

Chapter-14

SLIPPING UNDER THE RADAR: A POLEMICAL ENCOUNTER WITH NEOLIBERAL POLICIES IN SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

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ABSTRACT

This chapter presents a polemical encounter with the ideology of neoliberalism that governs Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) in post-apartheid South Africa by focusing upon manifestations thereof in the policies of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and ad eundem gradum (AEG). Concordant with use of the polemical voice, the argument begins by offering a private or experiential view of challenges met in researching the implementation of these policies and the pedagogical vision or ideology that underpins them. After offering a brief literature review and explaining the policies of RPL and AEG, substantial attention is paid to two journal articles – written by South African scholars Ivor Baatjes (2005) and Corinne Knowles (2019) – that offer scathing critiques of the implementation and effects of a neoliberal agenda in South African universities. These critiques feed into an assertion of pedagogical alternatives put forward by Baatjes and Knowles as well as two international scholars, bell hooks (1994) and Emrah Karakilic (2020). It is shown that a common point of focus for these scholars is the importance of historically disadvantaged students being admitted to study in HEIs. The argument proceeds by providing an anonymous case study of a South African Master's in Creative Writing (MACW) Program that has sought to implement alternative pedagogical strategies. This case study pays particular attention to attempts made within this program to admit and support historically disadvantaged students. In the chapter's conclusion the author resumes the worm's eye view that initiated the argument and assesses the likelihood of HEIs actualizing a dynamic, inclusive and, ultimately, politically meaningful pedagogical vision.

Keywords: Polemic, Neoliberal Agenda, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), Ad Eundem Gradum (AEG), Pedagogical Alternatives, Case Study

INTRODUCTION A WORM'S EYE VIEW

On 16th August 2021, I experienced myself as teetering at the edge of a swamp of documents pertaining to the philosophy and implementation of the policy of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), and the interlinked practice of ad eundem gradum (AEG), within the sphere of Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) in South Africa. These two policies, to be explained in detail in the section of this chapter titled “RPL and AEG in South Africa” are manifestations of the ideology of neoliberalism that governs HEIs in the post-apartheid context. In the midst of reading the aforementioned documents, I sought an instant's respite by entering my email inbox, only to be met by a communiqué from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Academic and Student Affairs of the university at which I currently teach in the Department of Literary

THIS IS A LIMITED PREVIEW OF THE CHAPTER.

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