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CONFERENCE REPORT

“Social Justice and Education for the 21st Century: Towards a Decade of Equalising Opportunities and Optimising Social Justice Outcomes in and Through Education”

3 June 2021

Hosted by **The Law Trust Chair in Social Justice, Faculty of Law, Stellenbosch**



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Conference Proceedings: Overview

The conference events formed part of a suite of activities and projects led by the Law Trust Chair in Social Justice, Faculty of Law at Stellenbosch University, aimed at mobilising the nation and the global community around a Musa Plan for Social Justice (M-Plan). The Social Justice M-Plan is a Marshall Plan-like initiative and Integrated Programme of Action for accelerated social justice advancement which aims to end poverty and break the back of structural inequality by 2030 in pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and National Development Plan (NDP) objectives.

Attended by academics, experts and industry professionals of diverse backgrounds intersecting with the education sector, the aim of the conference was to inform (about social justice and its implication for the area), transform (thinking) and inspire (to achieve social justice). Social justice is about the equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms regardless of human diversity, reflected in the fair and just distribution of all opportunities, benefits, privileges and burdens in a society or group. Accordingly, delegates faced the pressing question: What had been achieved regarding remedial action to address colonial-, apartheid-, patriarchal-, heteronormative-, and other legacies of previously legalised social injustices in education?

I Summary of Discussions

The discussions of the day emphasised that there was a unique opportunity to use the Covid-19 “reset moment” to invest in education and social justice. The broad objective was achieved - to show how education itself is a solution for equalising opportunities and for optimising social justice outcomes, while at the same time acknowledging that education too needed to be solved to achieve equality within education.

Overall, discussions focused on three dimensions. The first was transforming education itself, with the aim to achieve equality and social justice within education.

Plenary discussions and recommendations included:

- Transforming education through narrowing the gap between policy and implementation, by Prof Jonathan Jansen.
- Leveraging copyright law for access to and protection of quality educational material, by Dr. Chijioke Okorie.

- Equality, inclusion and social justice in education as the price for peace, by Prof Thuli Madonsela.
- Technological responses such as The Marking App, by Mr Kabelo Mahlobogwane.
- Sustainable Funding of after-school programmes (ASPs), by Ms Joy Olivier and Sibongile Khumalo.
- Incorporating translanguaging in South African higher education institutions in an effort to resuscitate indigenous languages, by Mr Letsela Motaung.

The second discussion focus emerging from the conference was the transformative potency of education in other areas of life, with the aim to equalise opportunities and outcomes. This was seen in discussions and recommendations regarding:

- Mathematics as African and accessible, by Prof Neil Turok.
- Mathematics as a complexity to be craved among African Youth, by Prof Richard Calland.
- Education that transforms, through the case study of the Ubuntu Learning Programme, by Dr Mary Nel.
- The legacy and extent of inequality in South Africa, by Dr Neva Makgetla.

The third key discussion point centered on education as a means to achieve equality with the rest of the world. Notably, this was seen in discussions and recommendations around:

- The global education renaissance, presenting a global opportunity to rebuild from the Covid-19 “reset moment”. This meant mitigating the learning loss through education leadership and online learning for future education, by Prof Reimers (keynote speaker).
- Education activism for equal education, by Ms Roné McFarlane and Ms Rubeena Parker.
- The exponential impact of investing in early childhood development (ECD) for uplifting the prospect of equality in South Africa and the world, by Ms Jasmine Jacob and Mr André Shearer.
- Digital empowerment and digital inclusion to bridge the divide, instead of perpetuating the gap that persisted, by Prof Josef Noll and Mr Khulekile Msimanga.

- Social justice education as a key means to achieve social justice, by Dr Lloyd Chigowe.
- Incorporating gender-based violence education beyond “sex education” as part of transformative education in South Africa, by Ms Sarah Sydenham.

II Agreed Process Forward

The conference commenced with theoretical and policy issues in transforming education for social justice, progressing into practical pedagogical discussions. The central premise being, transformative education could indeed show children how to be human, resuscitate indigenous languages, bridge the digital gap for teachers and learners, and move the needle on gender-based violence and more. Peace and prosperity would be brought about through the pursuit of education, underpinned by social justice principles, and through a combination of scholarship and praxis. Finally, participants were invited to join the Social Justice Chair in meaningfully engaging the Department of Justice on the Equality Act and considering the current South African context as an opportunity to initiate a renaissance in education and beyond.

