Lucinda du Plooy & Mphumzi Zilindile

Problematising the concept epistemological access with regard to foundation phase education towards quality schooling

Abstract

This paper comprises a brief study of the literature about the concept epistemological access, a fairly under-researched topic in South African education. It is aimed specifically at the notion of access in the early years of the primary school. Morrow's distinction (Morrow 1992) between formal access (institutional access) and epistemological access (access to the goods distributed by the institution) is used as a conceptual framework. We argue that the meaning of the concept epistemological access, as Morrow intended it, was borne out of a particular political need that arose in higher education in the last years of the apartheid regime; the need to democratise access to higher education. The dearth of literature on the concept epistemological access and its meaning for access to basic education, especially foundation phase schooling, therefore warranted this study of the literature.

Keywords: Epistemological access, elementary school, foundation phase, human capital theory, human rights discourse, capabilities approach, social justice

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Introduction

The aim of this paper is to discuss literature in order to problematise the concept epistemological access. We work from the premise that what constitutes epistemological access still remains fairly under-researched in South Africa (Boughey 2010). In this paper we argue that epistemological access, as coined by Wally Morrow, was borne out of a particular political need that arose in higher education; the need to democratise access to higher education (Morrow 2007:11–25). Currently there appears to be no literature relating to access to basic education, especially access to foundation phase schooling. Basic education in South Africa covers the general education band (GET) over three phases: Foundation phase (grades R to 3), intermediate phase (grades 4 to 6) and senior phase (grades 7 to 9). Grade R, which is the reception year, only became compulsory and therefore part of the foundation phase in 2010 (Pendlebury 2008/9). According to Pendlebury (2008/9:25), "at the heart of basic education, is learning to read and write, to reason, to work with numbers, shapes and patterns, and to use concepts to understand the content of different learning areas". These are therefore the goods that the institution distributes in the foundation phase.

To confirm the lack of literature on the meaning of epistemological access to basic education an advanced search was conducted on EBSCOhost, a multidisciplinary databases that is home to other databases like: Academic Search Complete (with 8 500 full text periodicals and 7 300 peer reviewed articles), African-Wide Information (with over 3.2 million citations), Education Source (with 1 700 journals), ERIC (with 1.3 million records), PsycArticles (with 153 000 articles) and SocIndex (with 2.1 million records). On conducting the search the following keywords were used: "epistemological access and foundation phase schooling" as well as "epistemological access and basic education". This delivered no results. We then used the term "epistemological access" and got 45 hits. These 45 journal articles dealt with epistemological access as it pertained to access to higher education. We then directed our search to Google Scholar, using similar search words and came across the South African Child Guage 2008/2009, a flagship publication of the Children's Institute that provides an annual snapshot of the status of children in South Africa. In this resource two articles stand out: one written by Shirley Pendlebury entitled *Meaningful Access to basic education*, and another by Jonathan Jansen, titled *Reflections on meaningful access to education*. In addition to this we also found an interesting journal article by Joseph Chimombo (2005), titled *Issues in basic education in developing countries: An exploration of policy options for improved delivery* and an unpublished thesis by Gamede (2005) with the title *The biography of "access" as an expression of human rights in South African education policies*. This author used Morrow's notion of epistemological access as its conceptual framework. We also came across the work of two consortiums – CREATE (Consortium for Research on Education Access, Transitions and Equity) and EdQUAL (a research programme consortium on implementing education quality in low income countries). Although the focus in both consortiums is on research providing educational access through quality education, it could be useful when conceptualising epistemological access, especially in low performing countries like South Africa.

The literature analysis is therefore driven by the following questions:

1. What are the historical roots of the term *access* and how does this link to the term epistemological access?
2. Through which analytical lenses can one view the notion of epistemological access especially in relation to South African?
3. How has the term epistemological access been viewed in literature thus far?
4. How, according to literature, can epistemological access be realised in basic education, and, more specifically, in access to the foundation phase of schooling.

Structurally this paper takes on the following format: First we trace the historical roots of the term access to education as a means to understand what could be meant by epistemological access. This is followed by a discussion of literature that conceptualises the idea of epistemological access. In this section we offer a critical analysis of what constitutes epistemological access by focusing on how it has been defined in literature thus far. We then continue by entering into discussion on the conceptual frameworks through which the term could be understood. Here we focus mainly on the South African literature. Finally, we look at the meaning of epistemological access as it pertains to access to basic education, especially to foundation phase of schooling.

