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A New Agenda for Higher Education and Development:

Re-integrating scholarships for sustainable human development

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Abstract

This paper addresses basic dilemmas for higher education (HE) in development, posing three questions: ‘Where is HE in the global development agenda?’ ‘What is the contribution of HE to development?’ ‘What dimensions of development should HE address?’ It argues for broader conceptions of ‘higher education’ and ‘development’, countering global pressures pushing narrow, unsustainable interpretations to the fore. A critical approach involves broader developmental and cognitive rationales. An inclusive post-2015 agenda for HE should consider fundamental demands to transform knowledge and knowledge relationships to make ‘sustainable human development’ attainable. In practice, HE could re-imagine scholarship in a more holistic, integrated manner. Individual, specialist professional education can be re-aligned with societal visions for transformation, engaging diverse publics through curriculum and research that directly address urgent sustainability problems. “Development’s” relative neglect of HE can be redressed, by revitalizing its public and common good mission for sustainable human development.

1. Introduction – where is higher education in the global development agenda?

Debates about higher education's contribution to development have intensified in the past few years as the transition from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs, 2000-2015) is discussed and negotiated. Since 2000, the MDGs have driven a global development consensus based on a 'numbers game', and focused on increasing primary enrolment. Various critiques have been offered. Too little attention has been afforded to quality issues. Secondary and higher education were excluded from the MDG agenda, whether as goals in their own right, or as the means to achieve goals and targets set by the other MDGs.

The problem of limited, but unmet promises was already noted, even before global economic downturn and aid budget cuts began to bite in 2009-10. Aid for education grew significantly under the MDGs, but donors did not meet the commitments agreed at the 1990 World Conference on Education for All (EFA) meeting in Jomtien, and consolidated in the 2000 Dakar Framework for Action (UNESCO, 2000). Assessments of the MDG-driven development consensus (United Nations, 2014) celebrated a degree of success, but also expressed anxiety that the post-2015 debates might distract the development community from 'finishing the job' begun with the MDGs. Influential voices continue to argue for a MDG-type approach with narrower goals and targets, and are sceptical about the more ambitious and inclusive agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). For example, Bill Gates and the Gates Foundation have downplayed the open-ended SDGs, in preference for the more limited MDG approach (Paulson, 2015). MDG 2 of 'universal primary education' is 90 percent achieved in enrolment terms, while narrowing gender gaps help fulfil the MDG 3 of 'improving gender equality'. The MDG consensus is credited for a growth spurt in development assistance to the education sector, which rose from \$6.8 billion (\$3 billion primary and \$2.7 billion post-secondary) in 2002 to a peak of \$14.4 billion in 2010 (\$6.2bn

primary, \$5.7 billion post-secondary). However, donor assistance for education has declined since 2010. The MDG 2014 report noted with alarm that aid to basic education had fallen to \$5.8 billion in 2011 (United Nations, 2014, p. 19), reflecting a slight shift in priorities away from basic education and the poorest countries. The relatively large share of aid (almost half of the education allocation) allocated to the post-secondary sector has been less clearly debated and justified. This funding mainly flows to universities in donor countries, largely through bilateral scholarships for third and fourth-level education and support for research.

The Dakar framework and ‘Education For All’ (EFA) policies prioritize everything but higher education (HE), covering primary education, gender and ethnic equality, life-skills for young people and adults, adult literacy and ensuring ‘good quality’ in basic education. The global policy discussion about ‘quality’ and ‘excellence’ is focused on ‘recognized and measurable learning outcomes...especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills’ (UNESCO, 2000, p. 8). This EFA approach to education has been criticized for being too limited, and possibly endangering the prospects for endogenous and sustainable development (Sawyer, 2004; Roberts & Ajai-Ajagbe, 2013; Ugwu, 2013). Concerted critiques, generally from developing countries, have pushed higher education back onto the global development agenda in anticipation of a post-MDG development era.

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are scheduled for agreement by September 2015. Seventeen SDGs are identified, along with one hundred and sixty-nine targets (United Nations, 2015). SDG 4 is to “**ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all**”. SDG 4’s ten educational targets broaden out the EFA approach, while allowing more country-specific adaptation and flexibility in target setting. Goals for early childhood and pre-primary education are added; emphasising equity, quality, relevance and

effectiveness. 'University' is explicitly included in the definition of 'affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education'. Scholarships for developing countries are specifically mentioned, and development cooperation is to target teacher education in developing countries.

Target 4.7 of the SDGs integrates curricular content for sustainability into the educational goal, so that, by 2030

all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

The SDGs have been roundly criticised. World Bank commentators insist that this 'laundry list approach to target setting' represents a weakening of the development consensus. The new proposed goals risk merely making statements 'that will hardly be met' (Fiszbein & Bustillo, 2014). Their concern is that development resources will be channelled to hiring more teachers, and not spent on standardizing, benchmarking and monitoring existing teaching to 'internationally comparable learning standards'. SDG Target 4.7 is singled out for particular criticism. The challenge of developing a consensus around sustainable development and global citizenship is deemed to be 'simply overwhelming' and 'certain to undermine discipline, focus and accountability' (Fiszbein & Bustillo, 2014).

