



## **Shared futures (Draft 1)**

### *The Role of Education in combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance*

**Andre Keet,  
October 2011**

#### ***IWG on the effective implementation of the DDPA, Geneva***

- a) In the 2009 and 2010 reports to the United Nations Human Rights Council and the United Nations General Assembly, the Special Rapporteur<sup>1</sup> on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance confirmed the world-wide intensification of racism and related forms of discrimination. These forms, within the context of the United Nations, are viewed as among the root causes of many internal and international conflicts and are also often a consequence thereof<sup>2</sup>. These patterns align with national trends whilst research on these challenges in the European contexts suggests a “rise”<sup>3</sup> whilst the same is true for my own continent and other parts of the world. These trends appear against the backdrop of an increase in structurally anchored inequality, poverty, ethnic violence and various forms of human rights violations across the world.
- b) The work of the relevant United Nations structures has been tireless and there has been an exponential growth of research in this arena. Intellectually, studies within the field of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of discrimination are related to the social and cultural memory transmitted “in the discursive media of education, literary traditions and the pedagogy of museums and memorials”<sup>4</sup>. Coupled with studies on discourse, identity, nostalgia, grievability, precarity, mourning, forgiveness, cosmopolitanism and reconciliation, they are questioning our standard responses to and frames of thinking on racism, racial prejudice and discrimination. Probing the conditions that sustain our most prevalent frames of reference requires an epistemological capacity that can create a social environment for a new language and enduring practice to emerge. This epistemology suggests “that if we are to make broader social and political

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations, (2010) A/65/150.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations, (2010) A/65/150.

<sup>3</sup> Umut Erel, (2007). Racism and anti-racism in Europe: a critical analysis of concepts and frameworks. *Transfer*, 13(3), pp. 359–375.

<sup>4</sup> Habermas, J. (2006). *Times of Transitions*, Cambridge: Polity, p. 69.

claims about rights of protection and entitlements to persistence and flourishing, we will first have to be supported by a new bodily ontology, one that implies the rethinking of precariousness, vulnerability, injurability, interdependency, exposure, bodily persistence, desire, work and the claim of language and social belonging”<sup>5</sup>.

c) Furthermore, the following interlinked set of social and intellectual developments should also frame the role of education in combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance:

- Developments in bio-genetics, bio-technology, bio-prospecting and other ‘hard’ sciences, are reshuffling the encyclopaedia of the social with substantive implications for work on ‘race’ and ‘reconciliation’. At the same time, the social sciences are struggling to construct a new sociological imagination<sup>6</sup> capable of penetrating the complexities and pathologies of the social. New conceptual forms battle to be born thus making way for the increasing proceduralization of ethics and justice across the world. In South Africa, African ethics and notions of compassion-based justice have been displaced in favour of procedure which tends to formalise and thus amplify conflict in society. That this dominant frame is conceptually and pragmatically unfriendly towards non-discrimination is a matter which need to be addressed by means of inter- and transdisciplinary research and new pedagogies.
- Contemporary studies in ethnic violence, racial conflict and ‘hate behaviours’<sup>7</sup>, suggest the need for an ethic that works against the generational reproduction of intolerance and disrespect. This political-ethical orientation needs to respond to the “social dynamics of disrespect”<sup>8</sup> whilst at the same time acknowledging that work on anti-discrimination is located within the social realities of inequalities and the lack of material well-being. Thus, the conflict, aggression and structural violence embedded in human relations and their relations with the environment, should be analysed both in terms of the conditions that sustain disrespect and undermine social recognition, as well as the pragmatic demands for equity and equality.

d) A new approach to the role of education is required. I suggest that the primacy of ‘this question’ has escaped us. How are we recruited into forms of enquiry and pedagogy that, after decades of sustained intellectual work and education and training, consistently return us to the beginning? A cursory glance at social reality ratifies the fact that human relations are systemically locked into violence and conflict because inquiry and pedagogy cannot imagine a theoretical architecture capable of building a legitimate expectation of a sense of collective indignation in the face of human suffering, irrespective of class, racial and gender positioning. Rather, because the sense of

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<sup>5</sup> Butler, J. (2009). *Frames of War*, London: Verso, p2. Though Butler admittedly focuses on war, her insights are instructional for understanding other forms of human conflict.

<sup>6</sup> See Fuller, S. (2006). *The New Sociological Imagination*, London: Sage.

<sup>7</sup> See Ignatieff, M. (1996). *The Warrior’s Honour*, Toronto: Penguin; and Honneth, A. (2007). *Disrespect*, Cambridge: Polity.

<sup>8</sup> Honneth, A. (2007). *Disrespect*, Cambridge: Polity, p. 63.

indignation, the source of activism, is distributed proportionally by the burden of history one is expected to carry, the possibility of combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance is already terminated.

- e) The violence of everyday xenophobia is a sufficient reminder of horrific consequences of identity politics. The dynamics and interplay between national, group and individual identities, and their implications for anti-discrimination and social justice, seem to be unexplored. The emergence of streams of intellectual work and practical strategies on racism, identity and social justice with such limited reconciliatory currency is thus to be expected. Analyses such as that of Doxtader<sup>9</sup> who contends that “reconciliation is a mode of rhetorical history-making, a complex set of inventional practices that both open time for speech and employ speech to make time” seldom enter the debates on identity or critical race theory. More recently, he argues that ‘reconciliation and recognition are concepts that both ground and focus contemporary debates over how to best promote democratic pluralism, foster democratization, and repair the wounds wrought by gross violations of human rights’<sup>10</sup>. As is the case with McPhail’s critique against Hatch<sup>11</sup>, the psycho-social and political perspective of Doxtader needs to be grounded in an understanding of the structural dimensions of racism and material inequalities. This dilemma more or less forestalls the theoretical movements. That is, academics will continuously argue for the intersections between the psycho-social and material dimensions and the interpersonal, cultural and structural levels, in the absence of a theoretical architecture and language that can create the possibilities of weaving these dimensions and levels together into a coherent project on anti-discrimination.
- f) The logic at work here demands the following:
- i. A total review of how education and training is conducted in the contexts of the complex psycho-social, economic and cultural conditions that give rise to racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance.
  - ii. The normative content of our education and training programmes needs to re-assessed.
  - iii. A pedagogy that is commensurate with combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance needs to be developed.
- g) Thus, the role of NHRIs is of crucial importance but we have to explore whether the necessary capacity for deep education and training resides within these institutions.
- i. Deep, solid research.
  - ii. Curriculum interventions at various levels of the education systems.
  - iii. Education and training for professional groupings

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<sup>9</sup> Doxtader, E. (2001). Making Rhetorical History in a Time of Transition: The Occasion, Constitution, and Representation of South African Reconciliation. *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*, 4(2), pp. 223-260.

<sup>10</sup> Doxtader, E. (2007). The Faith and Struggle of Beginning (with) Words: On the Turn Between Reconciliation and Recognition. *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, 40 (1), pp. 119-146.

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- iv. Assist with developing and monitoring national action plans
  - v. Monitoring targeted legislation.
- h) Institutions of Higher Education have become central and important players in support of the DDPA.
- i. Re-curriculation and the re-organisation of knowledge.
  - ii. Compulsory, credit bearing signature courses (refer to SA examples)
  - iii. Institutes and Centres with specific mandates
  - iv. Epistemic access
  - v. Protection and promotion mechanisms.
- i) A new, humanizing pedagogy is required to give educational expression to the objectives of the DDPA. (see attached slides)

End

Andre Keet