III Country Profile (at the time of meeting)

Population size: 60 041 994	Gini-Coefficient: 0.63
Youth Population: 20,7 million (15 – 34yrs)	Years since Apartheid: 27
Number of Schools: 25 000 +	Unemployment Rate: 42,6% (expanded)
Number of Provinces: 9	Youth Unemployment: 63,2% (15 – 24yrs)
Number of Wards: 4932	41,2% (24 – 35yrs)
GDP: R761 Billion (Q1, 2021)	Literacy rate: 87.05

I Introductory Remarks

Prof Thuli Madonsela – *Law Trust Chair in Social Justice, Law Faculty Stellenbosch University and M-Plan Convenor*

The conference was a necessity, particularly in the context of Covid-19, which had fomented an opportunity to reset education systems. 27 Years into democracy, the conference prompted the pressing question: What had been achieved regarding remedial action to address colonial-, apartheid-, patriarchal-, heteronormative-, and

other legacies of previously legalised social injustices in education? Ultimately, Prof Madonsela concluded, when justice failed, the fabric of society was torn.

Dr Beatrice Wiid - *Founder and Chairman of the Board, The Interchange Foundation*

As a past educator at Stellenbosch University for 36 years, Dr Wiid reflected on her work in extra-curricular education at Stellenbosch University since 1962. Through girls' camps, Dr Wiid and colleague Ms Isabel Nel promoted equality and social justice values to diverse groups of girls.

Prof Wim de Villiers - *Rector and Vice-Chancellor, Stellenbosch University*

In a world where human diversity need not be a source of polarisation, Stellenbosch University seeks to close the gap on inequality and make poverty a thing of the past. Conferences such as these were necessary to give power to the ideas that drive the fight against inequality.

II Keynote address

Prof Fernando M. Reimers - *Ford Foundation Professor of the Practice in International Education and Director of the Global Education Innovation Initiative and the International Education Policy Program at Harvard University*

This address began by contextualising the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on education, which had the potential to wipe out decades of progress. It was clear from research that “no one learns very much when they are in fear.” Despite the learning losses, progress could be made to “build back better” through different approaches, ultimately grouped together and coined as “an education renaissance.”

GLOBAL EDUCATION AND BUILDING AN EDUCATION RENAISSANCE DURING THE PANDEMIC

The risks that Covid-19 presented for educational opportunity in the world. The response to the learning loss to build back better by embracing Sustainable Development Goals as the driver of reform.

Context: Covid-19

On March 11, 2020 the World Health Organisation declared Covid-19 a pandemic. Since then, there were three key challenges involved in containing the pandemic:

- 1 Produce and distribute enough vaccines for at least 70 – 80% of the global population. (At the time, the distribution of vaccines had already been purchased by the 10 wealthiest countries in the world).
- 2 Gain consent (people agreeing to be vaccinated) at 70 – 80% of the global population.
- 3 No new strands develop that are immune to the vaccine.

It could be confidently concluded that at least until 2022, the world would be coping with the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic directly or indirectly.

Educational Impact of Covid-19

“Most education authorities had no strategies in place and anticipated a tremendous increase in educational inequality. A proposed protocol was put forward to develop a strategy for national-, provincial-, local- and institution-level.”

The Covid-19 pandemic had been the largest experiment in online learning at a global scale. Transferring the site of education from the school to the home had augmented the way in which the home advantaged and disadvantaged educational opportunity. While it illustrated how effective in-person schooling was at mitigating social difference to level some of the playing field, the pandemic simultaneously made visible how much harder it was to compensate for social differences when education did not take place in the school, but rather in the home.

Literature by Professor Reimers highlighted the impact of Covid-19 on education including austerity, health, life loss, interruption of schools and the multiplier effect on pre-existing challenges (for example inclusion, social life, violence, democratic governance and climate). The main conclusion from research conducted under *A Framework to Guide an Education Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic of 2020* was that most education authorities had no strategies in place and anticipated a tremendous increase in educational inequality.¹ A proposed protocol was put forward to develop a strategy at national-, provincial-, local- and institutional-level (school). To date, 100 short case studies had been produced, capturing alternative education efforts, one of the results of which was the realisation that education leadership was critical to educational opportunities.

Towards an Education Renaissance: A broader policy of education leadership

Creating a better understanding of the educational effects of the pandemic based on the analysis of evidence, professor Reimers introduced the Education Renaissance concept. He called on participants to consider “building back better” instead of focussing on the learning losses of the Covid-19 Pandemic. Prof Reimers had examined a range of options to mitigate the learning loss and to advise governments including recognising **the Seven dividends of the Covid-19 Pandemic, 11 Ideas of Future Education, a 13 Step Protocol for Opening Schools and Five Perspectives to transforming education systems.**

¹ Organisation for Economic Co-operation & Development and Harvard Graduate School of Education *A framework to guide an education response to the COVID-19 Pandemic of 2020* (2020); https://globaled.gse.harvard.edu/files/geii/files/framework_guide_v2.pdf.