Despite the fact that higher education has consistently received only slightly less assistance than primary education, the explicit relevance of higher education to global educational and development goals has never been entirely clear, let alone subject to standard-setting and monitoring. Most of the discussions involving HE have been restricted to the important, but limited

sub-discipline of teacher education. Reflecting World Bank preferences, the focus has been on standardized testing and measurement of basic literacy and numeracy and promoting ‘essential life skills’. The deeper question, raised a decade and a half ago regarding higher education’s core role and mission has remained untouched – namely HE’s role ‘...to educate, to train, to undertake research and, in particular, to contribute to the sustainable development and improvement of society as a whole’ (World Conference on Higher Education, 1998, p. 2). These challenges are revisited in the latest UNESCO policy document on the future of education, which recollects the wider context of challenge and change to traditional conceptions of HE (UNESCO, 2015). UNESCO’s policy documents seriously consider the impacts of privatization and marketization (UNESCO, 2004; UNESCO, 2015). However broader questions about the status of research and knowledge production, HE’s role in governance and reform, and issues of intellectual property and academic freedom are regrettably deemed to be outside the policy scope (UNESCO, 2004, p. 4). Questions about HE and the generation, ownership and relevance of knowledge, especially in relation to non-elite, disadvantaged and indigenous communities remain unanswered.

2. ‘What is the contribution of higher education to development’?

Five broad rationales can be given for HE’s relevance to development (McGrath, 2013).

1) Through **research**, HE provides the basis for the ‘big ideas’, ‘evidence base’ and ‘what works’ demands of the development sector. Research within higher education generates the knowledge required to address issues like poverty, food security, disease, climate and environmental change (Roberts & Ajai-Ajagbe, 2013). Thandika Mkandawire notes that over 100,000 foreign experts are employed to address Africa’s problems, costing approximately USD 4 billion a year, mostly from

aid budgets. Much of this expertise could be more efficiently and sustainably provided if resources were redirected to postgraduate training, research and university capacity-building within Africa itself (Hayter, 2015). Deeper questions could be raised about the ‘ownership’ of research and the ethics of knowledge creation. Troubling questions of epistemic and cognitive justice surround the framing of ‘developing countries’ or ‘Africa’ as a source of research subjects and data for Northern, metropolitan and donor-oriented and designed research (De Oliveira Andreotti & Stein, 2015; Hall & Tandon, No global justice without global cognitive justice, 2013). Alternative, participatory, community-based and transformative models (which largely developed in the global South, especially in Latin America) have sought to simultaneously transform development, education and what counts as knowledge (Munck, Community-Based Research: Genealogy and Prospects, 2014). Such ‘bottom-up’, Southern and participatory approaches have tended to remain on the periphery of research within HE, however they have been mainstreamed (though with limited influence) in development practice (Narayan, 1999). There is hope that a global, community-based research movement may yet expand and transform both HE and society (Munck, McIlrath, Hall, & Tandon, 2014). However, the question remains whether a democratic and inclusive vision of knowledge creation, one that addresses existing epistemic inequities and cognitive injustices, will occupy a central place in a new global education and development compact. The continuation of ‘HE as usual’ may allow alternative approaches to remain at the periphery of the HE and research, but they will have limited influence and impact on large-scale global transformations.

2) The World Bank Task Force on Higher Education and Society (World Bank, 2000) suggests that it may have been counter-productive to neglect HE because of its potential contribution to **technological catch-up and economic development** (Bloom, Canning, & Chan, 2006; World

Bank, 2002; World Bank , 2008). Some Southern academic critics go further, warning that HE's marginalization in the post-2015 agenda (Teferra, 2014) has potentially negative consequences for sustainable development (Ugwu, 2013).

3) The HE and development linkage that is often invoked is its role in **professional and technical education** – training professional engineers, health workers, teachers, public administrators and policymakers, technologists, and scientists whose work is crucial to improving people's lives (Roberts & Ajai-Ajagbe, 2013, p. 3). The notion of **pro-poor professionalism** has also gained a foothold. Teachers, engineers, architects, agronomists and public sector professions have seen recent initiatives to advance the idea of 'developmental' professionalism, responding to critical global issues with a focus on social responsibility and ethics, for example the Medact initiative (<http://www.medact.org/about/>), and Global Engineering (Chan & Fishbein, 2009).

4) Links have been made between **democracy and good governance** and HE's role in educating professional public journalists, activists and intellectuals, promoting societal debate and deepening democracy.

5) Human development and capability theory highlight the **intrinsic humanistic value of HE**, its contribution to making a good society based on humanistic ideals and fostering capabilities for human flourishing.

Within international co-operation circles concerned with higher education, a view emerged that little would be gained from lobbying the global goals process to make higher education a specific (sub) goal in the post-2015 global agenda. Instead, efforts could be concentrated on integrating HE and research into development programming to achieve the SDGs (Boeren, HE and the Development Goals: a means to an end, 2014). However, this strategy can only be effective if HE's

contribution is clearly demarcated and acknowledged (Boeren & Holtland, A changing landscape: making support to higher education and research in developing countries more effective, 2005).

