Re-membering practices of popular education in the struggle for an alternative South Africa[1]

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Abstract

Throughout history there have been dreams, visions and hopes for a utopian world. The history and presence of politics in South Africa abounds with moments and movements of pushing beyond and resisting 'a dog's life'. Integral to pushing beyond for a better world, are education and learning processes and practices, albeit in different shapes and forms, with varying intensities and power. This paper seeks to trace certain popular education practices that have and continue to deepen the struggle for an alternative South African society. The paper highlights the shifts and changes in popular education in response to the ebbs and flows of political struggle and movements. It is based on research entitled 'Re-membering traditions of popular education' – a recovery of popular education practices from the past that may have been forgotten and reconnection with present forms of education, organising and action. As a renewed working class movement is regrouping and growing in response to the ongoing structural violence of neo-liberal economic policies and state violence, this paper argues that popular education can play a role in contributing towards building this and other movements. Popular education can foster critical analysis in order to understand the context more deeply, name the enemy and foster openness and hope in searching for and imagining a collective alternative.

Keywords: Popular education, political struggle, vision, hope, history, South Africa

This paper is part of a 3 year research project entitled 'Re-membering Traditions of Popular Education', which aims to un-cover and re-cover forgotten traditions of popular learning and education in South Africa. 'Re-membering' suggests two things: firstly, a process of casting one's mind to call up something that may have been forgotten, a finding and retrieving in order to reveal, a recollection, uncovering of something that was neglected or no longer recognised as being there. Secondly, re-membering suggests an act of connecting what has been severed, a re-attaching, a putting together what has been kept apart and re-establishing of relations between parts that belong together. The project aims to shed light on processes of activist education that

generated knowledge in often imaginative and innovative ways in South Africa particularly in its hey days of the 1970s and 1980s.

The history of South African politics abounds with moments and movements of pushing against oppression and exploitation, and "pushing beyond", resisting "a dog's life". According to Freire (1998), through dialogue and mutual relations, we are able to collectively understand our reality and to imagine different possibilities. Processes of imagining and envisioning enable acts of collective resistance, action and agency, and vice versa. Education and learning are integral to imagining and struggling for a better world. This paper seeks to highlight popular education practices that have and continue to deepen the struggle for an alternative South African society. We look back and tell an incomplete story of the history of popular education in South Africa in order to move forward in the current context.

Through shining light on moments from the past that bear on the present, this paper illustrates how firstly, popular education is part of a rich history in the struggle for an alternative society in South Africa. Secondly, popular education is embedded in its socio-political context. It is constrained and enabled by the ebbs and flows of history it "is always contextual and contingent, reflecting and responding to changing circumstances and, in particular, the changing relationship between the formal politics of state and the informal politics of social movements in civil society" (Martin, 1999, p. 1). Whilst popular education is rooted in its context, at its best, it responds to the context with a view to pushing beyond what is, at any particular moment in time. Popular education initiatives are part of building a vision for tomorrow, today. Thirdly, whilst many argue that there has been a demise in popular education, this paper seeks to demonstrate that popular education continues to exist in the cracks and crevices, in the search for the 'not yet'.

Tenets of popular education

Popular education is a contested term and practice, with multiple definitions and practices. Definitions of popular education range from employing participatory methods for personal development, to acting as part of overtly political anti-capitalist projects (von Kotze, Walters & Luckett, 2016). Martin (1999, p. 4) argues that popular education is "rooted in the interests, aspirations and struggles of ordinary people", "is overtly political and critical of the status quo" and committed to "progressive social and political change".

This research understands popular education to be both a theory and a practice of social action, underpinned by the following key principles:

- Social justice, both in process and in proposed outcomes;

- Grounded in the daily social, economic, political and cultural reality of people whose experiences throw up the questions and contradictions they wish to examine and reflect on in order to change

them;

•   Dialogue: all participants engage in dialogue and analysis and in the process develop their 'voice' to 'speak up and out';

•   Action and reflection – what Freire called 'praxis': the purpose of learning to 'read the world' is to change it (von Kotze, 2014).

Here, popular education is not about identifying skills deficits in order to better prepare individuals for the marketplace, as is the hegemonic model of education. Rather, it seeks to draw on the collective knowledge and experiences of life struggles and activism, on historical understandings, in order to develop coherent theory and practice to challenge the individualized, commodified, social world. It is part of deliberate undertakings to further social movement learning.

Eyerman and Jamison state that "Social movements are not merely social dramas; they are the social action from where new knowledge including worldviews, ideologies, religions, and scientific theories originate" (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991, p. 14). As Walters (2005) explains, popular education is integral to social processes, and therefore it is not surprising that it gains in prominence at heightened political or economic moments in response to actions within the State, civil society or the private sector. As she elaborates, social movement learning includes both learning by people who are participants in social movements and learning by people outside of social movements through the impact they make. (Hall & Clover, 2005) Learning through a movement can occur informally through participation, or through intentional educational interventions.   The educational and organisational practices are intertwined. The cultural, gender, class, and ethnic locations of the individuals or groups involved shape the educational and organisational practices, just as they are shaped by the particular historical conjuncture. Social movements are exceedingly rich learning environments. As Mohanty (2012) states, popular education within social movements is the "sustained and hard work of excavating experiential knowledge, and of teaching/learning to change the world".

Methodology

Research design

The research project seeks, as far as possible, to achieve congruence between its means and ends, adopting a Participatory Research Approach (PRA). Drawing on adult education literature (for example, Kassam 1982, Walters 1989), this approach demands that knowledge is constructed collectively, through dialogue, and that the research integrates 'investigation, education and action'. PRA is committed to the educational value of the research process for all participants, consistent with the notion of risking disturbance, that is, a willingness to change as result of the research process in the pursuit of social justice. In this way, the

project employed an inductive, empirical method of research, allowing for the emergence of trends, patterns, themes and unexpected findings and outcomes.

Data collection and production

The project employed a number of data collection methods. For the purposes of this paper: we firstly unearthed and collected documents – printed text, auditory records and visuals from the past. We consulted history books, historical sources, and other published timelines of adult education and political events in the 20th and 21st Centuries. We searched for information on education laws/policies, progressive non-formal education activities, the establishment of organizations/ institutions/ publications involved in popular education with an eye towards identifying different historical strands of popular education, for example, relating to the labour movement, Black Consciousness Movement and cultural activism, as well as the political events that affected the terrain of struggle for liberation. We do not claim to have captured all historical facts, or even attempted to. Rather it was a search for a story and stories of popular education through a "collection of concrete remembered objects and impressions" (Benjamin, 1968).