Seven Dividends of the Covid-19 Pandemic

Taking inspiration from the Renaissance of 14th Century post-pandemic Italy, Prof Reimers proposed that we needed a similar Renaissance in education, to bring about an education Renaissance post-pandemic. He explained, after a devastating pandemic wiped out one third of the population in the small city of Florence, the rulers of the city decided to invest in the Arts and Sciences. This convergence and investment in creativity brought about an extraordinary return to humanism, resulting in the Italian Renaissance. One of the ways to effect a similar Education Renaissance was to first recognise the dividends from the pandemic (despite the loss and calamity it represented):

- i. Greater emphasis on educating the whole child (socio-emotional development)
- ii. Greater appreciation of science and technology
- iii. Greater appreciation of and use of technology
- iv. Greater communication between schools and homes
- v. Greater societal appreciation of education
- vi. Greater collaboration among teachers and other stakeholders
- vii. Greater reliance on partnerships

11 Ideas of Future Education

These ideas would be evident in the foreseeable future if leaders could seize these dividends as the North Star of Future Education:

- i. Breadth of Skills: that education provides the skills for lifelong learning
- ii. Sense of purpose
- iii. Ethical foundation
- iv. Preparing for the unknown (ambiguity, flexibility, adaptation, survival)
- v. Capacity for deeper and continuous learning
- vi. Personification
- vii. Problem and project-based education
- viii. High quality curriculum and pedagogy

- ix. Teachers as professionals – a redesigned profession as we have seen the capability of the teaching profession, as well as the power of working in teams.
- x. Schools as learning organisations (working together at larger scales, augmenting power to innovate)
- xi. More connections and collaborations between schools and other institutions

Thirteen-Step Protocol for Opening Schools

As a guide to a process of continuous improvement in schools, to develop the curriculum and to teach, ultimately to achieve the SDGs:

- i. Establish a leadership team
- ii. Develop a long-term vision
- iii. Develop a framework of knowledge, skills, and dispositions
- iv. Audit the existing curriculum
- v. Design a prototype
- vi. Communicate vision, framework, and prototype (listen as much as explain)
- vii. Decide and develop Implementation Plan
- viii. Identify necessary resources
- ix. Develop a framework to monitor implementation
- x. Develop a communications strategy
- xi. Develop a professional development strategy
- xii. Execute
- xiii. Evaluate (And do it all again, but better this time!)

Five Perspectives to Transform Education Systems:

- i. Cultural: about social expectations, norms, values, accepted goals and practices
- ii. Psychological: about the science of teaching and learning
- iii. Professional: about creating the expertise, norms, institutions, and goals of education practise
- iv. Institutional: about understanding that an education system is a series of interacting processes
- v. Political: about stakeholders and interests, political mapping

In conclusion, education leadership was critical to educational opportunities. Covid-19 had created an enormous gap in educational opportunity, with real challenges of injustice around the world. The best way this calamity could be faced was by seizing the innovation dividends (as demonstrated by many throughout the pandemic) and building an education renaissance.

The Social Justice Chair gave reflective comments before introducing the Dean of Law at Stellenbosch University for concluding remarks. Notably, Prof Madonsela asked whether the Covid-19 reset moment could be used to embark on an education renaissance as Italy did when it had a similar pandemic, while Prof Nicola Smit commented that the conference came at a very important time: “The Covid-19 pandemic had seen many losses including a learning loss. The conference was a reminder to continuously celebrate education and those dedicated to making it a reality for everyone.”

Plenary Panel I: Transformative Education

Prof Francis Petersen (Moderator) *Vice-Chancellor, University of the Free State*

Experts provided cutting-edge perspectives, which framed new approaches to social justice thinking in education and education leadership. The consensus was that ownership, whether ownership of the policy process, Mathematics and Science as "originally African", or ownership of educational content was critical in driving educational leadership for social justice.

The challenge around social justice outcomes through education could be very complex, but there was also an aspect whereby every citizen simply wanted to see more socially just outcomes. As educational institutions, it was important that multi- and interdisciplinary methods were used. This meant that alternative knowledge systems needed to be used (outside of universities): communities, private sector, industry, commerce and government itself. A key need was to produce graduates where humanity and technology were infused with complexity.