A recent ‘rigorous review’ attempting to answer the question of how higher education ‘impacts’ development found that it needed to start by defining ‘development’. Five types of development ‘outcomes’ were identified: **earnings, productivity, technology transfer, capabilities and institutions** (Oketch, McCowan, & Schendel, 2014). However, in the absence of a stable consensus on development’s **goals**, this evaluative overview perpetuates the confusion between means and ends, and fails to differentiate narrow quantitative ‘outcomes’ from broader social, political or environmental progress. This reinforces the neglect of normative and ethical dimensions of change, including the specific value of pro-poor development research and professionalism, contributions to governance, peace and democracy, the promotion of intrinsic humanistic values and capabilities, or the advancement of epistemic and cognitive justice. These dimensions, and how HE contributes to them, still require better demarcation and acknowledgement.

3. What dimensions of ‘development’ should higher education address?’

3.1 Higher education’s contribution to the entrepreneurial workforce

The Association of African Universities argues for a renewed agenda for HE focused on skilled manpower, especially in science and technology, for economic growth (Mohamedbhai, 2013). Rural development, manufacturing industries, extractive industries and export oriented development require skilled, employable graduates from relevant fields. Africa has the lowest proportion of global graduates. Even though the number is growing, tertiary enrolment currently

stands at only 7%, so a considerable increase is required. 'Employability' is a shared concern in both 'developing' and 'advanced' economies, but African countries have the highest proportion of young people, coupled with high levels of youth unemployment, including graduates (Mohamedbhai, 2013). The least developed countries have a relatively tiny share of the world's graduates, and they strive to expand that share, however their economies struggle to absorb even the few available graduates. The analysis of the absorption problem focuses on whether HE is doing enough to ensure employability. Perhaps the problem is a gap between how 'employability' is understood by HE and the kinds of employment actually or potentially there? The suggested solutions lean heavily towards entrepreneurialism. They advocate less expensive, non-university routes to professional, technical and vocational education, and the inculcation of 'soft skills' that employers want. 'Entrepreneurship education' is encouraged, and HE is expected to make itself more permeable to business and industry, by introducing business influence into curricula, employing adjunct faculty from the business sector and increasing industry placements and contact. The private sector is considered to be the primary audience and beneficiary of HE, while the government's responsibility is to subsidize and incentivize the private sector.

3.2 Higher education's contribution to good governance and developmental leadership

Some researchers are disappointed with the marginalization of HE's role in promoting democracy, good governance, and 'developmental leadership' (Ndaruhutse, 2014). This is seen as a missed opportunity to bring HE's 'proven influence on wider governance, state-building and peace-building' to the global goal-setting process. HE could be seen as a transformative investment in good governance (Jones, Jones, & Ndaruhutse, 2014), and developing transformative leadership.

In Ghana, for example, secondary and higher education contributed to leaders' core values, leadership characteristics and technical skills. These were directly relevant to several areas of developmental reform: democratic restoration, economic recovery, public sector reforms, and media liberalization. Ghana's improving governance was partly attributed to the cultivation of debate, critical thinking, meritocracy, tolerance and positive leadership skills, all of which enabled educated leaders to contribute, individually and through developmental coalitions. Skills, values and networks were required to effect sustained change. This example suggests that post-2015 education policy need not be restricted to narrow conceptions of poverty reduction. It could also address formative and strategic aspects of development leadership and good governance. Science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) training are understood to be vital for technical aspects of economic development, but the essential role of the humanities and social sciences in creating transformative leadership is less well-known. The most common subjects studied by Ghana's developmental leaders were law, economics, politics and journalism.

A broader HE educates people to form and interpret ideas that are key to sustainable development, such as social inclusion, equity, ethics, and political contestation, while research and analysis conducted within HE serves to inform and reform social policy and governance. 'Quality' HE could be conceptualized as offering rich opportunities to develop core values as well as technical skills, and enabling individuals and coalitions to explore political beliefs and activism within their educational experiences.

Some progressive donors do recognise that HE does more than develop skilled manpower for economic growth. A critical mass of researchers and institutes is needed to inform decision makers and the general public about relevant trends and issues (Boeren & Holtland, *A changing landscape: making support to higher education and research in developing countries more effective*, 2005, pp.

18-19). HE also contributes to a ‘critical mass’ of independent-thinking citizens, necessary for the functioning of ‘knowledge societies’ as open and democratic societies (Delanty, 2001).

The aforementioned Ghana study (Jones, Jones, & Ndaruhutse, 2014) highlights the concept of ‘capabilities-based professionalism’. According to this concept, professional training for the ‘public good’ involves developing eight professional capabilities: vision; affiliation; resilience; struggle; emotions; knowledge, imagination and skills; integrity and confidence. (Walker & McLean, Professional education, capabilities and the public good: the role of universities in promoting human development , 2013). The Ghana study looks back on a period characterized by inclusive access to quality education, during Nkrumah’s post-colonial government. The key Ghanaian reform coalitions of the 1980s and 1990s had roots in campus networks formed in this earlier period. Most of the leaders in this study were positively impacted by educational policies of widening meritocratic access to quality institutions, and this access made Ghanaian elites more meritocratic. Academic status motivated individuals to join reform coalitions, while academic freedom provided some protection for democratic causes. Educational experiences inculcated key values of public service and national unity, helping to form a consensus for democratization.