Secondly, we conducted semi-structured interviews with individuals and groups about past and present organizations in South Africa that undertake educational work. The primary purpose was to develop insights into organisations' educational practices, philosophies and conceptions of popular education. Over 30 organisational profiles were drawn up from sectors ranging from community development, democracy and human rights, labour, land and rural struggles to education rights, such as Community Monitors, Equal Education, Gender at Work and Surplus People's Project. In addition, we conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with 21 local and international practitioners. Each of the interviewees had been involved in popular education/activism for over 30 years in sectors ranging from labour, cultural activism, feminist popular education, literacy, community activism, peace work and children's rights.

Thirdly, we observed and participated in two national workshops of popular educators in 2013 and 2014, which brought together practitioners working in a broad range of popular education. These provided opportunities to observe, journal and interview popular educators as well as conduct dialogues on popular education.

Conceptual framing

Popular education is underpinned by various theories of the state and theories of transition – as we have elaborated elsewhere (Von Kotze, Walters & Luckett 2016), there is not one understanding of popular education. While Paulo Freire is often referred to as a core reference point, interpretations of his work vary. During the 1970s and 1980s in South African popular education, Paulo Freire and Antonio Gramsci were oft cited. For purposes here we elaborate briefly on

key ideas within Gramsci's work, which influenced activists at the time.

As Walters (1989, p. 100) describes, Gramsci saw education as central to politics. He saw the struggle for a new working class culture as taking the form of a struggle for a mass philosophy able to make each party member an 'organic intellectual', which involved a range of democratic activities including modes of thinking, living and feeling. In order to transform society Gramsci believed that people needed to know what the new world could be like. The first task was therefore to 'make revolution in the mind'. Thus, the development of coherent theory was central to Gramsci's theory of social transition and his educational practice.

The role of the educator, in the form of the organic intellectual or the party was clear. The educator needed to be 'connecting people's historical experience dialectically with laws of history...' (as cited in Walters 1989, p. 100). For Gramsci, Marxism provided theory which helped transform 'common sense' to 'good sense'. However, Marxism was not used as a dogma which was outside of history. The pursuit of intellectual activity, he argued, should occur in close linkage with political practice and so be continually challenged and transformed by practice. The importance of knowledge being generated through praxis (Gramsci and Freire appear to have similar views on this) worked against the notion of an authoritarian teacher-learner relationship. Action and reflection, while deepening praxis, were crucial components of the educational process.

Gramsci saw participatory democratic practices such as the development of working class organisations in the Factory Council movement as integral to the educational process. Gramsci saw as the practical and political task of hegemony: to organise and unify the working class so that it would acquire from its own experience 'a responsible consciousness of the obligations that fall to classes achieving State power' (Gramsci, 1977, p. 65). At the core of Gramsci's practice was the connection between destruction and construction. The councils were seen as the embryonic form of the new society in the womb of the old. Therefore the basis of his strategy was to organise the workers and peasants in order both to wage a frontal attack against the state and to establish working class organisations as the foundations of a new culture. Through democratic participation in the management of the organisations, theoretical and technical skills would be acquired. Gramsci, like participatory democratic theorists, argued that learning occurred through participation itself.

Gramsci's ideas were partially a critique of the prevailing economism amongst the orthodox Marxists of the day. He expanded the concept of 'politics' to include economic, social, ideological and political factors. His concept of hegemony has created alternative possibilities for Marxists in their development of a theory and practice of transition from a capitalist state to a socialist one. These include widespread democratization of many aspects of social, political and economic life; the acceptance of community organization as an important aspect of the working class struggle; and the creation of democratic institutions where workers can obtain a 'ruling class consciousness' through praxis.

Gramsci's ideas continue to be reflected in contemporary theorising of the South African state and its transition. Hart (2013, p. 10) argues that Gramsci's notion of `passive revolution` is useful but, to be adequate to contemporary challenges, requires moving beyond 'with help from Fanon, Lefebvre and strands of feminist theory'. She notes that both Gramsci and Fanon have figured prominently at different moments in South African struggles – Fanon was an inspiration for Steve Biko and the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) in the 1970s (and again to the student movements of 2015 onwards). Gramsci's ideas helped fuel fierce struggles against the apartheid regime and racial capitalism in the 1980s. Hart (2013, p. 18) in fact argues that 'they share remarkable similarities and complementarities'. One of these is Fanon's emphasis on the imperative for working through and beyond taken-for-granted understandings of nationalism, which resonates closely with what Gramsci meant by the philosophy of praxis – 'namely the practices and processes of rendering fragmentary 'common sense' … more coherent, enabling new forms of critical practice and collective action'.

Hart (2013) draws on nearly 20 years of ethnographic research to describe what is happening in South Africa today, which she says exemplifies "an extreme but not exceptional embodiment of forces at play, in many other regions of the world: intensifying inequality alongside 'wageless life'; proliferating forms of protest and populist politics that move in different directions; and official efforts at containment ranging from liberal interventions targeting specific populations to increasingly common police brutality" (Backcover).

Hart (2013) describes in great detail community struggles over, for example, adequate water supply for daily living. She argues that local government has become *the* key site of systemic contradictions, which play out in everyday life – water, like many other resources is being 'outsourced' and privatised; it has become commodified so even politicians at the local level do not have direct control – it is difficult for local citizens to know to whom they should turn, or to whom they should make demands. This has the effect of limiting democratic participation of citizens. She quotes Sitas (Hart, p. 148) who argues how in KwaZulu Natal, popular democratic politics that accompanied the growth of the democratic trade union movements in the 1980s has given way to grassroots populism 'with serious authoritarian undertones'. She also refers (Hart, p. 173) to Neocosmos' argument that 'state politics has systematically de-politicised the people with emphasis being exclusively placed on managerialism (to deliver human rights), juridical expertise (to protect human rights) and education……'. In other words 'technicism has replaced active politics'.   Hart (p. 225) suggests that 'passive revolution' is a useful lens through which to bring aspects of Fanon's work to grasp the complementarities between Gramsci's philosophy of praxis and Fanon's efforts to point towards a new humanism. As she states, "Both Fanon and Gramsci were relentlessly focused on the processes through which subaltern classes might become active participants in the production of new forms of critical understanding and collective action; and both assigned a crucial role to intellectuals who are neither vanguards nor celebrants of subaltern wisdom, but engaged in mutual processes of transformation". Of

particular relevance to popular education, Hart (p. 228)   argues that "both Fanon and Gramsci envisaged an ongoing process of democratic and dialectical pedagogy, in which the educator must herself be educated".