1. “Policy Aspects of Education”

Prof Jonathan Jansen - Distinguished Professor of Education, Stellenbosch University, President of the Academy of Science of South Africa. Former Vice-Chancellor, UFS

Transformative education as a reality that was felt by people beyond policy

What if we started to think of policy not as paper, nor as intentions or government direction - but as something that was truly felt in the lives of ordinary people on a day-to-day basis? There was a tendency, in South Africa especially, to think of policy as something noble. One of the many functions of policy was symbolic. This meant policy was often about signalling modernity or progression. Richard Elmore advanced the notion of “backward mapping” which was about starting with practice and mapping backwards into policy, instead of the other way around, to try and figure out what might be wrong with the policy itself. Thus, if policy was taken as a “good thing” with the assumption that it would simply work with good intentions, transformative education would not happen or be successful, because between policy and practise, there were many “operators” which made it incredibly difficult to get a sense of justice on the ground. The problem, among a myriad other, was a very corrupt state, which required a political analysis and not a technical efficiency analysis. What if on-the ground implementation was the metric by which we measure the success of policy? Metrics such as toilets for students, food for students, adequate pay for teachers, healthcare against Covid-19, exposing power for what it was, for what it had not done, rather than what it had proclaimed.

2. “The Role of Mathematical Science in Transformative Education”

Prof Neil Turok - Director Emeritus, Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics, Founder of AIMS, Chair of the AIMS South Africa Council and Chair of the Board of AIMS-NEI

Transformative education as accessible and critical through pan-African Maths and Science

The theories in physics were nowhere near as theoretical as the theories in development. Social Justice and development were a physical concept, not theoretical and required progress in mathematical skills and enabling people to enter the field. The origins of Maths and Science are in Africa. To make maths accessible, the first step was to realise there were too many barriers to understand the origin of everything. We live in an age of scientific discovery. The conditions were “absolutely right”, and Africa needed to play its role. For this reason, the African Institute for Maths and Science (AIMS) was started in 2003 with the goal of creating entry points for young Africans to access and become involved with cutting-edge science worldwide. The vision of AIMS was that the next Einstein should be an African – there was no reason why this should not be true except for the practical issues highlighted by Professor Jansen. There was value in knowledge over money. To understand the value of knowledge, one simply needed to look at the leading industries which stemmed directly from mathematical science and the discoveries from it, such as innovation. Mathematical Science is something that we all share as individuals. Mathematical Science talent could (and did) arise anywhere. This vision was in line with a simple concept: if Africa had the young people, the dividends would come. Africa had an increasing number of young people – it was the youngest and fastest growing population in the world. If these young people had the opportunity to go into science, they would make “big waves”. On the basis of what had already been seen, Prof Turok confidently predicted that in 2030, there would be a wave of young Africans from all over the world entering the sphere of science and transforming many fields of science. To South African leaders: “You are literally sitting on the solution. Your job is to unleash a talent explosion.”

3. “Transformative Pedagogical Dynamics of Education”

Dr Mary Nel - Senior Lecturer, Public Law, SU

Transformative education as the practise of freedom and intersectionality

An example of transformative pedagogy was taking place in an unconventional learning space: behind prison bars. In 2018, a prison university educational partnership was initiated by Stellenbosch University through Dr Nel. Part of this initiative was the Ubuntu Learning Short-Course that included a group of Stellenbosch University students along with prison inmates at Brandvlei prison. A prison/university educational partnership had particular benefits for transformative education. The aim of the partnership was to create a safe learning space where prison and residential university students could learn with and from each other; and to promote transformative learning to enhance participants' desire and ability to be agents of social change. The theme for 2019 was: “Am I because we are? Exploring self and community”. The pedagogical approach that informed the short course as well as subsequent research, combined a number of perspectives. Feeling connected to others with different backgrounds and different world experiences did indeed lead to transformative learning and a sense of personal agency and responsibility. The social and *ubuntu* oriented dimensions of learning (community building, collaboration, and connectedness) were a significant factor contributing to transformative learning and holistic student development. The conscious effort to transform the classroom had transformed Dr Nel as a lecturer herself. Significantly, her teaching and learning approach during Covid-19 had been informed by deep compassion and empathy.