3.3 Sustainability: the real question for development

The major problem facing the predominant ‘human capital’ focus in education is the accumulating evidence indicating that the current trajectory of human capital expansion is unsustainable. New ways have to be found to balance human capital accumulation with enhanced understandings and protection of natural and social capital (New Economics Foundation, 2012). The five broad dimensions of HE’s contribution (McGrath, 2013) and the five types of outcomes (Oketch,

McCowan, & Schendel, 2014) must address this one overriding reality - that global development has now exceeded several critical global thresholds (Rockström, et al., 2009), while also failing to meet demands for social inclusion, equity and justice. The current paradigm and politics of development are those of **actually existing unsustainability** (Barry, 2012). Developing and developed societies alike face critical environmental and social challenges which are no longer amenable to simple technical fixes. Fundamental social transformation is required, involving deeper democratic citizen involvement (Dryzek, 2013; Klein, 2014). New development pathways are needed which are able to align ecologies, cultures, visions and values (Ugwu, 2013; Leach, Raworth, & Rockström). This indicates a renewed relevance for transformative, community-based, participatory forms of research and action. Key examples of participatory and transformative approaches originated in the global South, but there are also many examples of learning, resistance and experimentation in the North (Tandon & Hall, 2014; Munck, *Community-Based Research: Genealogy and Prospects*, 2014). Broadening HE's mission necessarily involves a critical questioning of unsustainable dominant epistemologies, the inclusion of indigenous and popular forms of knowledge and action, and the search for a co-creative approach to knowledge (Edwards, 2007; Munck, McIlrath, Hall, & Tandon, 2014).

This remainder of this paper makes the case for a new agenda for HE that responds to the unresolved challenge of sustainable human development. One way for HE to effect this is by moving towards a more integrated model of scholarship, converging the separate requirements for research, interdisciplinarity, community engagement and teaching through the question of sustainable human development. Taking a critical perspective on the unsustainable 'globally structured agenda for education' (GSAE), the discussion examines the potential of rights-based approaches to offer a countervailing integrative concern. Human rights can ground a renewed

global compact for HE and development, one that answers to concerns for material, epistemic and cognitive justice, and that responds to the current global crisis of sustainability in a manner that keeps justice in the frame.

4. Globalizations of higher education

Globalization has blurred the boundaries and challenged the content of ‘development’ and ‘education’, while redefining both. Globalization poses new problems for education policy, while re-making ‘education’ as a space where complex, mundane and sometimes contradictory forms of neoliberalism are promoted and ‘done’ (Ball, 2012, p. 2).

HE, as a subsector of education has been particularly impacted by globalization. In a global transition towards ‘knowledge economies’, governments are under pressure to expand education and re-orient educational processes to the objective of global competitive advantage. Dale provides a compact characterization of the dominant processes of globalization in education, as a ‘Globally Structured Agenda for Education’, (‘GSAE’) (Dale, 2000, p. 436). The GSAE works through three interrelated domains: a hyperliberal economic domain, a political domain operating “governance without government”, and commodification and consumerization in the cultural domain. Globalization makes education a national concern for global competitiveness. However, educational policies and practices have become post-national. Education has become a globally homogenizing, competitive field, privileging generic (‘flexible’) skills and competences for a globalized market economy over specific ‘national’ content. GSAE is post-governmental as welfare and regulatory concerns are eroded, in favour of transnational private sector investment and cross-border trade in ‘educational’ goods and services. Dominated by neoliberal globalization,

state funding and capacity to shape and deliver 'national' education is continuously redacted to fulfil competitiveness demands, governed by uniform parameters of 'quality', 'learning' 'accountability' and 'standards' (Carney, 2009). Education has been globally re-shaped through competitive international measures, benchmarks and league tables, such as the human capital investment/return rationales promoted by the World Bank and OECD, or EFA goals and targets. The OECD's programme of standardized international educational testing integrates secondary test scores (Programme for International Student Assessment PISA) into national competitiveness assessments. Under GSAE, education policy is also becoming post-educational, since the predominant structures and reforms are driven by extra-educational forces, events and processes (Novelli, Altinyelken, & Verger, 2012). From a human development perspective, GSAE is also a post-development, post-human educational agenda. Dominant global education policies enact a circular instrumentality by treating human beings as means to achieve economic competitiveness, while ignoring and excluding education as a goal in itself, or the possibility of other goals that education might help achieve. This is an arguably dystopian vision of global education in the twenty-first century, where education exists only to promote economic competitiveness and satisfy the networked interests of global edupreneurs and edubusinesses. Under a GSAE, educational services are likely to be of uneven quality, compromised by the profit motive and become a major cause of indebtedness. Teaching becomes devalued and deprofessionalized by the focus on standardized testing and high-stakes evaluations, while the encroachment of managerialism and declining remuneration vis-à-vis other professional sectors are issues for concern (UNESCO, 2015, p. 54).

