Re-imagining democratic citizenship education: Towards a culture of compassionate responsibility

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Benhabib (2002:134) maintains that, in order for individuals to become democratic citizens they need to be exposed to at least three inter-related elements: collective identity, privileges of membership, and social rights and benefits. Through exposure to these three inter-related items it is hoped that, by means of the teaching and learning of cultural, linguistic and religious commonalities and differences, a participatory climate of deliberation will emerge in which, ultimately, the rights of all people are recognised and respected (Waghid, 2010:198-199). After a decade of implementing liberal conceptions of democratic citizenship education in public schools in South Africa, questions need to be asked about its credibility and success. We commence this article by analysing the Department of Basic Education's (DoBE, 2011) recently produced Building a culture of responsibility and humanity in our schools: A guide for teachers – a practical guide for teachers that can hopefully engender democratic citizenship education in public schools. Thereafter, in reference to a post-graduate teacher training programme at a South African university, we argue for a renewed and enhanced version of democratic citizenship education.

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A guide for teachers of citizens

The Department of Basic Education's (DoBE, 2011) recently produced *Building a culture of responsibility and humanity in our schools: A guide for teachers* – a practical guide for teachers that can hopefully engender democratic citizenship education in public schools. That is, it can be assumed that the democratic citizenship education agenda in South Africa perhaps only partially succeeded in bringing about meaningful change in public schools. Hence, a 'practical guide' is thought to be apposite to perhaps address some of the difficulties teachers had, in particular in implementing the existing democratic citizenship education agenda. And, since the new 'practical guide' actually provides examples of:

> *... how a rights and responsibilities based culture can be built into school and classroom management ... [and that it] further gives teachers practical examples across a number of learning areas on how to develop a variety of lessons around rights, responsibilities and values as individuals and as citizens in a democracy (DoBE, 2011:iii),*

it would not be unreasonable to claim that democratic citizenship education in South Africa has not as yet achieved favourable results, as initially envisaged by policy makers.

At face value, the practical guide is a well organised, concept driven and colourful (user friendly) text using many examples of how to acquaint learners with terms and ideas in and about harnessing "responsibility and humanity". It seems as if the practical guide is meant to make learners understand, clarify and enact ideas associated with cultivating a liberal form of democratic citizenship education. Quite sophisticatedly, it seems to be presented as a practical guide that aims to guide learners in engaging in activities in and about democratic citizenship education. Yet, it does not seem to come up with plausible explanations and ways for how mechanical iterations and blind patriotism can be avoided, and for safety to be responsibly ensured at schools. Instead, the examples and explanations about these pertinent issues

seem to further compound the polemic about inculcating in learners a commitment towards responsibility and humanity. Let us explain.

First, democratic iterations are explained through the use of terms such as ‘dialogue’, ‘debate’, ‘negotiation’ and ‘discussion’. In fact, the guide’s own explanation of dialogue seems to be biased towards reaching ‘agreement’: “… an exchange of ideas and opinions on a particular issue, esp. [sic] a religious or political issue with a view to reaching an amicable agreement or settlement” (DoBE, 2011:16). The practical guide not only gives a parochial understanding of dialogue, but also seems to conflate the concept with other concepts, such as debate, negotiation and discussion. Considering the aforementioned explanation of dialogue, the practical guide introduces quite mechanically how learners should engage with one another, coming up with very prescriptive and anticipated prompts with the aim, of course, to make learners agree on pedagogical issues. In this sense, the practical guide does not do much to reduce or attend to the conceptual misinterpretation of democratic iterations. If it really wants to serve the purpose of a guide, it needs to couch dialogue in a practical way by making suggestions as to what learners might do or what conditions ought to be in place, without casting dialogue as some mechanical exercise that should make learners reach agreement or a settlement. Of course, dialogue is not the same as debate, discussion and negotiation. If one debates and has a discussion, the outcome is not always an inevitable agreement. Sometimes people debate and discuss issues with others without an agreement being reached, which does not make the dialogue superfluous. Similarly, agreement cannot be a precondition for dialogue, for that would mark the end of dialogue, but rather is an outcome of dialogue. If one engages with someone with the aim of reaching some kind of agreement, the possibility exists that the agreement might be plausible but, equally, also contrived, which would possibly render the consensus and even the dialogue a mechanical procedure. Instead, dialogue should be presented as a practice that allows learners to open up to one another with the possibility that they (learners) might even come to some kind of disagreement among themselves. The problem with a mechanical form of dialogue is that the possibility exists that the dialogue be ‘policed’ by teachers, who would want to see that an agreement is attained. In this way, learning to talk back might even be curtailed, because the possibility exists that one’s aspirations to be heard might prematurely be stunted because of an obligation to reach agreement.