With this conceptual backdrop, we turn now to the story of 'moments' of popular education in South Africa particularly in the 1970s and 1980s.

A story of popular education in South Africa

There is a long history of people's resistance to oppression and exploitation. Popular education initiatives cannot be separated from political conditions where local/global ideas and practices rise and fall. The history of systematic education initiatives in the search of an alternative has been an ongoing process albeit with interruptions, pauses, varying pulses and intensities, and different strands from liberation theology to Black Consciousness, from radical adult education to feminist education and workers' education. The first instance of trying to make accessible educational material, documented in this project, is the *Voice of Labour.* It was a publication to support the General Workers Union and a series of socialist groups, started in 1908. Worker education classes began with the formation of night schools by the International Socialist League (later the Communist Party of South Africa) in 1919. Later on, the struggle against apartheid was punctuated by moments such as the launch of the Defiance Campaign and the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) in 1952. In 1956, the first national SACTU school was convened, where young workers and organizers learnt from the experiences of veteran trade unionists such as Ray Alexander, John Nkadimeng and Eli Weinberg. Trade union education was linked to campaigns, such as the SACTU 1-Pound Campaign (SAHO, 2016). In the 1970s and 1980s, the struggle intensified and in 1985, the United Democratic Front launched the 'Forward People's Power' campaign. The struggle for an alternative education was an integral part of the struggle for a democratic future. In the early 1990s organisations and coalitions prepared themselves for negotiations and a democratic government. Coalitions such as the Women's National Coalition (WNC) were formally launched. The WNC brought together over 60 national organisations to draw up a Women's Charter to build a democratic society based on the principles of non-sexism and non-racism. It undertook education and organizing with thousands of women as part of its campaigning work. Popular education during the anti-apartheid struggle, was situated in an extra-ordinary movement of resistance, despite and because of political constraints, which enabled radical visions and radical education practices (see for example, Fester 2015).

As indicated above, there are many stories, moments and explosions of popular education in South Africa's history. This paper does not offer a full overview of the many popular education-inspired initiatives. Such an undertaking would go beyond the limits of one paper. Instead, we will focus on illustrative moments and initiatives, contrasting the 'heyday' of popular education from the late 1960s with its decline post-1994 and its re-emergence more recently in order to

elucidate contextual dynamics over time.

1970s and 1980s: Building tomorrow today

> Because of the sharpening of contradictions, the objective reality, it boiled over completely, it gave popular education a spark or the fires of popular education grew much further, they'd been there all the time because of the way in which the country lurched forward. There was some sense that there's a possibility of breaking the apartheid chains and creating a new society, and there was an alternative. And since popular education had been preaching this alternative for quite a while, it emerged much more strongly and much more visibly than in the past. (Community Activist, 28/05/2014)

In 1967 the radical University Christian Movement (UCM) was formed, with its founding conference held in Grahamstown. It was influenced by black theology and liberation theology. Within 2 years, the UCM established 30 branches at universities, training colleges and seminaries all over the country. At the same time, the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) began on campuses of black universities under the South African Students Organization (SASO). SASO was established in 1968 after some members of the University of Natal's Black Student Representative Council decided to break away from the liberal National Union of South African Students (NUSAS). In 1969 SASO had its inaugural conference at which Steve Biko was elected the first President. SASO organized community learning groups and study circles dedicated to political education. According to SASO's policy manifesto, black consciousness is "an attitude, a way of life" (cited in Naidoo, 2015, p.117). The emergence of the Black Consciousness Movement in 1969 marked a challenge to colonialist and apartheid conceptions of knowledge and education. Questions arose about the nature of formal education and its value for students and adult learners involved in the struggle against apartheid oppression. As Neville Alexander (1990, p. 106) writes, "Until 1969, approximately, most people in the liberation movement, most political activists, wanted, and said so in so many words, an education that was equal to the education of Whites ... And it didn't strike them until the Black Consciousness Movement came into being that that education was an education for domination, that it was a racist education that prepared people for an oppressive and exploitative position in society". According to Hadfield (2016), at the core of the BCM was a focus on liberation – enabling black people to fulfill their potential through self-reliance and a sense of dignity. Similarly, Gibson (1988) argues that it is about the creative subjectivity of black people against the force and brutality of the state.

The BCM's critique of education for domination grew in the 1970s and 1980s and converged with growing workers and student movements. In 1970, the UCM began receiving and circulating the works of Paulo Freire, notably *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Students were trained in Freire's methodology and

used it in community education and literacy classes. Two years later, Anne Hope facilitated a series of workshops with Steve Biko and 15 members of SASO, who were planning to run a national literacy programme based on Freire's approach of conscientisation (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IRTMJMcAhCQ). The literacy programme was part of the Black Community Programmes (BCP), in which Black Consciousness activists reached out to build black self-reliance. Mosibudi Mangena, a member of SASO's branch on the Reef, recalled his experience of the BCP, "No doubt [teaching literacy with Paulo Freire's methods] conscientized the Winterveld people, but they also conscientized us … There is a difference between knowing about oppression of our people on a theoretical level and actually getting involved with the community" (Hadfield, 2016, p. 39).

The national literacy programme did not take place as planned because leaders were arrested and banned – but the curriculum designed was later to become the basis of what is now both a local and an international programme, Training for Transformation. In 1972 and 1973 Christian students, black students and workers built new organisations, undertook new actions, tried out new teaching practices (some drawing on Freire), and wrote new publications e.g. Ravan Press, in the face of political repression and bannings (Hadfield, 2010).