A counter-globalizing movement from civil society defends education as a basic human right, and argues for teaching, research and societal 'relevance' to be maintained for the public and common

good (UNESCO, 2015). Alternative educational goals include the development of human capabilities to be knowledgeable and self-determining within a democratic society. More open and equitable access to knowledge, fairer distribution of educational opportunities, and attention to demands for epistemic and cognitive justice are some of the requirements to fulfil the human rights and capabilities of persons to live healthy, knowledgeable, and productive lives with and dignity.

5. A new approach to global higher education - 'Moving the whole system'

Is it possible, on a global scale, for HE to adopt a more focused, but also more diversified and locally-appropriate approach to meeting the challenges of sustainable development? This question pushes the HE agenda beyond simple demands to include HE in the SDGs in any form, to asking more fundamental questions about what role HE should play in development. Responding to the questions posed by the Association of Commonwealth Universities concerning HE's role in the post-2015 agenda, Dinesh Singh of Delhi University outlines the real challenge as one of '*moving the whole system*', by breaking down the barriers between knowledge systems and society (Singh, 2014).

5.1 Enabling skills in an open knowledge society

Singh contends that HE's key role is to provide enabling skills for people to solve the problems of society - analytical skills, quantitative skills, IT skills and communication skills. However, given the conditions of globalized society, these skills need to be developed in a networked and 'open' manner that is quite different from that practised within traditional HE formats and structures (Singh, 2014). Higher education must foster adaptability and innovation, especially through the capacity for research (Mendis, 2014). But 'research' is not a neutral term. It can be defined through

dominant and top-down, or resistant, contestatory and bottom-up processes (Munck, *Community-Based Research: Genealogy and Prospects*, 2014). Skills acquisition cannot be viewed as neutral and isolated from knowledge content and knowledge intention.

The hope is that ‘open’ higher education can lead to knowledge and skills being applied in ways that will ‘move the whole system’ towards sustainable development. Could an ‘opening’ of education redress current imbalances and inequities of knowledge and power, or will it merely reinforce existing asymmetries, inequities and epistemic and cognitive injustice, while simply reproducing the dominant imaginary? (De Oliveira Andreotti & Stein, 2015)

These debates come at a challenging time when the ‘development’ and ‘sustainability’ of higher education is itself increasingly squeezed. Established HE institutions and systems in the ‘developed’ North face a perfect storm of globalizing pressure and increasing expectations, but with declining political, public and fiscal support. On the other side the coin, some governments in the ‘rising South’ like China, Brazil and Ethiopia are investing heavily in HE and research, hoping that this will propel them towards ‘fully developed’ status as knowledge economies.

5.2 Critique of Eurocentrism and demands for epistemic and cognitive justice

African observers have held alternately hopeful and sceptical views about the role of HE in economic and societal transformation. Some outspoken critics have pointed to the way the sector has been left behind and neglected, to the detriment of local, national and regional development (Sawyer, 2004). The neglect of African HE is at least partly attributable to the changing international development consensus since the late 1980s. In the face of structural adjustment policies, the first priority for ‘adjustment with a human face’ (Cornia, Jolly, & Stewart, 1987) was

to defend basic education for the very poorest. However, the key argument for protecting primary education was not justice, or even inclusion, but **cost-effectiveness**. Primary education was promoted as a sound economic investment in human capital, with a high ‘rate of return’ compared to secondary or higher education.

The structural disadvantage that ensued from the de-prioritization and defunding of secondary and HE and research in Africa under the influence of structural adjustment eventually led to desperate demands for increased public and private investment, aid and government spending. Structural strains have become evident in public institutions, given the historic underdevelopment and stagnation of research capacity, too few staff and resources and, more recently, competition from private, for profit institutions for staff and expertise (Sawyerr, 2004; Jegede, 2012).

The perspective presented by critical, de-colonial scholars is one that challenges Eurocentric and over-universalizing education and development structures from the perspective of epistemic and cognitive injustice. In this view, the challenge for HE is an ethical and epistemic challenge - to confront a dominant global imaginary that expresses and reproduces hierarchical relationships between the ‘advanced’ and the ‘backward’ (De Oliveira Andreotti & Stein, 2015). Hall and Tandon argue that a post-2015 agenda must foreground global justice, which cannot be achieved without ‘**cognitive justice**’ – an innovative and decolonial effort to ‘**radically broaden our understanding of whose knowledge counts and how knowledge is used for the benefit of all**’ (Hall & Tandon, No global justice without global cognitive justice, 2013). The de-colonization of HE calls for a revolution in knowledge, relationships and curriculum, to produce **differently relevant** global knowledge and learning, by including previously excluded voices, knowledges and interests. Hall and Tandon suggest that participatory approaches underpin the creation of ‘knowledge democracy’ through new ecologies of knowledge that enable greater cognitive justice

(Hall & Tandon, Majority-world Foundations of Community-Based research, 2014). In the context of the South Africa, Hoppers writes about the need to move to a ‘moral and cognitive reconstruction of citizenship’ (Hoppers, 2009).