Secondly, the practical guide depicts a notion of ‘storytelling’ that borders on the edge of breeding dogmatism in schools. In fact, an allegiance to uphold national symbols patriotically, yet blindly, might become exacerbated through the practical guide’s insistence that teachers tell imaginary stories and that learners listen to their stories. It is one thing to narrate a story to give learners insights into the heroic lived experiences of individuals with the aim of encouraging them, through listening, to emulate such heroic examples. However, it is another thing how the story is, in fact, narrated. Teachers can convey moral lessons through storytelling, but it is the way in which the story is told that potentially stifles its promise. If learners are just being told stories, the possibility exists that they might be denied opportunities to critically evaluate stories, especially heroic ones. Such forms of listening could result in learners not challenging the portrayal of heroic characters, which could lead to them accepting things blindly. (How many children heroically worship the Hulk movie character without even beginning to problematize his use of excessive physical power when provoked to anger?) It could be that, through storytelling, learners actually develop a kind of passivity whereby they merely endorse heroic stories without critically disrupting the storylines. This potentially makes storytelling a debilitating pedagogical activity, especially when learners accept things blindly without questioning the underlying assumptions of the stories. Simply put, the practical guide seems to prepare learners to accept things more dogmatically, thus undermining its intention to engage them or “to capture their (learners’) imagination” (DoBE, 2011:44). And, if this happens (that is, stories being told in a way that actually blinds learners’ critical judgments), the fact that children are learning to become blind patriots might become of real concern for the DoBE and the critical implementation of its democratic citizenship education programme.

Thirdly, the practical guide’s focus on teaching learners to become proponents of safety and security in schools is linked to producing both safe schools and classrooms, and environments where they (the learners) live. And the guide hopes to achieve this through teaching learners how to deal with gangsterism

and bullying. There is nothing pernicious about teaching learners about the ills of the gangsterism and bullying that are operative in schools. However, it seems to be an ambitious demand that learners should become responsible for ensuring that the environments in which they live should be safe and secure, and free from gangsters and bullies. Of course, we are not suggesting that learners should not be taught to distance themselves from gang activity and bullying, however, it is rather overwhelming and demanding to expect of learners to be responsible to prevent unsafety and insecurity in their communities. This is expecting too much of schools and learners, and too little of the state police and security. It cannot be the learners' responsibility to ensure safe schools (although admittedly some learners do become caught up in gang-related activity). Rather, the government and its agencies for security and safety have the responsibility to ensure safety and security, both in schools and in the environments in which people live. We think the practical guide overextends the responsibilities of learners by insisting that they become involved in securing safe schools and environments. In fact, such a view of responsibility, it seems, is grounded in an understanding that schools are appropriate places where community issues such as the prevention of gang violence and disrespect for the other can be taught. We think this is taking away the responsibility of families, community carers and the government to become credible agents of safety and security.

If the DoBE guide is meant to address some of the difficulties encountered by teachers in implementing the existing democratic citizenship education agenda, then what practical training is being provided to student teachers in preparation for their future profession? In examining the latter, we will first turn our attention to a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) programme at a South African university, followed by an account by one of the authors of her own experiences as a student teacher.

Cultivating citizenship education

A PGCE student is taught about concepts of diversity, multiculturalism, respect for differences, fostering a classroom of deliberation and engagement, recognising the other, extending friendship, forgiveness and compassion. During the class we are able to discuss the effects of apartheid, we can imagine what it may feel like to be marginalised or oppressed, we debate on how best to include the voices of all our students, we learn how to forgive and extend compassion, and when we disagree with each other's viewpoints we do so politely and respectfully, never maintaining that our view is the only one that matters. The majority of PGCE students, however, during practice teaching, certainly at the institution where we teach, are predominantly exposed only to that which they already know. Most of them attended high schools in the surrounding areas of the university. Most of them grew up and continue to live in the same environment of the university. When they go out to various schools to complete the practical component of their PGCE qualification, they will do so by returning to if not the very same school which they had previously attended, then a school which is indeed very similar. In other words, one which is well known to them and where they will in all probability, encounter the same type of learners that they once were. So they are seldom exposed to others who they may encounter when they actually commence training for their chosen profession, which, ultimately, means that because they have never experienced the other, they have not acquired the values and norms required to know the other. The stories and rhetoric that they will encounter at these schools will not offer them insight into anything new.