One cultural activist/sociologist (04/04/2014) interviewed, was asked to identify key moments or events in the history of popular education in South Africa, and listed 1973, 1976, 1980, 1983, 1986 and 1990. He explained, further:

> 1973, with the explosion of strike activity that created the new trade union movements; symbolically very important and created the conditions for popular and class education in the country. 1976: the rebellion of the black youth when the ideas of emancipation started hitting the streets, the violence, new forms of organisation, new challenges. 1980: the formation the first time of a catalytic movement; the Community Action Support Group in Johannesburg … the coordinating of a lot of the emerging movements, whether they were Congress type or Black Consciousness type – everybody started getting together supporting worker strikes, anti-republic demonstrations, and a sense of organising the alternative. 1983: for me personally, the Dunlop play and strike, but also at the same time the formation of the UDF, approximately the same time. 1985-1986: civil war in KwaZulu-Natal, its beginning. In 1990: the unbanning of the organisations. I am saying these because these were significantly the moments where a new environment was being created.

The birth of a militant workers and student movement in the 1970s, saw mass student boycotts and workers undertaking mass strike action, with the proliferation of worker organizations and advice offices in solidarity, such as the Urban Training Project. Advice offices, often driven by white students and academics, played a solidarity role during and after the strike wave of 1973 (Vally, Mphutlane & Treat, 2013). The peak of strike activity saw an estimated 100 000 workers participate in a series of short but widespread industrial

strikes. Workers mobilised around the slogan "Ufilumuneti, Ufe Usadikiza!" ("The person is dead, but his spirit is alive!") (Lacom, 1989, p. 163). Ordinary workers were intervening, making history in the spontaneous strike waves of 1973. It was arguably the first time that masses of 'ordinary people' believed that an alternative was possible; and more so, that they would make that alternative possible through their own struggles (Grossman, 2000). A cultural activist (04/04/2014) involved in the trade union movement stated, with a Gramscian sensibility, "1973 it's this idea of democracy, grassroots democracy and it's both a practical necessity and vision that one needed to build a new type of trade union movement that was democratic, that was accountable, that was building tomorrow today type of slogan. So that was a very key idea in 1973."

Friedman (1987), amongst others, has written extensively about the rise of the workers' movement and independent trade unions in the 1970s. The rising workers' movement was influenced by Black Consciousness, ideas from the New Left (that rejected Stalinism) and the grassroots organizing of the Civil Rights Movement in the USA. In a syndicalist tradition, unions were seen as experiments in pre-figuring a future, socialist society. Students and radical intellectuals such as Rick Turner (1980), who put forward an argument for utopian thinking and practices of humaneness in the present as part of a rejection of capitalist values, aligned themselves with workers (Nash, 1999).

Vally (1994) suggests that trade unions were understood as "schools of labour" and "laboratories for democracy" in which workers could experiment with new ideas, arrive at understandings, and generate and develop collective practices. The labour movement was rooted in collective struggle and collective goals – the overarching goal of democracy, and within that, varying visions of socialism and freedom. Collective experience rather than information from books was the foundation for the generation of knowledge to be used in struggles and processes of grassroots organising. Events such as meetings, rallies, shop-steward councils and 'siyalalas' (all-night seminars/meetings) were sites for creating and disseminating education (Vally, Mphutlane & Treat, 2013). Boundaries between educator and learner were blurred as ordinary people possessed experiences of everyday life, which could be built on and shared as knowledge. A worker was both learner and teacher – thus the slogan "each one teach one" (Vally, 1994). The initiation of Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) national workshops saw the integration of workers' self-education and workers' cultural expressions. Importantly, education, culture and action were closely linked, illustrating both Gramsci and Freire's notion of praxis.

Ordinary trade union members gave expression to their experiences of exploitation and oppression in cultural productions (Sitas, 1986; von Kotze, 1988).   Culture became understood as a 'weapon' of struggle, with organisers and facilitators of writing, drama, poetry, art and music labelled as 'cultural workers', who saw their work as contributing to political struggle. According to a cultural activist (04/04/2014), in the 1980s, "you saw the best of creativity, the best of what was possible in the working class in terms of culture and education

coming together" – an assertion and reclaiming of the creative capacities and experiences of the working class.

The South African Committee for Higher Education Trust (SACHED), SACHED, founded in 1958, became the largest and arguably most influential education NGO in South Africa by the 1980s. SACHED was able to respond to the ongoing education crisis and political movement by constantly adjusting curricula to current and local dynamics. One systematic response was the formation of its more radical wing, the Labour and Community Committee (LACOM), which undertook educational work with community organisations and trade unions (Trimbur, 2009). It emerged out of a need to link labour and community struggles and to build democratic working class organizations. According to a community activist (28/05/2014) interviewed, "LACOM was in a sense following what was already happening".

According to former LACOM educators interviewed (08/10/2014), LACOM undertook educational work introducing systematic study of political economy concepts, organising skills, basic technical skills, African history, workers' history and campaign-linked education. Education was embedded in organisations and campaigns, such as the workers' May Day campaign, and seen as part of movement/organisation building. The collective process of education and knowledge production was emphasized as more important than individual self-advancement as workers and community members jointly planned workshops, building on people's experiences and existing knowledge. One illustration of this is that educational materials rarely carried a particular author's name: materials were collectively authored and owned. As a LACOM literacy educator interviewed (08/10/2014) said: "We didn't publish as individuals. We're a group. We're a collective. It was really strong. It was really important".

LACOM's internal culture aspired, in the Gramscian sense, to reflect the society it was part of creating. LACOM built and struggled for a culture of democracy, openness, debate, critique, transparency, non-sectarianism and collective ownership, which fed into the ways in which education was facilitated. LACOM's educational work was part of attempts to push beyond the present. For example, LACOM with the South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union (SACCAWU) pushed against deep-seated patriarchy within the trade union movement and society more broadly by undertaking educational work on gender relations and maternity leave. This was one of the first attempts to transform gender relations within workers' organisations. LACOM/SACCAWU (1991) published 'Sharing the Load: The struggle for gender equality, parental rights, and childcare.' In this way, LACOM tried to pre-figure the future by concretely imagining a society in which knowledge is not individually owned, in which patriarchy is overcome and solidarity is a cornerstone.