HE is challenged to be more democratic, creative and flexible, to fulfil community-based as well as country-specific imperatives, while promoting inclusive, non-discriminatory, confident and locally-owned versions of ‘education’ and ‘development’. In the case of South Africa, educational norms were historically aligned with white privilege, systematic discrimination and majority exclusion, leaving a legacy of isolation and displacement across its HE institutions (Cross, Mhlanga, & Ojo, 2011). However, HE and particularly universities simultaneously represented a **wider universalism** capable of transcending national division, by providing transnational, transcontinental and transcultural spaces (Ramphela, 1999), capable of broad intellectual contributions and knowledge generation not only for the locality, nation or region, but for the world. The South African Research Chairs Initiative (SARChI) (Hoppers, 2009) and the 20- year SANPAD research capacity building programme (<http://www.sanpad.org.za>) aimed to redefine the mission and purpose of research and HE in post-apartheid South Africa. The transformative vision included **restorative action** to redress cognitive and material injustices, both historical and reactionary, and to bring about **sustainable human development** for Africa (Hoppers, 2009, p. 2). This transformative vision far exceeds the narrow goals of EFA and narrowing doctrines of standardization and monitoring. Instead, the vision is for Africa to be a recognized and recognizable contributor to **global scientific excellence** (Chibale, 2015). Internationalized ideas of research capacity and excellence **and** national transformative aspirations are both important considerations for African HE. The SARChI Chair in Development Education was conceived as a critical and reflexive forum for contemporary social science research – **using ‘development’ as a**

pedagogic field, with human development as the goal. This is a far more critical, reflexive and conative conception of ‘**development education**’ than most Northern practitioners are used to, one that genuinely challenges the Northern-dominated but Southern-focused global fields of development practice and (sub-field of) development education.

6. Reimagining Higher Education for the development of an inclusively globalised world

One analysis of key intersections between development, higher education and research (Khoo S.-m. , 2014) suggests that the interactions between these domains are neglected and under-researched. HE’s contribution might more coherent and effective of it philosophically and practically challenged the problematic hierarchical divides between research and education, between education and other disciplines, and between global educational and global development goals. Drawing upon Boyer’s re-consideration of academic work (Boyer, *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*, 1990; Boyer, *The Scholarship of Engagement.*, 1996), an ecology of scholarly practices might be re-imagined to redress problematic binaries and hierarchies. Currently, ‘applied’ and community-based research, teaching, and inter-disciplinary collaboration are all seen as having lesser value. There is currently a world-wide crisis of meaning and values in higher education, pressured by a largely unchallenged dominant imaginary. This challenge can only be faced by posing a set of difficult critical questions about different interests, inequities and possible conflicts and contradictions (De Oliveira Andreotti & Stein, 2015). The pursuit of human capital on its own has already proved to be unsustainable and cannot continue unchecked. A more sophisticated understanding would respect other valued means and ends – cultural, social, political and natural. The case can be made for HE to decisively integrate the

agendas for research, interdisciplinarity, ethical engagement and teaching, by focusing squarely on the problem of sustainable human development. It is possible that **human rights** may offer an alternative integrative concern and provide alternative global agenda for higher education.

6.1 Re-imagining HE research and education by re-connecting scholarships

Research is associated with originality, independence, rigour and the academic setting, but it is not self-explanatory. The work of research has arguably been raised to abstraction, and disconnected from other tasks of knowledge and education. The ‘scholarships’ of engagement, interdisciplinarity and teaching can be re-connected (Boyer, *The Scholarship of Engagement*, 1996; Boyer, *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*, 1990). The binary divisions: between academic theory and practice, between higher education institutions and their wider publics, between research and teaching, and between different disciplines are assumed, not factual, but such divisions stand in the way of sustainable human development becoming the central *problematique* and focus. Where appropriate, the role of research can be clarified and reconfigured in relation to HE’s other core contributions, with explicit arguments offered as to whether and how it relates to the over-arching challenges of sustainable human development.

Integrating research with teaching, engagement and inter-disciplinary dialogue broadens the actors and audiences of HE. The broad range of disciplines and professions, policy-makers and publics can use HE spaces to co-create knowledge, and debate and pursue material and cognitive claims in relation to that knowledge. Collaboration and co-creation are difficult processes that may result in a good deal of disagreement and conflict. The distinctive spaces of HE, protected by academic freedom, offer relatively safe, hospitable and learning-oriented spaces where difficult issues of really existing unsustainability can be faced. Different aspects of academic work are currently

separated and traded off, so current structures of reward and recognition require reform in order to work in a more complementary manner. Research, ‘the scholarship of discovery’, should be valued *in relation to*, not *over*, teaching, community engagement and interdisciplinary collaboration, keeping the SDGs in view as a guiding framework.

That said, the current HE-development nexus remains globally dominated by an imaginary of unsustainable, unecological and inequalitarian economics that instrumentalizes human beings and their education. Earnings, productivity and technology are privileged, while capabilities and institutions are not seriously considered. Societal or macro-level benefits are deemed less important. They are set aside due to the belief that such goals are too difficult to quantify, unlike individual earnings.