4. “Applying Copyright Law to Optimise Social Justice and Sustainable Development Outcomes in Education: The South African Experience”

Dr. Chijioke Okorie - Lecturer, Department of Private Law, Researcher, Centre for Intellectual Property Law, University of Pretoria

Transformative education as protected and enhanced through (ownership) laws

Anyone who had been part of the education system (whether as a teacher or learner or policy maker) would recognise the need for access to educational resources for teaching and learning. Copyright law assisted access to the use of educational resources because, in many instances, educational resources were protected by copyright laws as a bundle of exclusive rights given to authors and creators to encourage the use of protected works. Essentially, copyright law had to shift the dimensions of justice through a recognition of the investment and creative genius of protected works to fight for exclusive rights so that the creators could generate revenue from the exploitation of those rights. This would simultaneously incentivise the public to create more, as anyone could create and hold the rights to protected works. Without the creative dimension of social justice, we would fail to recognise the lives and experiences of users of protected works. Within the research environment, teachers, learners and institutions would be engaging in activities that were covered by copyright protections, such as research and educational materials, making them available to the public. Given the exclusivity of copyright protection, the only way to lawfully undertake these activities was either through licensing or (if the activities were somehow exempt from copyright protection) blanket licensing agreements. A move to amend Copyright laws in South Africa in 2015, resulted in the Copyright Amendment Bill 2017, which proposed fair billing arrangements and exceptions, and applied to all categories of protected works. The Bill was being reconsidered by Parliament, following the President’s reservations regarding the constitutionality of some of the provisions.

5. “Craving Complexity: Re-Purposing Education for the Excruciating Challenges of the Age”

Prof Richard Calland - Public Law, University of Cape Town, Fellow, University of Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership, Co-Director, Sustainability Education (SusEd.org)

Transformative education as future oriented

There was very little global thinking around the intersection of education and sustainability, bringing these two disciplines together. There were also important features of the modern context which were highly relevant for the challenge of rethinking education. The Education and Sustainability Leadership Programme was born from this realisation. However, a key question was how to avoid elite capture, as there was a danger of the conversation around sustainability being dominated by an elite which would not break down the obvious barriers between elite and other forms of education, holding back young people and the economy.

In the face of a complex set of overlapping crises, the failure of leadership needed to be examined. The global climate at the time was one of upheaval, which demanded resilience and nimbleness from young people. The notion of craving complexity is one that is pivotal.

Regarding assessment - why were students required to go into a room and regurgitate knowledge with a pen and paper? Was this a useful way of assessing success in their studies? What was the point, in the modern era, of testing memory? Why were law students required to remember cases, when in the real world one could flick through their cell phone and find the answers. Surely, in the sea of complexity, it was not remembering information, but applying it that mattered. Students should be encouraged to have a conscious social purpose, informed by an ethical and compassionate worldview.

6. “Legislating for Equal Education: Quo Vadis the SA Equality Act, 21 Years On”

Prof Thuli Madonsela - Social Justice Chair, Stellenbosch University and M-Plan Convenor

Transformative education as legally mandated for peace over time

One of the biggest challenges with inequality was bigotry. In South Africa, equality and equity were the same thing, whereas in other countries, equality and equity were different concepts, separately executed (if at all). Prof Madonsela, as one of the drafters of the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 2000, questioned whether it was proper not to implement restitutive measures of the Equality Act 2000 - Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) resulted from the Act. The Equality Act covered anti-discrimination and restitutive, remedial aspects of equality, especially given that the South African Constitution embraced the substantive notion of equality. A key challenge was indifference to difference and disadvantage in contemporary policy drafting. During apartheid, the governing laws limited freedom. After apartheid, it was poverty that limited movement in South Africa. Poverty was the contemporary “pass” that set limits to what an individual could and could not achieve. Social justice was about equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms marked by just, fair and equitable distribution of all opportunities, benefits, resources, privileges and burdens within and between societies. Section 9(2) of the Constitution of South Africa, 1996 states that equality included the enjoyment of all rights and freedoms. In addition, section 7(2) is critical in its protection of human rights, particularly because it states that that state must (not may) respect, protect, promote and fulfil the Bill of Rights – of which equality was a key tenet. Ultimately, caring for social justice and inclusion was a payment for peace. With this in mind, the Social Justice Impact Metric was designed and instituted by Prof Madonsela in her capacity as the Social Justice Chair at Stellenbosch University.

Plenary Panel II: Inequality, Challenges and Civil Society Responses

Mrs Futhi Mtoba (Moderator) *Founder, TEACH South Africa and Chair of the Council at the University of Pretoria*

The persistence of inequality meant that civil society responses in education and social justice needed to be innovative and future fit. Case studies were presented as part of civil society responses which addressed inequality by designing future-focused approaches to historical issues.

With South Africa remaining one of the most unequal countries by class, with the highest Gini coefficient in the world, there was a schism in the expectations versus realities of education addressing inequality. Though there was an array of interventions needed at government-level, it was clear there was a particular set of future-focused skills needed at individual level for education and employment: language, problem-solving, computers, mathematics, and design.