All interviewees agreed that LACOM was part of a longer and bigger radical tradition and vision for socialism and freedom: "people connected [to LACOM] had a vision of social society, an alternative society to the capitalized society ... a

vision of something very different" (community activist, 28/05/2014). Part of this vision was to overcome mental/manual divides and enable the expression of people's whole beings: their productive, creative, mental, emotional capacities. Expressions of this radical tradition, in organisational form and educational practices, are enabled in the context of a radical movement. The radical pulse of popular education that pushes beyond what is, is enabled when grounded in the struggles/movements that beat outside the workshop/meeting walls. As a community activist (28/05/2014) said, popular education and socialism, visions of an alternative, have a long history but catch fire in particular contexts: "Popular Education tradition comes much earlier, socialism earlier and so on. So it continues. And for me that tradition still continues in different ways, in different forms. But the intensity and heights are continually in dynamic with a whole lot of other forces." SACHED, and with it LACOM, closed its doors by the late 1990s, as part of what has been referred to as the "decimation of the NGO sector" (Aitchison, as cited in Trimbur, 2009, p. 158).

'People's Education for People's Power'

In 1985 the United Democratic Front (UDF), a broad alliance of African National Congress (ANC) oriented community and worker organisations, launched the 'Forward People's Power' campaign. This was a period of mass stay-aways of hundreds of thousands of workers and students and grew in the late 1980s to stay-aways involving millions of workers, youth and communities. The struggle for an alternative education was part of the struggle for a democratic future. 'People's Education for People's Power' emerged as a concept, vision and programme of action out of the education crisis. People's Education can be described as "a deliberate attempt to move away from reactive protests around education to develop a counter-hegemonic education strategy, to contribute to laying a basis for a future, post-apartheid South Africa" (Kruss, 1988, p. 8). People's Education was based on a rejection of Apartheid education epitomized in the ongoing school boycotts of 1984/5, but it moved further to envision education for the majority of the people – students, parents, teachers and workers – and attempted to build that vision in the present. According to Kruss (1988, p. 9) "Students, teachers, and parents began to question what a different, alternative education system would be like. What would be its underlying principles? What would be its method and content?" People's Education aimed to prepare people for full participation in a democratic society, build democratic organisations to struggle for People's Power and deepen and develop `revolutionary organization`. It aimed to instill particular values necessary for building an alternative society, such as co-operation, solidarity, creativity, critical thinking, active participation and democracy. The movement of People's Education tried to inculcate these values in the present and undertook projects to rewrite curricula based on these values and in the interests of the majority of the people.

The tide of political movements and resistance enabled the mushrooming and explosion of ideas, organizations, actions – taking risks and searching and

pushing beyond the present. In this ferment, new creative, courageous ideas emerged: "We are learning. We are finding that there are many things that we can do. We are sharing our strength", (ILRIG/Workers of the Vineyard, Townhouse and Spurs, 1989, p. 15). As the anti-apartheid movement grew stronger, ideas and practices of accountability, participation, report back, recall and democratic control became part of building an alternative, democratic and socialist society within the present. Voices spoke loudly (through multiple means) of alternatives; asserting and valorizing their own knowledge and experiences as the basis for an alternative future. These processes were understood as deeply educational (Baskin, 1991). It was a period in which people grew and explored: "workers searched memory, each other, history, the world, political texts, for ideas and knowledge, bringing everything into their intellectual embrace" (Cooper, Andrews, Grossman & Vally, 2002, p. 119-120).

Nonetheless, the politics, processes and practices of collectivism, within popular education and the anti-apartheid movement, were not universal and ever-present – they were constantly struggled and fought for. Reflecting on mass meetings, a feminist educator (28/04/2014) stated that education practices were sometimes undemocratic:

> If you really wanted people to, firstly, learn something and to participate and have their voices heard, you would do it completely differently. You would use different sorts of processes, different sorts of methodologies. But to stand there preaching at people for two, three, four hours at a time – ... the messages you were sending is that, usually it's men, but not only men, stand up and tell you what to think and what to do ... So whenever I could influence things I would try to say, so what are we trying to do here? And try to design things in a way which would firstly be more playful, and allow people to bring their whole selves into this space as opposed to only their heads.

Whilst the political conditions enabled the innovative, bold, courageous, democratic political acts and popular education activities, the conditions also undermined them. The intensity of repression bred divisions, mistrust and secrecy. As much as forging solidarity and unity, the necessity for secrecy also encouraged authoritarianism in organisations. Political/ideological differences entailed divergent visions for the future. While the identification of a common overarching enemy united people and organizations on the ground, in struggle, there was also mistrust and divisions. The moments zoomed in on, threw up flashes – sometimes prolonged and sustained – of an alternative that interrupted the present: "hope is active – we exercise agency, piercing through time by seeing the alternatives, the possibilities available to us in moving beyond a particular limit situation" (Jacobs, 2005, p. 793). Popular education is constrained or enabled by the political situation of its time, responding to and at times pushing beyond. The ideas of Freire, Gramsci, Fanon, circulated and influenced understandings of organizing, politics and pedagogy – means and ends were at times seen as co-terminous.

1994: Tensions, contradictions and diminishing collective hope

> It's clear that popular education in the 1980s rode on the back of the popular
> movement, and as that movement declined so did the popular education.
> (Worker educator, 14/04/2014)

The 1994 political transition process saw shifts in popular education, as popular
education continued in the absence of a strong popular movement on the
ground. The main liberation movement became the government. The radical
purpose, rooted in collectivism, became increasingly diluted and polluted. All
activists interviewed stated that there was a decline in popular education
programmes and initiatives from 1994 as most efforts went to build the new
democratic society. This movement as described by Neocosmos (2011, p.385)
was "from an emancipatory (non-identitarian) conception founded on popular
agency in the 1980s to a chauvinistic one based on victimhood in the 2000s".
Neocosmos (2011) argues that 'there is little doubt that this political change
resulted from the hegemony of state politics from 1990 onwards, very much
along the lines outlined by Fanon from an earlier period'. Education came to
reinforce the neoliberal state agenda through a limited, reductive approach to
education. Education, understood through human capital theory, reduces
learning to plugging in 'skills-deficits' for the market economy, as opposed to "a
broader purpose for education that is linked to a tradition based on social
justice and democratic citizenship" (Vally & Motala, 2014 p. X).