But, can someone truly know or imagine the experiences of another without actually having similar experiences? Can we lay claim to truly understanding love or grief if we have never experienced these emotions? By the same token, can we ever say we know what happiness feels like if we have never experienced unhappiness? If the argument is that we can only know the experience of another by also experiencing similar experiences, then what is actually being said is that because we have never experienced what the other has experienced, we can never lay claim to understanding it. This, of course, brings into question our capacity to empathise or demonstrate compassion. And it would be unwise and unreasonable to expect everyone to have had a similar or shared experience – and even if they have experienced a similar experience, their experiences thereof would not necessarily be a shared one.

So, what exactly are we saying? It is our argument that there are different ways of understanding and knowing the otherness of the other. First, from a basis of compassion, it is possible to place oneself in the position of the other and imagine the experiences and perspectives of the other. This requires that the individual temporarily engages the world from the perspective of the other. And second, by deliberately placing oneself in the position of the other, the experiences of the other becomes the actual experiences of the individual. Of course, the latter is not always feasible, nor necessarily desirable, since it presumes that, in order to know what it feels like to be burned, we need to burn ourselves. However, it is feasible, and we will argue, necessary, for student teachers to actually experience teaching and learning in environments other to those from which they have emerged. We are asserting that, when it comes to the training of teachers, and this should probably be extended to other forms of public service employment (regardless of whether one's intention is to enter the private sector), training institutions should be under obligation to expose teachers to a reasonably concise and diverse spectrum of society. When it comes to teaching it is not enough to simply talk about diversity, inequality, multiculturalism, and the legacy of apartheid on our schooling system. Teaching is not confined to imparting of knowledge; teaching is a value-based practice, the core of which should be socially and morally based awareness, not only of our own condition, especially of the condition of society as a whole. By placing students in contexts of unfamiliarity and otherness, we are exposing them both to the norms and values which are being taught, and those that are not. To simply rely on the lecturer's capacity and ability to adequately relate an experience of teaching in a broader South Africa is at best naive. Like the students in our PGCE class, certain lecturers, too, have only been exposed to one particular brand of schooling, and within the South African experience, this is a profound comment on what lecturers do *not* bring to student teachers.

During the first author's own experiences as a PGCE student in 1993 – a year before the country's very first democratic elections – her first teaching practical took place at a 'Whites only' (at that stage) Afrikaner school. She was completely intimidated at the thought of having to teach in this environment, since she would be expected to teach learners from a different race group with whom she had never been allowed to learn. The choice of this school, as for other student teachers, was not her own, since she was assigned there on the basis that one of the teaching subjects was Afrikaans First Language. And so there was no deliberative action on the part of the university to expose her to anything different – it was a simple matter of finding a school close to the university that taught in the Afrikaans medium. Besides the expected top class resources and facilities, she encountered a particular type of learner. Although deeply respectful of her as a teacher, they embraced and displayed a citizenship, which she knew existed, but had never experienced. During every assembly, the head prefect would walk into the hall, carrying the (old) South African flag. This was followed by a sermon from the local *dominee* (minister), and ended with the singing of the *Die Stem* (the national anthem at the time). On closer scrutiny, the school had numerous cultural activities and groups, which included a *volkmusiek* (folk music) club and an Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB) (Afrikaner Resistance Movement) youth group. The first author's discomfort and disbelief were countered only by her acute awareness that she was experiencing something that she would never have understood had she not experienced it. The spatial and teaching environment of the school were completely laced in one version of what it meant to be an Afrikaner – it was tied to the numerous flags fluttering around the expansive rugby fields (there were no flags at the high school she had attended, since anything associated with the government at the time was considered racist and oppressive), it was tied to the words of the national anthem on a plaque in the school foyer, it was tied to the literature in the classrooms, it was tied to the songs being sung in the school choir, and it was tied to an identity and citizenship to which the second author had no claim and no allegiance.