Recommendations for equity in education and equality were made: The Covid-19 Lockdown had demanded that systems adapt as many schools had to shift from traditional to technological and digital schooling. As part of modern problem solving, a marking application was launched to address the issue of compromised teaching time because of the administrative burden of marking on teachers. Organisations, such as Equal Education used learner-centred framing in impactful advocacy and litigation cases for young learners. Another focus area was time spent after school, namely After School Programmes (ASPs), used as an opportunity for inequality intervention by The Learning Trust. Ultimately, the cost of inequality – not just financially but socially – required urgent and innovative action.

1. “Education, the Economy and Inequality”

Dr Neva Makgetla - Senior Economist, TIPS

What was the extent of inequality in South Africa? How did we expect education would address inequality and what had gone wrong since 1994? By virtually every measure, South Africa remained one of the most unequal countries in the world by class, with the highest Gini coefficient in the world. Some key mechanisms had maintained inequality. The first was work organisations established pre-1994 that sought to de-skill most jobs to increase returns to people with high skill levels. Secondly, an unequal and discontinuous education system (chances of progressing past matric are very small). Thirdly, unequal asset ownership, spatial patterns, and infrastructure distribution. The expectation of education to address inequality is seen through the theory of change, which assumes that basic education is compulsory for all in a unified system. However, the theory of change did not develop in this way. Schooling outcomes did not see change according to the expected theory. ECD was still barely funded and extremely unequal. Resources by schools were also extremely unequal, and inequality was entrenched by private schools. Little transformation took place with curricula. Employers and entrepreneurs needed certain skills from basic education that were not always provided. There were several recommendations towards decisions and measures to be more equitable.

2. “Innovation in Teaching and Learning in the 4IR era: The Case Study of the South African marking app – The Marking App”

Mr Kabelo Mahlobogwane - Educator, THUMA Foundation Chief Ambassador, Educators' Union of SA founding National Spokesperson, Co-Founder and Managing Director of The Marking App, Youth Leadership Council Member of the Democracy and Culture Foundation

The rise of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) saw how technology had changed life and the way humans relate to each other, especially since the pandemic. Emerging social media networks such as Facebook, Uber, LinkedIn had exponential lifestyle consequences. The Covid-19 Lockdown demanded that systems (including education systems) adapt, as many schools had to shift from traditional to technological and digital schooling. WhatsApp, Google Classroom and Microsoft Teams were examples of the platforms used for schooling around the world during the Covid-19 lockdown. Since much teaching and learning was happening remotely, there was much potential – but there had been a scarcity of tools and resources in South Africa which would enhance the learning environment, in contrast to countries such as China and the United States (US) where these apps were easily available and accessible even before the Covid-19 pandemic. South Africa was thus behind in terms of classroom innovation and struggled to adapt, with research highlighting that financial constraints were a key limitation on classroom innovation. Technology in South Africa was particularly expensive, coupled with pre-existing electricity and internet issues. Upskilling of teachers was another problem, which was not adequately discussed. There was an imbalance of time spent in the classroom on specific concepts, often because teachers had to mark in the time that they could have taught concepts. The marking app was born from these gaps, looking for ways to limit the risks highlighted, with a solution that was in accordance with the SDGs and Agenda 2063. Taking the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) and other research, The Marking App was designed - a platform that took the burden of marking by running automated marking, so that the teacher could focus on teaching and learning. As such, the Marking App was a solution for teachers, by teachers.

3. “Reflections on Education Activism in South Africa during Covid-19”

Ms Rubeena Parker - Head of Research, Equal Education (EELC)

Ms Roné McFarlane - Senior Manager: Development and Research (EELC)

South Africa’s education system saw inequalities in unequal learning outcomes. The nation's education system had unacceptable low learner outcomes, even before Covid-19. School grade repetitions cost the government R20 billion a year and dropouts had much more dire consequences, not just for learners, but also for the South African economy, as learners’ full potential could not be leveraged. Afterschool was an opportunity for inequality intervention. Given the aforementioned circumstances, it was clear that afterschool programmes could bridge the inequality gaps between quintile one to three schools (non-fee to low-fee paying), as well as quintile four and five schools (well financed). Afterschool programmes were (usually) community-based interventions which provided a safe environment for children and youth to access learning and care in the hours after the school bell had rung. These programmes also allowed for remediation and teaching children at the level they were at. It was important to assess the return on education expenditure. There were a number of innovative finance approaches that had emerged. This included Social Impact Funds (SIFs), development impact funds, pay-for-success and pay-for-results models. The long-term impact target was to see a shift in the composition of the South African labour force, to see changes to inequality disparities. It was important to ensure that more people could pull themselves out of poverty through education, rather than the situation where the education system was perpetuating inequality.