Participants at a national popular education workshop in 2014 asserted that
1994 was a turning point, when popular education waned. Activist/educators
contested that the rise of neo-liberalism 'dirtied the river of popular education',
and that in the absence of a unifying struggle, 'popular education branched off
into a small tributary, with neoliberalism itself as the main driving force'.
Workshop participants were sympathetic to the view that in 2014, we 'stand at
the delta of deceit: this is marked by individualism and individual interests, it is
also manifest in acts of violence such as Marikana. The river is so polluted that
it is dangerous to fish in it!' (National Popular Education Development
Workshop report, 2014).

For many struggle activists, there was a tension. It became a dilemma reflected
in debates on how to position oneself in relation to the new ANC government
and how to relate to the system. A cultural activist/sociologist (04/04/2014)
interviewed, explained:

> When you start to create a society of the 'new' and then immediately there's a
> polarisation of people who want to work in the system, to create the system, to
> create new ways the system operates, and people who are left with the people
> outside that – and because of this exclusion, inclusion, inequalities, and so on,

there are people inside and outside.

Thus the mid-1990s were described as a confused and contradictory period when many activists and educators were unclear as to how to support a democratically elected government and yet simultaneously be critical of it. A community activist (28/05/2014) said there was resistance to people wanting to continue popular education; people were told "look, liberation has been achieved" and "the more subversive or counter-hegemonic work disappeared" (feminist educator, 28/04/2014).

Those interviewed identified the dissonance between the notion of 'the people shall govern', for which they had struggled, and the reality which is well described by Neocosmos, as one where, unsurprisingly, popular education practices were not encouraged: "If I think of all the work in the literacy organisations and the language and the stuff; fantastic work was never taken up by the state into the adult night schools. All the SACHED work was not built on," (feminist educator, 28/04/2014). Working outside of the state, interviewees pointed to the difficulties of undertaking education/activist work in the context of neo-liberalism and considerable funding cuts for progressive projects, which led to the demise of many community-based organisations and NGOs involved in educational activities, and thus to a decline in popular education in the 1990s. Further, a feminist educator claimed that funding was sometimes denied to organisations that did not tow the ruling party's line.

The democratic South Africa was born at a time, which is described by Hart (2013, p. 156) as simultaneous processes of de-nationalisation and re-nationalisation. 'De-nationalisation' she argues, encompasses the terms on which heavily concentrated corporate capital re-engaged with the increasingly financialised global economy starting in the early 1990s, and the ways these forces drive increasing inequality and the generation of surplus populations. 'Re-nationalisation' relate to the ways the post-apartheid nation came to be produced. Hart and Neocosmos describe these processes differently, but both point to the uneven ways in which citizenship is manifest. The middle classes have `rights` and the subaltern classes have 'entitlements' – 'rights' suggests a core commitment to legal processes, the latter does not. Neocosmos (2014, p. 152) summarises state politics as 'a politics concerned with maintaining divisions, hierarchies and boundaries'. It is not one that embraces 'people's power' in the full sense of the term – nor popular education.

It is therefore to be expected, given the predominance of neo-liberal economics, that a key tension emerged post-1994 between collectivism and individualism. Education came to be framed within a human capital paradigm, which sees education as an individual or private good. So for example, the accreditation of skills and knowledge, as part of the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), introduced in the mid-1990s, was seen to potentially undermine the principle and politics of collectivism as it had been practised, by a process that individually categorises, certifies and divides workers. At a 2013 Development Institute for Training, Support and Education for Labour (Ditsela) Conference

on popular education, a South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) official stated that "workers have the right to have their skills validated ... accreditation makes their skills real" (Ditsela conference, 2013). This begs the questions, validation by whom and for what purpose? In the context of the erosion of strong workers and popular movements, and of internal radical education, recognition by and for a worker's collective (such as a general meeting) is not valued as previously.

According to Cooper et al. (2002, p. 123), worker education shifted from "a tradition in which the dominant self-conception of workers' engagement with their own learning involved images of worker-led choirs, plays and poetry — aimed at entrenching the self-consciousness of the working class as a force capable of demanding progressive change in the interests of the oppressed — new images came to dominate, of individual employees earning certificates and filling out paperwork in pursuit of their own advancement". Similarly, a literacy activist (08/10/2014) reflected, "If you look just at the field of adult education there was a strong movement around adult education. And there was a strong tradition wanting to link adult literacy work to political mobilization and to development. And I think that tradition died for a number of years ... it became a whole battle around certification and formalization, and standards. The whole emphasis on a link between education and organization died and then it became an individual credentialing thing." Popular education for social mobilization was increasingly displaced by education for individual social mobility.

Tensions arose and arise between collective learning, solutions and visions, and individual certification, development and advancement for private ends, in the absence of a movement. This is not an argument against personal development and growth, nor that they are mutually exclusive, – but that hope/utopian thinking reduced to private ends, when it is stuck in the dominant logic of the market, is stripped of its radical possibility. As Marcel (1951, 10) writes, "Hope is only possible on the level of the us ... it does not exist on the level of the solitary ego, self-hypnotised and concentrating on exclusively individual aims. Thus it implies that we must not confuse hope and ambition." Further key tensions are elaborated in the paper 'Navigating our way: A compass for popular educators' (Von Kotze, Walters & Luckett, 2016).

If popular education is contingent upon its context, what are the implications for popular educators inside and outside of social and political movements? A worker educator (15/04/2014) reflected on the balance of forces: "I think on the macro level of what kind of radical education is appropriate for this time, given all the balance of forces and states of organisation and what people are ready and right for, I don't have answers for that; it is very contingent ... so much of it is about a political context – I'm not taking responsibility away from us". This does not necessarily mean that popular educators can only do radical education work under certain contexts. One can continuously cultivate the possibility of pushing beyond the present; hope reaches out from its context, but is not bound by it. Popular education thrives on the tensions in any particular moment as tensions and contradictions make visible the status quo and what appears to be

normal, opening up possibilities to experiment and move beyond the present context.

