

Notes on the work and legacy of Howard Richards

By Gert van der Westhuizen, D.Ed.

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These notes are based on more than 10 years of collaborative work, academic engagements, my participation with Howard on research and academic /staff development work, and community engagement work through the Unboundedacademy.org.

This submission is by Gert van der Westhuizen, emeritus professor of Education at the University of Johannesburg, Academic Advisor to the Department of Higher Education/University of Johannesburg (UJ) Future Professors Programme, Expert Consultant for National Research Foundation rating and funding grant applications at the University of South Africa, supervisor and research associate to the SARCHI Chair on Post Secondary Teaching and Learning at UJ, and mentor of lecturers at the University of Zululand in the NGAP programme.

Howard Richards' presentations and writings

Howard's writings have been, and still are widely read in South Africa. These include – *#Moral (and ethical) realism* (), and *#Moral Education for Structural Change* () – encouraging readers to consider purpose of education and research in terms of fostering the general good of humanity and the environment.

Foci of workshops with students and academics have included education and structural understanding, values associated with pro-social intentions, ethics of care, dialogicality in education, cognitive justice, identity development and belonging, culture shift and leadership, and philosophies and theories of Levinas, Derrida, Buber, Dewey, Kohlberg, Bakhtin among others.

Exemplary academic work in South Africa

Noting extensive work with Catherine Odora Hoppers at Unisa in Development Education

Staff development, supervision sessions with PhD students, keynote speaker at university conferences and webinars.

>2022 Short Learning Programme developed under the leadership of Howard Richards: *#Ethical and Unbounded Organization Solutions to Economic, Political, Ecological and Social problems*

Curriculum of the short learning programme - Dialogues covering topics of

First: Unbounded organization, Moral reasoning and African Ethics

Second: The Ethics of Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu

Third: Transformation of ethical practice; reflections on experiences in education and community development

Fourth: Ethical solutions to the Fiscal Crisis of the State

Fifth: The politics of human interaction: how conversations are used to dominate, exclude and construct realities

Six: Spiritual cures for economic loss with special attention to land reform, unemployment and rural life.

Webinar presentations

>4 May 2023 UJ/Unbounded Academy Webinar on

#Practicing Ethical leadership during societal crises - How can we live with purpose and dignity through societal crises

>5 August 5, 2022 Unbounded Academy presentations at UJ

Ethical and unbounded leadership – hosted by prof Freddie Crous, Department of Industrial Psychology and People Management

>UJ Seminar on Tipping points in the stopping the culture of violence

18 July 2023 – with Howard's presentation on *how violence is caused by massively producing humiliation by the labor market, and how the creation of dignified livelihoods* is a significant solution. His suggestions are about unbounded organization and care ethics for dignified livelihoods. Stopping violence in everyday lives is about meaning and "living for something", sharing surplus, and teaching ethics deliberately. [Howard's thoughts have been

extended in the Transcend Media Editorial on “Why more upstream Care Ethics are badly needed”, 10 July 2023.]

Milestone texts

Texts impacting educational work in SA include

- >Rethinking thinking, with Catherine Odora Hoppers
- >Economic theory and community development, with Gavin Andersson
- >Identity as motivation
- >Moral Education for structural change
- >several others – see Annotated Bibliography

Change and development methodologies

Howard has demonstrated that education as transformation and identity change work, can best be affected by means of

- >Morally oriented methodologies – pursuing the general good of humanity and nature
- >What works philosophy
- >Tattonage – think your path, feel your way, learning by trying out
- >Activity-based learning
- >Transformative dialogues
- >Pro-social attitudes
- >Ethics of solidarity

Howard's work in the Unboundedacademy.org

ALL of his work is immeasurable!!!

He was the *initiator, founding member* with Gavin Andersson, Magnus Haavelsrud, and Gert van der Westhuizen, and the leader in the development of the Unbounded Academy (UA) in terms of standing, focus, content, vision.

As co-founder of the UA, he contributed towards organising, networking, content curation, through the *Reading group One*, and UA initiated *webinars*.

For him, the UA is a platform for dialogue, giving ideas away, changing paradigms, with confidence in the message that unbounded thinking can change the world; believing in solutions, attracting audiences, commitment to this cause.

>Reading group topics included topics of Ethics, of Rurality, critical realism.

>He wrote several pieces *commenting on current events in hisotrical perspective*, for example the conversation between the mouse and Cyril Ramaphosa on the economic policy of the government.

>He described the UA as an authentic knowledge building network, conversations platform, with the mission to promote paradigm shifts, a place for young people, for activist academics.

Howards views about UA

... a calling to fulifill a need

...we have our time to contribut to the necessary education, and thus the salvation of our fellow human beings...

...we exist to communicate a different worldview...we are giving ideas away and striking up conversations with anyone who responds...

...we do have a message expressed in many ideas...

UA in a place now to grow, continuing Howard's legacy...

Conclusion

I have witnessed Howard Richards' teaching, inspiring, inviting, conversing, confronting, pushing, arguing, writing and rewriting, trying out ideas, suggesting alternatives – always succinctly, convincingly, well-argued, philosophically grounded.

He is a thought leader, inspirational author, encourager of challenging dialogues, opening up perspectives!

ON A PERSONAL NOTE

With Howard and his granddaughter Justine dinners with my wife Leonie. We had good conversations filled with loving kindness!

Howard was my Mentor and helped me make decisions about working as academic and retired professor, and I quote him in my interactions with people, around me:

This is what my Mentor Howard Richards said: DO WHAT IS IMPORTANT!

With fond memories and commitment to grow the Unboundedacademy with all concerned.

And with commitment to contribute to and coordinate the Festschrift on the life and work of Howard Richards – email please to westgvdw@gmail.com.

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