4. “Innovative Social Financing Models to Scale and Sustain After School Programmes (ASPs)”

Ms Joy Olivier - Independent Researcher

Sibongile Khumalo - Executive Director, The Learning Trust

The unique advocacy model advanced by the Equal Education Law Centre (EELC) enabled powerful advocacy, especially in the case of Covid-19. Equal Education (EE), founded in 2008, was a social movement with elective, governance and leadership structures with 5 000 members in 5 provinces across South Africa. Members were predominantly high school learners who were informed about their rights, advocacy skills and other activities which promoted awareness through education campaigns. In 2012, the EE Law Centre was established as a separate entity to provide broader legal advocacy, while supporting EE with legal representation. This was different from many other models which had in-house legal expertise. The elements of impactful litigation were well illustrated in EE’s case around the national school nutrition programme at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. Important legal principles were established along the way, bringing hunger and nutrition programmes into sharp focus. Once the order was awarded, the journey continued with on-going monitoring to ensure implementation. A driving question was, “Why would they litigate in these circumstances?” This was an important question, because legal mobilisation could be understood as a complex component of a strategy, instead of a strategy in and of itself. At all times the movement’s goals and the voices of the movement’s members were at the core of the action taken.

During execution of the movement, two concerning elements emerged, the on-the ground realities of what was happening to learners because of the ramifications of not having food in their homes; and secondly, the attitude of the DBE which was seen in the announcement that food programmes could not be provided during lockdown. This forced EE to take stronger legal action to assist hungry learners who would otherwise be receiving meals at schools. Litigation resulted in a favourable outcome in the form of an interdict. For achieving social justice in education more broadly, it was key that systems and networks were in place. While an immediate remedy was achieved, EE brought a sharper focus to nutrition and education more broadly.

Plenary III: Educational Models and Pedagogical Approaches

Prof F Reimers *Ford Foundation Professor of the Practice in International Education and Director of the Global Education Innovation Initiative and the International Education Policy Program at Harvard University*

“Rights that cannot be enacted are like empty saltshakers: they add frustration and deliver no value.”

- *Khulekile Msimanga, Thuma Foundation*

This discussion, hosted by the keynote speaker, focused on evidence over ideology to go far beyond the surface of transformative education. This included evidence on the value of: Early Childhood Development as an early intervention strategy; multilingual education to transition indigenous languages from conversations to curriculums; educating “the human” by addressing cultural and socio-economic aspects of gender-based violence; leading innovation from communities to prepare for the Fourth Industrial Revolution; and the role of social justice education in advancing social justice. It was concluded that a new kind of thinking with integrated approaches to education and social justice was required. The Social Justice M-Plan was proposed as a springboard for the ideas and strategies presented.

1. “A Community-Rooted Coalition for High Quality Early Childhood Development”

Jasmine Jacob - Director, Indaba Foundation

Early Childhood Development (ECD) work truly was the early steps towards justice. Research by James Heckman, a Nobel prize-winning economist, showed that a 1-dollar ECD investment created a 13 dollar return later in life. The cycles of poverty could only be truly broken if addressed from the onset and earliest years. Changes were possible in the early years, when the window of opportunity was taken for development and consciousness in the brain. Inclusive pedagogies could be developed as one solution to ECD challenged - Montessori was one such solution. The Indaba Institute Training Centre was working with the Montessori Pedagogy, experimenting with the fundamental belief of showing children how to be human. Projects had shown positive results where ECD investment had occurred. The Indaba Foundation Institute also offered an internationally certified diploma course in Khayamandi. This enabled an increasing understanding of an inclusive pedagogy towards human development in a real-life-context. Feedback from students showed that the Indaba Foundation ECD programme was working and needed to continue. The first-hand feedback from students and teachers enabled a re-evaluation of the programme including the need to work with teachers to allow them to experience being human and to do the same for their learners. The biggest need was to walk the journey with teachers. A coalition for the education ecosystem was about a social investment seal that could leverage the funding of investment in the wine industry. Funding was being redirected from consumer consumption initiatives in the Cape Winelands, to funding ECD. This was ultimately about consumer consciousness and community engagement for accessible quality ECD.