Some attempts have nevertheless been made to argue for investment in HE in the post-2015 era as a common or public good, and for education in general as a global common good. However, few doubt that the common good aspect is under considerable strain (UNESCO, 2015). In a globally connected world, popular demands are increasing for accountability, openness, equity and participation in public affairs (UNESCO, 2015, p. 72). Alternative perspectives point to HE’s role in strengthening individual and institutional capabilities, and its contribution to realizing human rights through improvements in health, nutrition, gender equality, democratization and environmental protection. However, some argue that the evidence for these benefits is too limited, dispersed and further research is required (Oketch, McCowan, & Schendel, 2014, p. 6). The arguments for higher education have not yet succeeded in addressing the central questions – how higher education actually contributes to sustaining improvements in human development; how such gains can be made more sustainable, and how any of that actually contributes to the mitigation of actually-existing unsustainability (Barry, 2012).

6.2 The scholarship of integration and the challenge of sustainable human development

Looking beyond 2015, the proposed SDGs envisage the role of education to ‘ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all’ (United Nations Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals 2013). Interdisciplinarity, the ‘scholarship of integration’, connects aspirations for ecological protection, sustained inclusion, equity and human development. Sustainable development is contested, involving complex interactions between science, politics, policymaking and development (Khoo S. , 2013). Human development and sustainable development have evolved as separate approaches in development, the former being largely concerned with aspirations of people and the latter trying to balance development aspirations with environmental limitations. New interdisciplinary approaches enable human development and sustainability to be linked, using multi-dimensional development indicators like the Happy Planet Index. However, the new global synthesis presents a worrying picture for the future as nearly all countries are failing to sustain improvements to human development within environmental limits (New Economics Foundation, 2012). Climate change - arguably the most serious global environmental threat - is not, or insufficiently, accounted for, even in these progressive new measures (Khoo S. , 2013). Several fundamental planetary thresholds have been breached and we are exceeding the ‘safe operating space’ for humanity (Rockström, et al., 2009).

7. Conclusion – For Higher Education in ‘hard times’

Higher education is experiencing ‘hard times’, as the values and purposes of education and knowledge are increasingly contested (Walker, Higher Education Pedagogies, 2006), within a broader drama of growth, crises and reform. There is a demand for universities to perform wider roles in the ‘knowledge society’ and not simply serve the knowledge economy, by providing more and better discipline-based education, professional training and basic public research, but also more inter-disciplinary, applied, profit and private-sector focused outputs. There is still recognition for traditional values of academic freedom and intellectual autonomy, but greater emphasis has been placed on the responsibility of higher education for promoting social equity and inclusion, and as a common and public good in itself.

Globally, HE is under considerable pressure, as policies rationalize, downsize and centralize state control over HE, while contending social forces seek to simultaneously narrow and widen its processes, purposes and outcomes’. Diminished political support and financial resources for public HE inevitably result in the increasing importance of the private sector and competitive individualism. Pressures for international competitiveness have led governments to drive performance management, institutional branding and global market positioning, locking national HE institutions into a race for ‘world class’ status, where only a tiny minority of institutions are assured success. Research agendas increasingly eschew traditional scholarly values, in favour of narrowly-defined ‘impact’, market values and global competitiveness. Changes are also propelled by the global expansion of educational managerialism, allied to edubusiness. Economic crisis has shifted HE away from a Keynesian approach that develops educational infrastructure as a public investment, towards neoclassical orthodoxy favouring deregulated global trade in commodified education.

UNESCO's recent publication, '*Rethinking education – towards a global common good?*' suggests that 'common good' is a constructive theme for turning around the unsustainable 'globally structured agenda for education'. The common good is 'the good realized in the mutual relationships in and through which human beings achieve their well-being' (UNESCO, 2015). UNESCO eschews the term 'public good', failing to recognise new theories of public goods that would support HE as a constitutive force in developing democracy and the public sphere. Constitutive public goods work by providing the 'material conditions for the generation and regeneration of the public' (Kallhoff, 2011, p. 41). Higher education acts as a public good when it provides opportunities for people to encounter each other, forming *mutual awareness*, underpinned with a sense of institutional *reliability* and through opportunities for *experienced equality*.

Those who hope that HE education will play a fuller role in realizing a more equitable, inclusive and sustainable development face a deeply challenging scenario. Core resources and support for higher education and research are low, volatile and declining. Current academic monitoring and reward structures of pay and promotion encourage trade-offs, not integration. Academics who attempt to integrate their research, teaching, outreach and interdisciplinary work may face considerable difficulties and disincentives (Huber, 2004). Media and political pressure may discourage public support for academic freedom, and reject critical and alternative visions of global scholarship. The many challenges mean that HE institutions have become too preoccupied with their own problems of financing, competition and relentless reform to clarify what they stand for. Compliant, risk-averse visions of education prevail in such times, as the imperatives of the knowledge economy make it harder to justify a more ambitious, transformative vision that takes on human, social and environmental concerns on an equal footing to economic objectives.

This paper suggests that HE has something valuable to offer towards meeting the challenge of sustainable human development. It can also be suggested that the challenge of sustainable human development has something important to offer higher education in return. The challenge is itself a powerful tool for engaging an ethical re-imagination of HE in this current era of globalized, managed reform. For DSAI members working on education, the research agenda might develop beyond research *in* higher education, to reach towards a broader questioning of what HE is *about*, and *for*, and how to integrating research into a network of cross-disciplinary and engaged scholarship – for example to connect with civil society, governance, conflict, gender, health, nutrition or livelihoods research.