The heart of popular education beating in the cracks and crevices

Despite the decline in popular education, as described above, popular education continues to exist in the cracks and crevices in the search for an alternative society. Von Kotze, Walters and Luckett (2016) capture some of the shifts and expressions of popular education in South Africa by proposing a compass which outlines four 'types' of popular education, without being discrete categories: popular education for empowerment, popular education for systems change, issue-based popular education, and popular education for emancipation. These types can be seen manifested in the shifts and changes in popular education since 1994, with emancipatory practices existing in the cracks and crevices.

From 1998 onwards, we saw the rise (and fall some years later) of social movements as well as a range of new NGOs which continued old traditions of popular education; there were also new ones that reflect the shift towards neo-liberal politics.   The range of organizational profiles featured on the Popular Education website (www.populareducation.co.za) illustrates these divergent emerging practices.

Reflecting the trend of a shift towards individualization, much popular education now targets primarily the individual, believing, that 'development begins with self'. The underlying assumption is that change in the individual will translate into action directed at collectives and connect individual healing and development to collective struggles. As one feminist educator (28/04/2014) describes:

> If people are going to be able to be agents in their own world, they need a sense of self, and that might come in different forms. Some of it might be able to be responded to in popular education and some will need deep therapy and whatever else they need. Because without it you just get buffeted … by which ever wind is blowing. And if you don't recognise your own hurt and your own pain and your own stuff that you've been through and give yourself a break, allow yourself to acknowledge what I need to work on in order to, in a way, feel more confident.

Another educator explains that personal change may precede or coincide with collective action but that the first real hurdle is "to get people to recognize that your individual lived experiences, whatever issues, are not individual problems but common collective problems" (Labour rights activist, 27/09/2013).

In a different space, some popular education practitioners continue to put pressure on institutions from within, attempting to change policies, or keeping radical agendas and foci alive within what might otherwise be conservative institutions, such as universities.

Social movements and campaigns formed another key development post-1994. In 1998, the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), a social movement, was launched. TAC and other social movements and campaigns mostly undertook issue-based education, pushing against the erosion of living and working conditions. Other more recent examples include Equal Education and the Right to Know Campaign. Abahlali baseMjondolo took a more comprehensive approach to education, asserting the idea of struggle as a school and the combination of theory and practice in the 'University of Abahali': "The learning we talk about is always a learning that is put into practice. At the same moment of learning, we apply it. To share it and apply it is what makes it a living learning. This is not an education to make individuals better in their individual jobs and careers – it is with the people." (Figlan, Mavuso, Ngema, Nsibande, Sibisi & Zikode, 2009, p. 48). In Neocosmos' view (2011), it is not surprising that Abahlali has experienced the full force of a repressive state within 'uncivil society', as it refuses to kowtow to 'the victimhood of human rights discourse'. It has stressed its self-organisation, internal democracy and an axiom of equality. Its alternative politics has resulted in ongoing police brutality, a campaign of vilification and attack by the local state.

Currently, many social action groups engage in 'direct action' and run education sessions as part of campaigns: this is education for social mobilization and usually issue-based education.   Their purpose is usually to address an immediate short-term issue that has arisen within specific communities or constituencies, for example, 'The Right2Know'. The message is generally straight-forward, unambiguous. The education is an integral component of mobilization and often does not involve a deeper study of the underlying causes of current issues being addressed. The image that popular education for mobilisation conjures is that of a loud-hailer: calling people to join the struggle. The hope that sustains action is firstly, winning, and secondly, broader changes that may flow from victory and collective confidence.

Other NGOs, such as the Co-operative and Policy Alternative Centre (COPAC) and Workers' World Media Productions (WWMP) mobilise popular education to keep a radical vision alive. In 1999, the Khanya Annual Winter School was launched, to assist social movements, communities and labour in responding to globalization, including equipping activists with theoretical and organisational skills. Similarly, the International Labour Resource and Information Group (ILRIG) started an annual Globalisation School in 2002, which aims to build strong working class organisation to develop alternatives to the neo-liberal agenda. COPAC aspires to build 'a cooperative movement in South Africa and promoting alternatives to capitalism that meet the needs of workers and the poor'. COPAC's (2015) vision is "Building human solidarity to sustain life", based on values and principles counter to the logic of the market, such as solidarity, sharing, mutual care, democratic control, collective agency, creativity, and environmental conservation (interview, 02/10/2013). Similarly, in its counter-hegemonic practices, the Community Monitors School links education and research to building community organisation/organizing and to community action in order to achieve socio-economic and environmental justice

for communities affected by profit-making corporations. The intention of building organisation and organising is partly a response to the lack of strong working class organisation post-1994, especially in rural areas, and to the dominance of hierarchical and bureaucratic forms of organization. Community Monitors attempts to build an alternative idea of organisation/organising, which focuses on activity (not structure), continuous learning and develops the confidence, creativities and potentialities of all involved (interview, 01/10/2013). An organisation such as Gender at Work (*http://www.genderatwork.org/OurWork/OurApproach/GWFramework*) utilizes a holistic body, mind, spirit focus. Purpose and process (the 'what' and 'how' of the work) are closely inter-related. This includes investigating and challenging the patriarchal binaries of mind vs. body, private vs. public, nature vs. man. Underlying the work is an analysis of common assumptions – particularly with regard to the quality of daily interactions / relationships, building egalitarian relations in the present. It is important to note that whilst some NGOs are cultivating popular education pedagogy, and connecting their work to struggles on the ground, the NGO form of organisation is very different to organisations of mass struggle in the 1970s and 1980s, and in the current context, are not accountable to mass democratic movements. Thus there are limitations to democratic possibilities, and at times, NGOs can shift into vanguardist, authoritarian approaches.

Within different political orientations or trends, popular education continues to be part of building alternatives. Critical to these practices is building ethical relations and a particular sensibility towards the world which guides practices in varying contexts and conditions of struggle. Popular educators carry an aspiration to build ethical relations in the present, regardless of the context. As a children's rights activist/educator (16/05/2014) said, "It is not enough to speak about the values that underpin an alternative society. A popular educator must be a living example of the new socialist person through even the smallest everyday interactions." It is work that deals with our whole beings and our different life journeys. A feminist educator (28/04/2014) said, "It's not a small matter to work with people's sense of well-being and their sense of dignity and respecting themselves. And different people will be at different stages along the trail." She describes popular education as allowing and encouraging people to bring their whole selves into spaces – encouraging people to participate as fully as they can, with their heads, hearts and their hands, in whatever contexts and situations people find themselves. Often it is about disrupting spaces to make them more heartfelt, more equal and interactive, more playful and creative: "It's encouragement of the dignity and respect that comes with the challenging of the different hierarchies of power within a given context. And it might look very different and you might have very different opportunities at different times."