Based on these aforementioned accounts, it becomes apparent that, inasmuch as teachers set out to mould a particular student in their classroom, teacher training programmes set out to mould a particular type of teacher. Teacher training institutions, if they purport to prepare teachers to both teach and make a deliberative contribution to the society in which they operate, have a moral obligation to ensure that the teachers which they groom by the end of each PGCE year, have been exposed and fully prepared for teaching in any schooling environment, and not just those with which students have been familiar, or

with those which the institution believes their students should be familiar. To pre-decide the teaching environments of prospective teachers, is assuming that the students are incapable of operating in any other kind of environment, and perhaps more precariously, assuming that the institution does not have the responsibility of acknowledging the existence of any other types of schools, and all that they encompass and face, or worse, being unwilling to prepare its students for the full spectrum of a multicultural society.

By simply re-considering the types of schools that the university sends its students to, the university will immediately extend and enhance the teaching and experience of democratic citizenship education in two critical and pedagogical ways. One is that, by sending the PGCE students to a deliberately different environment from that which they have always known, the university will ensure that their students are exposed to both a greater spectrum of South African society, as well differently manifested citizenship – most likely one shrouded in hardship and disadvantage, rather than one adorned by privilege and social rights. Secondly, by advocating and implementing a teacher training year, which boldly centralises an acknowledgement of a radically skewed and damaged society, the university ultimately fulfils its primary purpose of offering an enhanced preparation and contribution to society. At the core, then, of the PGCE teaching is a clearly stated goal for students to get to know the otherness of the other, so that their own citizenship can begin to take on perceptible forms and evidence of recognition, understanding and compassion, and hence, responsibility.

That the DoBE has chosen to develop a practical guide to assist teachers to engender democratic citizenship education in public schools means that schools are, in fact, not fulfilling this brief credibly enough. Taking this into consideration, we will now argue for a renewed and enhanced version of democratic citizenship education.

Re-imagining democratic citizenship education

Prevalent in Benhabib's (2002) depiction of a democratic citizen is the presumption of belonging, meaning that every inhabitant would want to be party to a citizenship which incorporates these three inter-related elements: collective identity, privileges of membership, and social rights and benefits. But, a collective identity is only plausible and sustainable if the majority of individuals that constitutes the collective want to be recognised as being a part of that collective. So, what happens when an individual is deliberately excluded from being a part of that collective, and all its accompanying privileges? Can such an individual still be considered to be a citizen, or is he or she merely an inhabitant? And what can or ought to be done to ensure that (1) this type of exclusion does not occur; and (2) that the marginalised citizen becomes a fully integrated citizen, and thus have access to the privileges, and social rights and benefits of a democratic society? Perhaps it may not be enough to only pay attention to the types of values and norms that a notion of citizenship espouses, but also to those values and norms that are not being taught and learned.

Education, says Tarrant (1989:39), is an intentional enterprise – not because of empirical considerations, such as school-going age, but because of a conceptual point that education as a venture involves the prescribing of a programme of learning with the intention that certain objectives – social and political – ought thereby to be attained. To socialise someone, Tarrant (1989:40-41) continues, is to introduce him or her to a particular way of life, skills and accomplishments of a particular and pre-determined role. Citizenship, like education, is an acquired attribute, which, in our opinion, is entirely shaped by the condition of the individual's social, political, economical and emotional habitat. It is informed and shaped by the individual's own historicity, from which he or she can never be divorced. In this respect, much of the connotations associated with a notion of citizenship, as they are with an 'educated' individual, are pre-determined by the individual experience of exposure and access, or the lack thereof. As Taylor (1989:34) explains, who we are, is determined and essentially defined by what matters, and has significance to us. This means that, inasmuch as we have gone through an educational process, which has taught us the value of education and being educated, we are taught to subscribe to a particular notion of citizenship, based on our own exposure and experience thereof. Our identity formation is often shaped and determined by in inward reaction to external experiences. Either way, we hold the capacity to determine to which extent we wish to immerse ourselves in either systems, that is, to which extent we buy

into the value of our own educational experience, and to which extent we choose to define ourselves as citizens or in relation to a notion of citizenship.