Tracing the historical roots

In the literature that we have studied we found that the meaning of the concept *access to education* is not as clear-cut as it at first would seem. For some authors it is defined in terms of physical access, or in terms of entry (enrolment) into schools (Gamede, 2005; Chandani, Balan, Smith & Donahue, 2007; Alexander, 2008). For others, it is more than mere physical access, since it is reflected in educational outcomes or in what Samoff (2001:25) calls "expanded access" (post-enrolment experiences). Policies like the constitution of South Africa, which borrows from international instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the World Declaration of Education for All (1990) and the Dakar Declaration on Education for All (2000), view access to education as a basic human right. Gamede (2005:4) argues that

> the complex nature of the meaning of "access to education" lies in how people think and talk about education as a human right and how the representation or non-representation of different voices in education policies, including the Constitution, advances or hinders the realisation of open access to education as a basic human right.

The complexity of the meaning of *access to education* therefore necessitates an exploration of the historical roots of the concept. Following is a chronological account of the use of the term.

Historically, the term, *access to education* can be traced back to the early 19th century in Europe and the Americas, and earlier also during the reformation movement, when "compulsory mass schooling became part of the legal framework

in the nation-state building process" (Chandani et al 2007:10). In the 1940s, with the formulation of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, the right to free basic education became part of the policy framework of most developing countries, especially those that were receiving support from international agencies. The period between the 1950s and 1960s was dominated by the education-for-development discourse, when international agencies prioritised the notion of education as a means to economic growth. Chandani et al (2007:10) argue that this period resulted not only in the growth of public schooling, but that it also led to an increase in the enrolment rates to public schools throughout the developing world. They further point to the fact that the debt crisis in the 1980s, which marked a decrease in international aid, forced most developing countries to find alternative ways to finance their education systems (2007:10). The 1990s, with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and other international organisations' launch of the Education for All (EFA) movement, once again placed education at the top of the developmental agenda. Up to and including this period, the preoccupation of the international community was on gaining universal access to basic education for all children; the emphasis being on enrolment and physical access. The commitment to ensuring universal access to primary education is also contained in the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDG), which aims to ensure that children everywhere will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling by 2015. According to Alexander (2008:6), this statement contained in the MDG was "immensely ambitious yet conceptually minimalist". We argue that it failed to consider the multiple contextual factors encountered by developing countries that could hinder the achievement of these goals. As mentioned before, the preoccupation of the Western world was on ensuring physical access to schooling, and very little attention was given to educational outcomes and ensuring *expanded access* (post-enrolment) in terms of what happens to keeping the learner in school and ensuring quality education. In 2000 the Dakar World Conference reaffirmed its commitment to achieving the MDG by ensuring universal access to education by 2015. Govinda and Bandyopadhyay (2011:1) however argued that

> the Dakar Declaration put quantitative progress and quality of education in two separate baskets by creating a separate goal on quality distinct from universal schooling provision.

This dovetails with what Alexander (2008:1) said when he noted that setting up infrastructures for universalising basic education is one thing; universalising genuine belief in a pattern of basic education which is well conceived in its own terms, regardless of what follows it, is quite another. According to Govinda and Bandyopadhyay (2011:1) "only one whole report (for the year 2005) of the Global Monitoring Report (GMR) was devoted to the quality". They further note that the focus of the report remained at the "generic and philosophical" level, focusing on what quality means, but not on how it could be operationalised (Govinda and Bandyopadhyay 2011:1). What appears missing from the report is a focus on classroom and school-based processes or, as confirmed by Alexander (2008:vii), "pedagogy is often the missing ingredient in EFA discussions

on quality". For the purpose of this paper, borrowing from Gamede (2005:4), access to education is understood to mean "both the means of entry, which is the first step, and post-enrolment access that is reflected in the outcomes" of schooling, since this definition would encapsulate both physical access and access to quality education. In the next section we provide an overview of the possible frameworks that could be used to analyse the term epistemological access.

The human capital approach to education in South Africa

In this section we explore frameworks such as human capital theory, human rights discourse and the alternative discourses of social justice theory and the capabilities approach. The aim of this section is not to go into a deep critical analysis of the conceptual frameworks, but to draw on literature that could provide explanations of the main focus of each framework. We then look at how and when these frameworks dominated within the South African educational policy- making arena. Our main purpose for holding this discussion is to suggest that it is the dominating framework driving a country's education policies that ultimately determines how epistemological access is viewed.

The conceptualisation of education from a human capital approach was first pioneered by economists Gary Becker (1993) and Theodore Schultz (1963). Human capital theory considers education as an investment, with the economic productive ability of the human being as most important. The skills and knowledge acquired through education serve as a precursor, as the more skilful and knowledgeable a person is, the higher their wage earning. This becomes very important, especially for people living in poverty, where acquiring decent education (with the necessary skills and knowledge) can be "the difference between starving and surviving, and between merely surviving and having a decent life" (Robeyns 2006:72). The drive for human capital concerned economic productivity and valued education, skills and knowledge only if they served purposes of economic enhancement. The dominance of the human capital approach before the 1940s was based on the notion that education is fundamental to overall economic development and personal economic satisfaction.

