

Higher Education and Hope

Paul Gibbs · Andrew Peterson
Editors

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Institutional, Pedagogical
and Personal Possibilities

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To Sonny, Maggie, Zoe and Leo from Grandpa
—Paul Gibbs

To Jessica, Oliver and George
—Andrew Peterson

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Editors' Introduction

Across many nations, the context of Higher Education is increasingly shaped by discourses of employability, national/international rankings, student satisfaction, securitisation, academic integrity, competition and choice. Under these conditions, the role of universities in preparing students for all facets of life and in contributing to the public good is (re)shaped in significant ways. Over the last 40 years, many systems of higher education have witnessed a deliberate widening of participation with increasing numbers of students entering universities. While welcome in many ways, the growth in the numbers of those attending Universities has placed pressure on the financing of higher education places. In the face of pressure on the public purse, governments in a number of nations have offered various policy responses, including introducing and increasing student tuition fees and, often not unconnected, placing more onus on higher education institutions to demonstrate “value” for money (whether to individual students or the public more widely). For many commentators, the marketization of higher education systems, and indeed of the working lives of universities, raises significant and pressing questions about the nature and role of

universities as formative educational institutions—questions which cut across policy, curricular, pedagogy and practice, as well as the purposes of higher education.

Within this context, a resounding feature of recent academic literature on higher education has been to explore the ways that the marketization of higher education places pressure on and complicates the relational work central to, and within, universities. Such key relationships include those between: government and HEIs, government and university students, government and the wider public, universities and their staff, universities and their students, as well as those between and among university staff and university students. In 2017 a group of academics—including the two editors of this collection and a number of the contributors—met for a two-day symposium to share our own research and perspectives on the current context of higher education in the UK. While each of those who participated in the symposium had something to say about the current context of higher education, what struck all participants was the importance and value of hope as a concept for thinking through and deliberating about positive ways forward for higher education, whether that be at the systemic, institutional, pedagogical, interpersonal or intrapersonal level.

In identifying an edited collection as a fruitful way to share and extend the outcomes of the symposium, we were conscious of the relevance of our focus for those working beyond the United Kingdom. With this in mind, in addition to chapters drawing mainly on a UK focus, we have added further chapters from leading international scholars. While we would not claim that the contexts included in this collection is exhaustive (that would be impossible in a book like this) we would argue that key commonalities across the range of international contexts included—the UK, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Hong Kong, South Africa and the United States—are suggestive that the trends of marketization which we seek in this collection to identify, critique and counter have been pervasive.

As editors, our expressed aim in this collection was to include not only a range of contexts, but also to include a range of viewpoints and theoretical positions. With this in mind, our contributors come from diverse, and not always complementary, perspectives. So too, they come

from diverse backgrounds and experiences. Our hope is that including these different perspectives together in one collection will offer more to readers than would an authorship drawing on similar viewpoints. With this in mind, we asked authors to compile their contributions with the following guidelines in mind:

The chapters in this edited collection will each seek to (i) critique the current milieu and (ii) offer hopeful possibilities for universities based on humane relationships and notions of the good. With regard to the latter, chapters will make explicit notions related to a more humane and compassionate framing of the work of, and in, universities—including compassion itself, trust, sustainability, empathy, friendship, care, kindness and love. In doing so, each chapter will offer a hopeful account of universities' work.

By bringing what we hope are wide-ranging perspectives to bare on the issues at hand, this book seeks to contribute to current conversations and debates regarding the purposes and practises of universities today, as well as to changing the debate to one of hopefulness and inspiration about the role of higher education for the public good.

Before we progress to the chapters themselves, it is worth us spending some time in this introduction offering some thoughts about what we understand the meaning and importance of hope to be.

Why Hope?

In focusing on hope our intentions are both pragmatic and conceptual. Our pragmatic interest was to offer contributors a space to explore and share practical, useful ways that academics working in universities today have found, and could find, to respond to the marketization of higher education funding, pedagogies and relationships. That is, practical ways which offer positive, hopeful alternatives to the dominant theme of control that, albeit implicitly, suggest something of an acquiescence on behalf of university staff and students. In seeking to explore practical instantiations of hope in universities today, we were struck by two—not unrelated—contentions. The first is Michael Apple's (2011, p. 23)

provocation that 'among the tasks of critical educators is both to participate in movements that aim to create more critically democratic institutions in education and the larger society and to act as secretaries of these movements and institutions so that such successes are made visible'. The second is Čapek's (2010, p. 275) suggestion that 'there is more ignorance than intrinsic badness in the world; at the same time there is enough sympathy and trust, affability and good will to make it impossible to write off the world of people as past hope'. In line with these reflections, we are interested in how hope is recognised and enacted within universities today.