7.1 The grounding and integrative power of human rights

Markets and economic growth offer only one perspective on progress and development. Equality, human rights and human development provide valid alternative perspectives on development (Walby, 2009). These are inter- and trans-disciplinary, drawing together different ideas and debates within development studies, law, gender studies, food, health, education, environmental and security studies. Debates about the meaning of development and concerns with economic development, wellbeing and progress are not restricted to developing countries - they are clearly relevant to the global North too. The recent crises of economic austerity, social crises, conflicts and violence within many advanced economies have pushed the relevant debates in the broader public realm toward HE. Ethics, justice, and grounded global sensibilities (Massey, 2009, p. 80; Munck, *Civic Engagement and Global Citizenship in a University Context: Core business or desirable add-on?*, 2010) connect different issues and knowledge. A grounded approach to

globalization connects the theoretical and practical concerns of HE, extending ethical questions beyond the narrow traditional definition of ‘research ethics’ to broader questions about why HE is valued and how it relates to individual or collective values, processes of change, and the state of the planet.

Human rights may offer a route towards ethical forms of globalization (Realizing Rights: The Ethical Globalisation Initiative), based on transdisciplinary norms that can be mobilized by diverse actors and constituencies engaged in advocacy and problem-solving. As a field, human rights has moved towards diverse practical and applied concerns such as development, gender equality, terrorism, religion or even pandemics (Steiner, 2002, p. 317). HE institutions play a critical role in fostering the study and teaching of human rights as ‘[f]ew institutions other than the university are positioned to undertake such work’. Research universities play a critical role in the global human rights movement because they are uniquely positioned to host critical and interdisciplinary debate. There is a fundamental fit between the ‘...basic tenets of the international [human rights] instruments – freedoms of belief, inquiry, advocacy and association’ and the foundational values of the higher education itself (Steiner, 2002, p. 318). A relatively new and exciting area of human rights scholarship and practice, and one that is likely to see significant development in the future, is the convergence of human rights and environmental protection into an ‘environmental rights revolution’ (Boyd, 2011).

Environmental challenges such as climate change signal a major change for development thinking. Development studies can no longer wish away the contested, emergent and democratic dimensions of development and questions of justice. HE can draw upon traditions of academic freedom, scholarship and autonomy to address these challenges, together with the wide spectrum of disciplinary knowledge required to approach the ethical questions of sustainable human

development in a concrete manner. Through the proper exercise of academic freedom, HE offers a safe, enabling milieu to conduct debates about conflicting versus common values, their relation to universal rights and the requirements of non-discrimination. Research, teaching and the engagement agenda can be better oriented towards such dialogue, by drawing in a wider range of disciplinary, professional and practice activities and actors.

North-South collaborative research initiatives offer important spaces and examples of partnerships in teaching, training and research that engage development issues (Nakabugo, Barrett, McEvoy, & Munck, 2010; Hayter, 2015). Research, thus broadly conceived, merits core support not only from official development assistance programmes, but from HE institutions themselves, from the education and development sectors, and from the whole gamut of disciplines and professions represented within HE. In producing, synthesizing, communicating, contesting and extending knowledge, HE also contributes to the individual and collective capabilities of professionals and citizens. HE can play a pivotal role in the democratization of knowledge, and challenge globalization's vicious circles, but it can only do this if inspired human agency and a sense of higher coherence are allowed to enter, and underpin attempts to solve the problems of the future (Gidley, 2000, pp. 236-7). Such a change requires academics, administrators and students alike 'to become creatively courageous in reinventing universities if we are to become the creators of transformed futures and not just creatures of the past' (Gidley, 2000, p. 238). Courage, creativity and a different kind of critical mass are required to effectively challenge actually existing unsustainable development, and to recover the possibility of alternative futures. HE can play an appropriate critical role with regard to ethical development and the realization of human rights (Steiner, 2002), by purposefully diversifying and integrating the spaces of research, teaching and engagement, and by engaging some of the important ethical dilemmas around planetary thresholds,

equity, and justice, including cognitive justice. HE can engage a wider public in the production of knowledge about, and practice of, a public pedagogy of human rights. In doing so, it can play a critical constitutive public role. This public role is important in keeping the possibility of democratic futures open, where the quality of human lives, social justice and human freedom can be freely and authentically decided (Delanty, 2001). In response to the disenchanting versions of accountability advanced by government and managers, researchers and educators might choose to advance human rights-based concepts of answerability and constructive accountability (Freedman, 2003).

There are already some interesting and inspiring practical examples of knowledge creation and transformation for sustainable human development in the global South. These experiments see HE as central to the broader democratization and transformation of politics and society (Munck, McIlrath, Hall, & Tandon, 2014). The post-apartheid era in South Africa has initiated a transformative agenda for research and higher education, based on human rights (Hoppers, 2009). This points to a research imaginary which potentially redefines sustainable human development on endogenous terms, involving the search for cognitive and moral justice, as well as economic transformation. In such cases, there is much that the North can learn *from*, and not just *about*, development in the South and take heart from their visions for more ethical, sustainable and human-centred versions of global higher education.

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