The decision-making authority that we hold in choosing how we respond to our educational experience, or how we enact our conception of citizenship is not unlike Young's (2000:5) understanding of democracy, when she describes it as "not an all-or-nothing affair, but a matter of degree; societies can vary in both the extent and the intensity of their commitment to democratic practice". Of course, what we are referring to here is the privileged position of indeed having received an education, and laying claim to a notion of citizenship. Young (2000:17-18), however, is also referring to those who are not included in the discussions and the decision-making processes by virtue of their minority status or by virtue of their otherness, ultimately calling for a widening of democratic inclusion in order to counter what she labels as external exclusion and internal exclusion. If we have experienced either Young's (2000:53-54) external exclusion, which she describes as the deliberate exclusion of individuals or groups, or her more subtle internal exclusion, where we are excluded, even when we have been allowed access to procedures of decision making, then we have been exposed to and acquired at least two sets of experiences: knowledge of the experience of exclusion, and knowledge of how to exclude others, or not. We might tie these experiences into our particular understanding of a notion of citizenship. Or we might decide that our experience of exclusion has, in fact stripped us of our citizenship, as might have been the experience of the apartheid system, where notions of citizenship and belonging were overtly and inhumanely linked and determined by classifications and representations of race.

The concept of Benhabib's (2002) collective identity, which speaks to notions of inclusivity and unity, is then fractured not only by individual and exclusive constructions of identity, but also holds the real possibility of the re-enactments of exclusionary practices, as evidenced in Rancière's (2007:24) example of the growing tension between French nationals and immigrants in France:

> *For example, you hate Arabs because you are unemployed and they have jobs. Yet again, the seductiveness of coincidences, wretched as they might be: in this hypothesis you hate because you are deprived, you exclude because you are excluded. This happens, of course. But everyday experience still teaches us that the pleasures of exclusion scarcely diminish with the comfort and stability of one's own position.*

So, how, does one begin to construct a citizenship that is truly democratically inclusive, and thereby facilitates real and visible enactments of social justice? If the ultimate goal of education is the production and reproduction of the systemic norms and values of society, one of which encapsulates the notion of a 'good' citizen, then what is actually being worked towards is a notion of change: Change so that past injustices are corrected, change so that the people know more than they knew before, change so that those who have previously been excluded will, in future, be included, change so that the ills and hatreds of the past do not repeat themselves – all of this so that all voices can lay claim to be included in a democracy.

In attempting to combat the hatred and the practices of exclusion, Young (2002:53) argues for three modes of political communication: (1) greeting or public acknowledgement, which she describes as a recognition of the subjectivity of the other, thereby fostering trust; (2) rhetoric, which contributes to inclusive and persuasive political communication, including situating speakers and audience in relation to one another; and (3) narrative, which counters exclusive tendencies by striving towards a dialogical understanding. Roots or traces of these three modes of political communication are also found in Benhabib's (1992:78-79) call for a political agency in the form of engagement as opposed to mere reconciliation or participation in order to solve the dilemmas of modern identity and estrangement. Any form of engagement would, by its nature, necessitate a form of greeting, a rhetoric, which moves the heart or engages the imagination (Young, 2002:63), and a narrative through which we can understand the experience of others and counter any pre-understanding (ibid:73). Cooke (2001:130) describes the pre-understandings or images we have of each other as part of the baggage that we bring to any dialogue, which can lead to what Taylor (1994:25) describes as the *mis*recognition of others. Taylor expounds that *mis*recognition or non-recognition can impose harm, and can be a form of oppression since it distorts someone into a reduced state of being, and a less-than form of citizenship.

Waghid (2010:20), too, argues that active participation and belonging are both conceptually connected to some form of engagement in relation to someone else. In essence, the arguments advocated by Young (2002), Benhabib (2002) and Waghid (2010), is that meaning can only be produced when there is an other. To Taylor (1989), authenticity of the self is defined through articulation (i.e. language). He asserts that, in order to understand the intimate connection between identity and recognition, close attention has to be paid to the dialogical character of the human condition. To him the dialogical character of the human condition is critical, since our identity is always defined in dialogue with others (ibid:32-33). To this end, argues Taylor, the development of an ideal of inwardly generated identity provides recognition with a new importance: our own identity critically depends on our dialogical relationship with others. Of interest to us, at this stage, is to what extent, if any, our identity is (mis)shaped by *not* having a dialogical relationship with others. We link this interest to our earlier assertion that it might not be enough to only pay attention to the types of values and norms that are being taught, but also to those values and norms that are not being taught and learnt. We also link it to Tarrant's (1989) argument that, while one is trained for an occupation, one is never trained to be critical thereof. And so we can conclude that much of our knowledge is shaped and determined by factors we are not conscious of.