This said, to conceive and understand the practical realization of hope, we clearly need to start from a given conceptual and theoretical base. While contributions in this collection differ as to their given conceptual and theoretical bases, all authors start from the shared premise that hope is a relevant and important notion for the way in which we construe our being *qua* humans. This said, hope clearly is a contested concept. Perhaps its most famous critic, Nietzsche (1878, §71; 1984, p. 58) warned that hope was 'the most evil of evils because it prolongs man's torments'.

In a recent literature review, Webb (2014) outlines five modes of hoping: patient, critical, sound, resolute and transformative which he uses to delineate a range of pedagogies of hope. But the most generalised notion of hope is of a desired outcome and the belief that such an outcome is possible but by no means certain. Hope is something that is desired, and because we are unable to measure its likelihood it has a sustained power over our behaviour, even when evidence would reduce our confidence in something occurring which we might expect or feel entitled to. When we hope we reflect, rationalise, imagine and dream, even fantasise about the hoped-for outcome. These activities give us reason to feel optimistic (although see Eagleton 2015) and upon these we incorporate our feeling as emotional justifications for the hope. When our hopes materialise we tend to be joyful and when our hopes are thwarted we feel disappointed. This is where hope differs from expectations. With expectations, we tend to be more certain than we are when we hope as to the possibility that a given outcome will come about. On this reading, the comparable feelings for expectations might be relief and anger (just think of that super paper submitted to a prestigious journal and one sent to a journal less highly ranked).

According to Day (1991), the central insight captured in this view is that hope has both a *conative* and a *cognitive* aspect: conative insofar as hope always involves desire for something; cognitive insofar as it also involves some estimation of probability. Day agrees that, from a psychological point of view, hope involves a feeling of pleasure (arising from the idea of proximity to some good), if always mixed to some extent with pain (arising from the awareness that the good hoped for, the satisfaction of the desire, is still out of reach). Moreover, as Smith (2010) suggests, when relating hope to expectation and anticipation, 'Whereas the subject who expects stands back, observes and awaits, the subject who anticipates is from the beginning saturated, so to speak, with a *readiness for action*. Anticipation thus involves an active "taking up" of a stance and a projective preparedness that reflect the subject's immersion in and engagement with the environment' (ibid., p. 17).

Perhaps the most relevant educational commentator on hope is Paulo Freire. In his book, *Pedagogy of Hope*, Freire discusses the importance of hope for, as well as in, the edifying process. He recognizes that hope alone will not change much and writes that, 'my hope is necessary but it is not enough. Alone it does not win. But without it, my struggle will be weak and wobbly. We need critical hope the way a fish needs unpolluted water' (2016, p. 2). Freire's words here remind us that, much like the water in which fish swim, hope is vital and sustaining. And yet, again like the water, when we are immersed in day-to-day realities and experiences, the importance of hope may be taken for granted and under-recognised. Our aspiration is that by stepping back and reflecting on the day-to-day realities and experiences of working within the contemporary university, the chapters in this collection all have something to say about the importance and vitality of hope—both for education specifically and for the human condition more generally.

The Chapters

The book is divided into three main parts, which in turn consider respectively the institutional possibilities, pedagogical possibilities and inter-/intra-personal possibilities of hope in Higher Education. While

the authors in each part took either the institutional, the pedagogical or the inter-/intra-personal as their primary focus, most if not all of the chapters have something to say about how the institutional, pedagogical and inter-/intra-personal intersect.

In Chapter 1, Jon Nixon begins by noting that what distinguishes those who hope from those who merely indulge in wishful thinking is their willingness to confront and challenge the apparent hopelessness of the situation in which they find themselves. Suggesting that we are living in a divided and divisive world in which the need for global interconnectivity clashes with a renewed emphasis on cultural and national boundary maintenance, Nixon argues that hope requires us to acknowledge—in our own lives and the lives of others—the consequences of this contradiction, and to find within it the necessary resources to seek to resolve it. Here, Nixon identifies a role for the university as the possessor of two invaluable resources of hope: its passion for truth and its insistence on the necessity of reasoning together. By providing a space in which these resources can be developed and used for the common good, universities provide—in the face of a deeply divided world—hope of a common world: not an ideal world, but a better world in which the cravings of competition and the striving for cooperation and collaboration find a kinder balance.