2. “Translingual Pedagogical Practice: A Strategy to Resuscitate Indigenous Languages at a South African institution”

Letsela Motaung - Teaching and Learning Coordinator, University of the Free State

Multilingual classroom practises could be used to resuscitate South African indigenous languages at education institutions. The demise of the apartheid system saw high hopes from the marginalised, and those who had suffered exclusion at many levels. Sadly, sluggish progress in the promotion of indigenous languages since apartheid ended meant that high hopes fell flat. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 engendered the need to promote and protect indigenous languages. In higher education, indigenous languages were particularly vulnerable because many of them were not taught or used in the public sphere. There was thus a need to bring indigenous languages into teaching and learning, with a social justice education approach that brought about equitable outcomes for marginalised groups. Students’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds could be used to enhance learning if embraced. Some challenges to using indigenous languages in tertiary education identified in the research described the colonial legacy of education in South Africa. Findings in the case study of a tutorial group at the University of the Free State, South Africa, were most compelling. Language policies at universities were advocated to be translingual, based on practical evidence, not just ideology on paper.

3. “Can Transformative Education Move the Needle on GBV”

Sarah Sydenham - LLM Candidate, Stellenbosch University

Gender-based violence (GBV) was one of the most pervasive issues in South Africa. Transformative education meant quality education in-line with the Sustainable Development Goals that went beyond face-value. Unfortunately, Covid-19 did not help the situation as the pandemic had a disproportionate impact on women and girls. Though technically GBV was covered under the “comprehensive sex education” component of the Life Orientation curriculum, often the curriculum messaging was not carried across in classrooms. Education on gender-based violence as a topic was a significant component of transformative education. Ultimately, teachers needed to be empowered in order to empower their students. Transformative education could indeed move the needle on Gender-Based Violence.

4. “Advancing Equal Education in the Digital Age and Covid-19: The Case of a Digital Inclusion Drive”

Prof Josef Noll - Secretary General at the Basic Internet Foundation
and Professor at University of Oslo

Khulekile Msimanga - Financial Officer, Thuma Foundation

Covid-19 emphasised the importance of bridging gaps in technology and innovation, particularly in the education context. The right to equality, human dignity and access to information were further substantiating laws. Bringing digital empowerment to schools saw significant prospects and results. However, innovation needed to be led from the communities as the source. Instead of bridging the divide, the internet had sometimes furthered the divide. 5G, AI (artificial intelligence) and other industrial revolution technologies did not look at societies in their execution. Instead of integrating society, technology was often ripping society apart. There needed to be technology as part of the 4th IR with information that was free to everyone.

5. “Education of Social Justice and the Law”

Dr Lloyd Chigowe - Post-doctoral Fellow, Law Trust Chair in Social Justice,
Stellenbosch University

Social justice education played a colossal role in advancing social justice nationally and internationally. South Africa had gained the unwanted status of being one of the most unequal societies in the world. Social justice education and training was a means in itself to advance social justice more broadly. It was a commitment to challenging socio-cultural, economic inequalities arising from differential distribution of power, resources and privilege, centred in democracy and the exercise of one’s full humanity. In addition, social justice education also helped participants to develop knowledge and awareness to examine the intersection of justice and injustice in personal lives. Nevertheless, the status of social justice education in South Africa was discouraging. There was no single institution that offered a degree in Social Justice. Social justice education could therefore be a game-changer in South Africa, in that it allowed everyone to be involved in social justice, to accelerate the realisation of a just society.

Concluding Remarks

Prof Sakhela Buhlungu - Vice-Chancellor, University of Fort Hare

As the last speaker of the conference, Professor Buhlungu agreed with the speakers overall that education was indeed a powerful tool. He highlighted that education should also be about building social solidarity which meant building bonds of co-reciprocity, compassion, altruism, and cosmopolitanism. If education was a platform for achieving social justice, the destruction of public institutions hindered the quest for social justice. The real challenge was becoming part of the solution.

Vote of Thanks

Prof Thuli Madonsela, Law Trust Chair in Social Justice Stellenbosch University

In thanking all speakers, Prof Madonsela summarised, the conference kicked off with theoretical and policy issues around transforming education for social justice, progressing into civil society and pedagogical discussions. Clearly further engagement needed to take place, with ideas brought to the attention of policy

makers, going beyond advocacy to generate and implement solutions. Participants were challenged to consider the current South African context as an opportunity to initiate a renaissance in education and beyond.

KEY RESOURCES REFERENCED IN DISCUSSION

Musa Plan for Social Justice (M-Plan)

Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996)

Equality Act (2000)

Sustainable Development Goals (Particularly: SDG 1, SDG 4, SDG 10, SDG 16)