Unlike human capital theory that sees human beings as productive beings, the rights discourse views humans as beings with ethical and political concerns. The human rights discourse, underpinned by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which was adopted by the United Nations in 1948, ensured that all children have a legal right to basic decent education (Robeyns 2006). The mobilisation of every child to be in schools largely implied that governments needed to play a central role and ensure that the resources needed to offer quality education are there (UNICEF 2003:8). This commitment was reaffirmed with the adoption of the EFA movement in 1990. Chimombo (2005:130) challenges the EFA movement's intentions by stating "whose Education for All and Education for All for what?", noting that although it is desirable for every child to have basic schooling, in most developing countries this is not always possible. As previously mentioned, basic schooling failed to recognise physical access

and access to quality education as being on the same side of the coin; instead it was being viewed as separate things (Alexander 2008). The rights-based theory was often blamed for being *merely rhetoric* especially in developing countries where external issues such as poverty and illiteracy could hinder the goals of this discourse.

Two alternative emerging approaches to educational policy that have not as yet received adequate exposure in literature on education are the capabilities approach and social justice approach. A critique and a call to move beyond the human capital and human rights approach and shift the focus to a conceptual model of capabilities approach was offered by Sen (1992, 1999). Explaining capabilities, a person has to comprise

> the ability to be well nourished, to avoid escapable morbidity or mortality, to read, write and communicate, to take part in life of the community, to appear in public without shame (Sen 1990:126).

Sen's (1999:19) concept of an "agency freedom" is central to the capability approach and key in addressing education. Sen uses a concept of agency freedom by which he means

> someone who acts and bring about change, and whose achievements are to be judged in terms of her own values and objectives, whether or not we assess them in terms of some external criteria as well.

Robeyns (2006:78) gives an understanding of education as a capability by qualifying that

> the capability approach is a broad normative framework for the evaluation and assessment of individual well-being and social arrangements, the design of policies, and proposals about social change in society.

In the capability approach education is important for both intrinsic and instrumental reasons (Dréze & Sen, 2002; Unterhalter, 2003). The focus on the importance of education as an intrinsic value in life means that attention is being paid to what people are able to do. The instrumental value of education relates to the goods that provide instrumental value (Pressman & Summerfield 2000:95). If education is understood as a capability in itself, it is then imperative to ask of the contribution of education and education policy in human capabilities (Walker 2006:170). From a capability perspective compulsory education for eligible children is then needed, with a qualifier that the education provided is of high quality and is aimed at shaping a full human being (Nussbaum 2003:320).

For Tikly and Barrett (2011), the social justice framework draws on capability theory and can be used as a basis for supporting and extending the rights-based approach. They base their conclusions on the work of Fraser (2008:16) who notes that

> overcoming injustice means dismantling institutionalized obstacles that prevent some people from participating on a par with others as full partners in social interaction.

In an African context these "institutionalised obstacles" are multifaceted and often differ from one context to the next. The social justice approach has three dimensions, namely "redistribution", "recognition" and "participation" (Fraser 2008:16). Taken

from Tikly and Barrett (2009:5), redistribution relates to the distribution of wealth or access to resources, recognition means to identify and then acknowledge the claims of historically marginalised groups in the African context, and participation or *participatory justice* is "the rights of individuals and groups to have their voices heard in debates about social justice and injustice, and actively participate in decision making" (Tikly & Barrett 2009:5).

To understand the human capital approach in the South African context, one has to trace the policies that were in place during the apartheid regime. Although marginalised to only a certain people, the policies of pre-1994 South Africa had a human capital tone which was veiled by the apartheid ideology and agenda. According to Tikly (2011:4) the human capital approach served as the main discourse and framework of choice during the apartheid era. He argues that it was often overshadowed by other dominating ideologies of apartheid. Due to the national and international pressure before and after apartheid's demise, coupled with the human rights discourse which was instrumental at the time, the human capital approach was slowly being replaced by the human rights discourse with local and international scholars and organisations championing South Africa's democratic cause.

