowledge systems as explained previously are not liberating. Simply put, any education that suppresses the voices of the learner or knowledge that is produced by indigenous communities (not referring to mere beliefs about the world) is not redemptive or liberating. This includes both formal and informal education. I maintain that for any education to be considered emancipatory, it be borne into universal knowledge which is rooted in the mind-independent truth. The idea of a mind-independent truth can be summed up as follows:

'although the relevant notion of mind-independence is tricky to make out, I shall suppose that it comes to something like this: objects or properties of objects are mind-independent just in case they are what they are independently of how we take them to be. Alternatively, a truth, *T*, is mind-independent just in case *T* is logically (or

conceptually) independent of our believing (or more generally, taking) to be the case' (Heil, 1998: 69).

In this case, the truth about the world is not a matter of our construct or how we come to think or believe about such a world. Instead, it is that which is the case independent of our thinking of it. Thus, for Heil (1998: 69) the view that there is a mind-independent reality also means that 'truths about minds and their contents are to count as mind-independent: there being a mind, *M*, need not depend logically or conceptually on anyone's taking it to be the case that there is a mind, *M*'. Therefore, the existence of the assumed mind-independent world is not mandated by our thinking of it. This is because our thinking of or about such a world can be wrong. Consequently, it makes logical sense to assume that the mind and its content are mind-independent since it is not only the content of the mind that can be wrong, but the mind itself can be incorrect about its ontological existence and presuppositions. It is for this reason that I argue that universal knowledge is necessary in intellectually capacitating future citizens. Moreover, according to Charlot (2009), schools do not exist to teach learners about their reality as it is experienced. Instead, schools exist in order to cultivate the learner's intellectual capacity. For this reason, dwelling only on practical knowledge in the context of education can be detrimental to the intellectual development of future citizens since such knowledge does not guarantee cognitive development.

Conclusion

This article first provided a synopsis of how education was (in terms of distributive justice) during the apartheid regime. I also highlighted the intended ramifications of structuring of education on the basis of race. The severe racial disparities in South Africa, as postulated in the first section, were inherited by the African National Congress which continues to grapple with them even today. In short, inequalities in education predate the current democratic dispensation. I further showed, explicitly and implicitly, that the South African education system which was once imbued by racialised philosophies of education is yet to solve such pervasive distributive and epistemic enigmas. Hence, I also engaged with Kuhn's notion of paradigm shift. The author contended that the

paradigm (epistemic) shift (as proposed by Dei, 2008) is not ideal since it is founded on a false dichotomy and sense of identity. It is intellectually detrimental to the development of future citizens. The assumed false dichotomy stands to obfuscate the fundamental aim or existence of schools. Lastly, I also engaged with the question of knowledge and how the decolonisation of education in South Africa would take place provided that it is underpinned by the ideals of the mind-independent truth.

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