Popular educators push for this in a variety of spaces – the taxi, train, community meeting, trade union, social movement, university meeting etc. People and organisations are currently struggling for these spaces in the multiple forums and fields they occupy from the worker, feminist educator/activist calling out patriarchy in her organization, to the community

activist building solidarity against gender-based violence in her community, to
the popular educator who keeps asking why and so what, encouraging critical
consciousness. An educator activist interacts with the others by encouraging,
probing, pushing and expanding people's horizons:

> A sensibility; it's a way of being in the world … we are all living in extreme – well,
> some people in much more constrained circumstances than others, so how do I
> analyse? If I'm in a relationship with someone who's beating me up, what do I do
> about that? – as micro as that might be or in an organisation like a university.
> People may be becoming authoritarian so what am I going to do about it? How do
> we analyse processes? It's about a sensibility, which encourages the striving for
> social justice together with others. My liberation is tied into the liberation of
> others – I am invested personally and politically. (Feminist educator,
> 28/04/2014)

Public protest is at a high level in South Africa. During the 2004/5 financial year
about 6000 protests were officially recorded and in 2009 the number was
reported to be 10 times higher than in 2004 (Duncan 2016). As Neocosmos
(2011) reports, the politics of these protests are often about community interests
(rights and 'service delivery') and many are led by ANC members, so they rarely
adhere to an axiom of political equality. They have been described as being like
'fireworks displays' – they make a lot of noise and catch attention, but do not
necessarily focus on building organisation and using dialectical pedagogy to
understand the underlying causes of the problems and to create visions for
alternative futures.

Student activism reignited across the country in 2015 and morphed into the
#FeesMustFall movement and the related #OutsourcingMustFall/
#EndOutsourcing of workers on university campuses. There has been a great
deal written in the popular and academic press (see for example Booysen, 2016)
about these movements as they continue. The sources of the movements are
similar to those described by Hart (2013) at local government level; they arise
from systemic contradictions whereby students and workers are increasingly
forced to carry the burden of reduced funding from the state, as higher
education is seen as 'a private good'. The South African tertiary education
system has followed international processes of commodification of knowledge
and privatization of the public sector, instituting the "market university". In an
extremely polarized society, access to, and more especially, graduation rates in
tertiary education are very low for the majority of the black population.
Inequality is further entrenched in university employment relations through the
exploitation of outsourced workers (Luckett & Pontarelli, 2016).

The social movement learning and popular education strategies that fuel the
student and worker protests are still to be studied, but it is clear that the social
movements have influenced discussions in the broader society about funding
and purposes of education in general, including higher education. Within the
movements, amongst participants, there are a number of approaches used,

some more democratic and inclusive than others. Against authoritarian and patriarchal practices, attempts were made, particularly in situations of university occupations, to deepen democratic and pedagogical processes. Fanon's writings, with varied interpretations, have been widely referenced and pedagogical spaces have at times been nurtured where the theory and practice of 'decolonized education' has been a key focus. Solidarity across divisions was built, the most significant being between students and workers (which has existed previously but to a more limited extent).

One worker leader at the Witswatersrand University reflected on the process of coming together and combination of theory and action, "We learned that we have to join forces. When we are united we are strong. And we also have to have lots of meetings so we can have proper discussions about our struggles and how to come together to find common goals and solutions. We also took action." When asked to reflect on how she envisages an ideal university, she responded, "It is a place where we are free. Where all the workers and the students are free. I like what is happening now with all the struggles that have brought us together. It is not like before, when we just used to walk past each other … It is whereby we know each other as the university community. We communicate. We get together, not only when we are protesting. We should be able to get together … We also want to be able to get an education, not just be staff or workers. We want to be able to do all things." (Luckett & Mzobe, 2016, p. 97-98). This searching for community and the full expression of one's potentialities and humanity extends beyond the perimetres of the university, building hope for a different future. In the coming months it will be important to see if solidarity is built beyond the borders of the university, drawing on lessons from the Black Community Programmes of the BCM, whereby students learnt the necessity of participatory practices and "working with, not for people" in black communities (Hadfield, 2016).

Conclusion

By bringing to the fore histories of struggle and practices of radical education we are able to reconnect past practices with the present, strengthening the hope in the present for the future. This paper has highlighted the rich history of popular education in South Africa, as well as its rootedness in the socio-political context. It has noted that popular eduaction is shaped by the ebbs and flows of history and political struggle. However, popular education cannot be reduced to its context. This paper has tried to show moments and practices in which popular education initiatives push against and beyond the present. As such, whilst many argue that there has been a demise in popular education since 1994, this paper demonstrates that popular education continues to exist in the cracks and crevices, in the search for the 'not yet'. A focus on imagination, imagining beyond and the hope in the cracks, serves as an 'antidote to alienation and cynicism'; it offers 'an affirmation of life, a reawakening of the human spirit and of collective goodwill' (Mackinnon, 2004, p. viii). We cannot simply forget and escape what is, we can only consciously and willfully go beyond.

As a renewed workers' and student movement is regrouping and growing in response to the ANC's neo-liberal economic policies, the Marikana massacre, continued structural racism and destruction of the planet, popular education in South Africa can and must play a role, in contributing to building this movement, imagining and naming an-other world. (Von Kotze & Walters, 2017) This is a long-term commitment. As a worker educator (15/04/2014) stated, the solution lies "in a collective solution … allowing people to see things differently, to imagine a different future". This requires boldness in naming the enemy and openness in searching for a collective, common vision. On-going processes of democratic and dialectical pedagogy and organising are integral to these processes.   Looking to the past and the flashes of hope that pierce through homogenous capitalist time, we do not have to start from scratch: "There is a legacy which has not yet become, tied to struggle for a future which has not yet become. Millions of ordinary workers collectively laid the basis for that legacy, made that hope possible by doing what yesterday had seemed impossible. In that fact is surely the core of the hope of the future." (Grossman, 2000)

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