Towards enacting our responsibility

In conclusion, what ought PGCE students to be taught so that their own teaching will lead to a credible form of democratic citizenship education in South African public schools. One way of doing the aforementioned is to teach PGCE students some of the virtues of social justice because the latter constitutes a reason for cultivating democratic citizenship education. For Young (2000:31-33), social justice comprises two ideals: (1) self-development, which entails meeting people's needs, such as shelter, food and healthcare, depending on their need, so that they reach equal levels of capability as others, and (2) self-determination, which she defines as the ability to determine one's actions and the condition of one's action. Another way, then, of ensuring a credible form of democratic citizenship education, is by entering the public discourse not as democratic citizens, but as participants in a debate (Benhabib, 2002). As such, says Benhabib, rather than participating with pre-conceived notions and principles, we create a space for intercultural dialogue, thereby creating a space for what we have in common, instead of what we do not. By meeting (greeting), understanding (rhetoric) each other in open dialogue or debate (narrative) and by creating a space for intercultural dialogue, we open up a mutual space of comparison of differing understandings of citizenship – ultimately setting the landscape for a healthy democratic society. Benhabib's argument for intercultural dialogue is not unlike Rancière's (2006) call for intellectual equality whereby we all have the right to speak, listen and understand, and therefore to interrupt so that we, and others, are never excluded.

Another way of ensuring credible democratic citizenship education – and here we are responding to both Young (2000) and Laclau's (2001) understanding of self-determination – is that meeting (greeting) the other with credibility and countering unfounded pre-understanding (narrative) is only possible when a notion of self-determination is enacted in relation to the action or inactions of others. This means that our ability to determine our own actions and the condition of our actions should always be actioned in relation to whether it is for the collective good. Our individual self-determination, therefore, should not be at odds or at the expense of the collective. Conversely, the collective good is only good if it does not unfairly limit individual self-determination. This means that a credible form of democratic citizenship education can only be ensured if the collective identity to which Benhabib (2002) refers, is shaped not just by the recognition of commonalities and the respecting of differences, but in the realisation that the individual is not greater than the collective, and that the individual's right to self-determination cannot oppose or oppress the same right to self-determination among the collective.

Linked to the notion of a collective identity, is Benhabib's privileges of membership and exposure to social rights and benefits. But perhaps the two stipulations of privileges of membership and access to social rights and benefits are better understood when it is explained as that which informs and nurtures the collective identity, rather than separate conditions of democratic citizenship. This means that the very claim to a collective identity is in itself the privileged condition of membership, and that the right to

social benefit and rights are what constitutes democratic citizenship – premised only by a proviso that it be extended by all and to all in equal measure. In linking this to Rancière's notion of intellectual equality, what we are arguing for is that any notions or determinations of exclusion are immediately erased on the basis that there is nothing which makes one individual better or more privileged than the other.

In looking at ways for a renewed and enhanced version of democratic citizenship education – one which is credible and distinct, rather than elusive – we have to, ultimately, look at the philosophical underpinnings of what shapes a citizen and how that citizenship is enacted and entrusted. When we teach PGCE students to become the teachers of tomorrow's citizens, then we are also calling for a profound teaching of the condition of humanity. We cannot divorce the teaching of democratic citizenship education from the experiences that have tarnished our South African past. And we cannot overcome it by not acknowledging and deliberating about the injustices that permeated the lives of the vast majority of South African citizens. Any conversation about social justice, therefore, as any conversation about democratic citizenship education, would need to reach each individual on an individual and collective basis. Only when democratic citizenship education is able to achieve this, will it be possible to reach beyond the residues of an unjust history, so that we, as a collective, can finally realise that at the core of citizenship is not identity, privileges or social benefits. All that connects is our humanity, and that all that depends on us, and that allows us to depend on others, is how we enact that humanity.

To enact one's humanity, therefore, requires that one recognises the frailties and vulnerabilities within oneself and others, and actually acts upon someone else's vulnerability. In other words, recognising another's humanity implies that one does not begin to ostracise or sever ties with others. Cavell (1979:433) posits that, related to one's connection with the other is the view that one has to acknowledge humanity in the other, of which the basis for such action lies in oneself. A teacher's relationship with learners ought to be shaped by an acknowledgement that they be considered as fellow human beings. In acknowledging others as human beings worthy of respect, one should simultaneously acknowledge oneself as a person who should exercise respect. This is what we think Cavell (1979:435) has in mind when he claims:

> *[A]nother may be owed acknowledgement simply on the ground of his humanity, acknowledgement as a human being, for which nothing will do but my revealing myself to him [her] as a human being, unrestrictedly, as his or her sheer other, his or her fellow, his or her semblable. Surely this is, if anything, nothing more than half the moralists who ever wrote have said, that others count, in our moral calculations, simply as persons; or that we have duties to others of a universal kind, duties to them apart from any particular stations we occupy.*

Of importance to the cultivation of humanity is an understanding that one even has to engage others by doing the improbable, in this instance, learning to forgive and temporarily forget, and doing the unexpected, even though it goes against the grain of one's beliefs. Arguing in favour of 'forgetting' elicits all kinds of emotions. Surely, as Krondorfer (2008:234) argues:

> *To speak about forgetting in the context of the Holocaust, or of any genocidal atrocity for that matter, is an act bordering on immorality or, in any case, on callousness, for it seems to refuse empathy to, and acknowledgment of, the suffering of the victims. To advocate forgetting, it seems, moves dangerously close to denying the historical events and to erasing memory itself.*

But it is also the case, as he develops in his in-depth study dealing with Holocaust remembrance and the task of oblivion, that "... scholars recognize that memory and remembrance are not uncomplicated processes but are formed and informed by individual styles, personal trauma, narrative choices, cultural forces, political agendas, and national interests" (ibid:238). He does not pair forgetting with denial and amnesia, but suggests the more neutral term of 'oblivion', distinguishing between wilful acts of neglect and denial (which constitute political or psychological forms of forgetting) and "unavoidable modes of memory production based on sedimenting, condensing, suppressing, and expunging lived experiences of the past" (ibid:242), which he labels 'oblivion'. By suppressing and expunging lived experiences of the past, 'forgetting' assumes a different meaning. And arguing for 'forgetting' is to do the unexpected – that is, going against one's wishes (not to actually forget). If we suppress our feelings of resentment towards others and momentarily expunge bad memories, we do the unexpected. This is so because we wilfully

suppress thoughts of something horrible that had been perpetrated before. Thus, forgetting something that we otherwise would not have done if we were not suppressing our bad memories of an event, amounts to doing something 'improbable'.

Now that we have examined some of the challenges that confront the implementation of the DoBE's practical guide to ensure that responsibility and humanity are present in schools, we offer some thoughts on enacting our responsibility in schools. In the first instance, to be responsible implies that one possesses at least the capacity to 'respond' or to do something about a situation, and also the 'ability' or authority to change a situation – that is, to amend or improve it. Cavell (1979:441) argues that being answerable/responsible for what happens to the other means that their (the other's) views are acknowledged, although one might not be in agreement with them. Rather, one conceives the other from the other's point of view, with which one has to engage afresh (ibid). In so doing, one does not compromise one's relations with others, for that would mean a complete breakdown of society. One might find another group's actions (whether of gangs or bullies) repugnant (what Cavell would refer to as living my scepticism), but this does not mean that one views this group as outcasts unworthy of any form of engagement. That would be an abdication of one's responsibility. In demonstrating one's responsibility towards others, one immediately acknowledges one's capacity for intimacy with others – thus limiting one's idiosyncratic privacy. It is for this reason that Cavell (1979:463) claims that "human beings do not necessarily desire isolation and incomprehension, but union or reunion, call it community". Our private actions may lead to a betterment of our communal actions. If one's privacy remains restricted to one with the intention not to exercise one's responsibility to others, one's practices would remain unshared and separated from the people with whom one happens to live. So, one's privacy opens a door through which someone else can tap into one's thoughts – which might be of benefit to society.

Now, for one to be taught (as the DoBE's practical guide suggests) to enact one's responsibility on the basis of some mechanical and uncritical (dogmatic) initiation into dialogue is tantamount to learning what it means to engage others. But then one might not get very far in connecting with others, because democratic engagement also requires that one does so critically and at times provocatively (that is belligerently). We cannot imagine engaging with bullies and gang members without being prepared to deal with the unexpected. And, to be nurtured to engage the 'unknown' other is to be taught also what it means to act with belligerence and distress, or at least to deal with provocation. We cannot foresee a bully not being provocative, or a gang member not being hostile and, if one has not been initiated into what it means to encounter distress and belligerence, one would not begin to enact one's responsibility in engaging with the unexpected. To put it differently, one would not have learnt to do something about an undesirable situation – that is, to enact one's responsibility.

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