In Chapter 2, Ari-Elmeri Hyvönen argues that there is a link between critical thought and the ability to remain hopeful even under highly problematic conditions like the neoliberal environment of contemporary higher education. He discusses Hannah Arendt's and Richard Rorty's reflections on thinking and hope and suggests that despite their different starting points, the two authors share much. In particular, both reiterate the idea of Socratic irony and maieutic in a twentieth-century context. Also bringing Rorty and Arendt into disagreement Hyvönen contends that because of its adherence to facts and events, Arendt's thought is better able to produce meaningful criticism of existing conditions, accompanied with hope for changing them.

In Chapter 3, Rebecca Watts, Gabriel Swarts, Leslie Rush and Cynthia Brock examine the case of the University of Wyoming (UW) as a land grant, flagship American public institution, exploring the University's transformation to connect the University's values with

Wyoming's twenty-first-century needs while fostering a harmonious balance in the state takes place in a unique context. After establishing the context of University's relationship with the State, the chapter explores US flagship, land grant institutions and UW's unique role as the state's sole university; the renewal of UW's connections throughout the state in service to its people, and UW enterprises created to reinvigorate the embodiment of its institutional virtues. In exploring these themes, the chapter identifies the hopeful ways that reinvigorating institutional virtues while connecting to current, relevant service can provide a joyful, positive and meaningful role for higher education in the current era.

In Chapter 4, Marianne A. Larsen outlines the ways in which Denmark has ushered in market-driven reforms to the Danish higher education system to enhance their institutional competitiveness over the past 30 years. In this context, Larsen presents an overview of the concept of *hygge*. Larsen recounts her experiences as a Canadian academic on sabbatical at a Danish university in 2017, illustrating the ways in which she experienced *hygge* in the Danish university setting. Larsen argues that *hygge* can be viewed as a retreat from the individualism, competition, market stratification and other challenges associated with neoliberalism and as such offers hope to resist the alienation associated with neoliberalism as well as providing an alternative ethos for close and safe social relations within academia.

In Chapter 5, Caroline Walker-Gleaves commences Part II by focusing on caring pedagogy. She argues that while caring is a complex and fundamental human relational assumption around which all institutional and personal educational interactions are planned and which is often behind what academics and teachers do as the core of their work and consequently appears in missions, visions and values statements for colleges and universities worldwide, there seems to be a profound mismatch between what learners and teachers feel and expect about caring, and what institutions operationalize in their attempts to somehow capture and cultivate care. Based on a thoughtful analysis of care and caring pedagogy, Walker-Gleaves contends that caring pedagogy isn't so progressive at all and that while it may be risky, it is so in a rigorously scholarly exposing sense, rather than an emotional and well-being sense. The chapter examines the possible impact on students' learning in

relation to a reconceptualization of relationships, and asks what direction we should take to properly understand the relational and cognition satisfaction, not to say joy, of caring and how it is possible to properly care within a risky higher education context, whilst still holding out for hope.

In Chapter 6, Paul Warwick, Alun Morgan and Wendy Miller offer an important exploration of higher education for hope within the civic context of global social justice and environmental points of crisis. Focusing on the UN Sustainable Development Goals as a framework for societal change they look at ways that education can incubate hope through students' compassionate civic action for the common good. By looking at the place based pedagogical approach of service-learning, they conclude with a case study of emerging practice at a UK University and highlight key challenges to engaging students with creating more sustainable futures in a local context.

In Chapter 7, Craig A. Hammond starts from the view that one of the main tasks confronting contemporary educators, is to maintain optimism and hope and be pro-actively creative amidst the bureaucracy and perfunctory processes of the university. He argues that, despite expectations to conform to institutional prescriptions, pedagogical tactics can be invoked which can operate to repurpose the strategies and established practices of the learning environment. To develop this argument, he adapts and develops a range of concepts as pedagogic possibilities, associated with Gilles Deleuze (The Fold), Deleuze & Guattari (the Rhizome), Benoit Mandelbrot (Fractality) and Michel de Certeau (tactics). Hammond invites educators to investigate and facilitate the possibility of fostering alternative and ultimately creative and hopeful learning approaches (also incorporating bell hooks), that incorporate the unpredictable emergence and heterogeneous ruptures and Folds of individual learners, arguing that beyond established curriculum and pedagogy, untapped spaces of collaborative hope and possibility can be recognised and embraced.

In Chapter 8, Linda Muzzin replies to how neoliberalism is constructed within the academy, exploring emancipatory imaginaries that provide metaphorical space and time for scholars to experience fun, creativity, the beauty of nature, and a slowing of time, among other

pleasures of scholarship. Muzzin argues that it is in these theoretical spaces, professional responsibility is forged. The chapter engages with examples from the university that provide a glimpse of how everyday activism is sparked by social theory and how engagement with social theory can infuse hope and well-being. Muzzin suggests that we can take strength from scholarly work through engaging with the beauty of the physical and scholarly world, and connecting with intellectual role models and their imaginaries that promote a myriad of enchanting ways to proceed with one's own lifework. Here, equity imaginaries resonate with theories of education that promote engagement or caring, everyday/everynight attention to power relations and ethical praxis, maintaining long term health, well-being, and hope in the academy.

In Chapter 9, Cindy Sing Bik Ngai and Rita Gill Singh take as their focus Confucian ideology, particularly *Ren*, which is characterized as realized full humanity or a moral self guided by compassion and rooted in relations. They argue that cultivating *Ren* by embedding it in the curriculum in higher education is of crucial importance and offers hope given that students will be the future pillars of society and this value profoundly influences different professions. Ngai and Singh suggest that, in this respect, pedagogical approaches that are integrated into the curriculum, focusing on reflective learning tasks, learning projects, service learning, peer mentoring and group sharing, can enable learners to reflect on themselves, examine their strengths and weaknesses, perform to the best of their ability, practise the values, and show concern and care for their peers and the community at large.

In the first chapter of Part III (Chapter 10), Angela Scollan presents and examines a case-study from a Higher Education institution in the UK where a project of pedagogical innovation, the 'Transition Programme', successfully solved the paradoxical status of selective procedures that are caught between the principle of inclusiveness within the widening participation agenda and the contrasting principle of recruiting with integrity. In the chapter, Scollan employs hope to contextualise sociologically the motivations underpinning mature applicants' choice to access Higher Education. Such choice is positioned as a movement from the familiar world to a more complex social world, characterised by risky decision. The chapter criticises the implications of selective

processes for mature applicants' trust in the Higher Education system, as well as their well-being, self-esteem and happiness, enabling Scollan to re-contextualise within a discourse centred on hope in the Transition Programme.

In Chapter 11, Paul Gibbs begins with the reflection that while there has been considerable debate in contemporary literature on the erosion of public good in higher education, most of it has concentrated on the word 'public' in the phrase rather than on the notion of 'good'. In the chapter, Gibbs focused on the good, including the distinctions between inherent, intrinsic and instrumental used in a framework devised by Audi (2004) to develop the following ideas: that education is inherently good; that aspects of its practice are feasibly intrinsically good; and the institutions in which the practice of higher education is delivered is contributive and thus of instrumental value. Gibbs ultimately concludes that if education is intrinsically good then it is something we can all hope for as a common good.

In Chapter 12, Labby Ramrathan sets out the current context of universities in South Africa within which student protest actions coupled with massification and an inefficient tertiary system raise questions of quality and the worthiness of its graduates. He argues that while systemically the current higher education milieu projects stereotypical conceptions about different student groupings leading to a normalising discourse, taking a humanistic perspective opens up a possibility discourse within which higher education studies have provided life changing opportunity for students. Ramrathan draws on an institutional case study to explore a humanistic perspective that prioritises understanding people's subjectivity, and asks, 'what is it like to be this person?' in making sense of the multiple forces and factors that students have to negotiate in accessing and sustaining their studying in a higher education institution, moving beyond universal reasoning to individual reasoning that is textured, layered and discursive to illuminate hope and joy in students realised through their higher education studies.

In Chapter 13, begins by identifying certain core conditions of the neoliberal university. Drawing on recent scholarship in the field which

has viewed the neoliberal university as 'toxic' (Smyth 2017) and as operating a regime of 'terror' (Roberts 2013) he draws on Gravlee's (2000) work on Aristotle and hope to examine more optimistic forms of academic life in the neoliberal university. He argues that hope is needed for deliberation with others and that other-regarding virtues can provide pathways for hope in academic workplaces through their focus on relational ways of working based on mutual concern and solidarity.

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