The majority of world governments, leading donor agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) responded to the EFA call by providing funding, formulating policies and implementing initiatives that were aimed at improving the provision of basic education. Sub-Saharan Africa was faced with a big challenge and a desperate situation, and governments had to act promptly to ensure that the goals of EFA were met. According to Novicki (1998:1), more than half of the region's children were not in school, and adult literacy levels stood below the 40% mark. South Africa was excluded from attending the Jomtien conference because of the apartheid policies of the time. After the country gained democracy in 1994, the country has participated in all EFA processes and has embraced the EFA principles and goals (DOE 2002). South Africa's education policy focused on the right of access to education during the transition period to democracy (DOE 1995). Section 29 of the country's 1993 constitution states that everyone has the right to basic education and that the state should take reasonable measures to make education accessible (Republic of South Africa 1993). EFA released statistics for South Africa for the 1998/1999 period in their 2000 assessment report. Some of the alarming highlights in the assessment include a reported net enrolment of 87% (this indicated that the country was yet to fulfil universal access to education). Grade repetition rates were very high, especially for grade 1, and 67% of the population aged above 15 years was functionally illiterate at the time (UNESCO 2000:12). According to Motala, Dieltiens and Sayed (2009), the issue of universal education in South Africa is hindered by infrastructural backlogs depriving learners of equal opportunities to quality education. They further state that

> expanded access has little import unless it includes regular attendance, enables progression through grades at appropriate ages, and provides meaningful learning, achievement and completion … access must be more than just a place in a school for every child; it must be meaningful access (2009:251).

Even though the statistical results are contrasting, they do show a South Africa which is near to achieving the EFA and MDG. However, physical access has not translated to meaningful access and learners are yet to reach the required level of achievement and competency (DOE, 2005; Motala et al, 2009). Therefore, there is need to ensure that the learners are provided with quality basic education to ensure they pass in good time (UNESCO 2008:3).

In addressing the access conundrum in education, Motala et al (2009:260–261) suggests that

> the key South African access issue is not simply physical access (although there are significant marginalised groups who do not have access to schooling), but what learners have access to …

It is clear from the discussion that epistemological access, access to knowledge that could lead to successful schooling outcomes, still escapes the majority of South African learners. The question remains, if South Africa is on its way to achieving universal access to basic education in terms of physical access, how can we ensure that all learners in schools have epistemological access? In other words, what would epistemological access to basic education mean in reality? Before we address this question, a critical analysis of the term epistemological access is warranted.

Epistemological access: Towards a critical analysis

This section offers a critical analysis of the concept *epistemological access* in order to establish how we can define the concept within the boundaries of this paper. As mentioned already, the term was first coined by Morrow (2009: iv), a South African scholar who played a notable role in educational reform. The term appears to have been constructed while Morrow grappled with real concerns pertaining to higher education policy making and practice. The philosophy of epistemological access, for Morrow, is bounded by the past and present context in South African education. He captured most of his concerns in his book *Bounds of democracy*, which consist of nine essays that provide insightful reflections on higher education, more specifically his views on new ways to conduct academic practice in future (Morrow 1994:40). He first used the term in an article published 1992 with the title *Teaching large classes in higher education*, in which he describes the two dimensions of access to higher education; the first being institutional access (formal access) and the other being access to the knowledge that institution distributes (epistemological access), offering a clear distinction between formal access and epistemological access. To the contrary, Gamede (2005:53) warns that Morrow's concept of epistemological access is somewhat limiting, since it falls out of the human rights framework as it

> disregards issues of equity such as not only increasing access of learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, but also providing support in order to increase their chances of success.

Gamede further argues that Morrow's formulation of this concept "rules out the existence of a hidden curriculum that favours some and excludes others" (2005:58).

Robertson and Hill (2001:95) agree that marginalisation of certain forms of knowledge can compromise access to knowledge. Morrow (2009:78), however, asserts that

> epistemological access is not a product that could be bought or sold, given to someone or stolen; nor is it some kind of natural growth, such as the growth of plants or bodies. Epistemological access cannot be supplied or "delivered" or "done" to the learner; nor can it be "automatically" transmitted to those who pay their fees, or even to those who collect the handouts and attend classes regularly. The reason for this is that epistemological access is learning how to be a successful participant in an academic practice.

It appears that both Gamede (2005) and Robertson and Hill (2001), in their critique of Morrow's idea of epistemological access, are alluding to the political and social dimension of access to education and taking into consideration the type of learner which is referred to. Morrow (2009:78) does acknowledge that learners come from different backgrounds and that having certain things can facilitate one's epistemological access, but it still does not guarantee it. Morrow (2009:78) simply states that "in the same way in which no one else can do my running for me, no one else can do my learning for me". Both Morrow's ideas and the limitations which Gamede (epistemological access for whom and for what?) raised has implications for how this paper constitutes the provision of epistemological access. It also has further implications for the type of analytical framework (discussed later) that we will use to inform the way epistemological access will be constituted within the realms of this paper.

Although Morrow eloquently describes the meaning of epistemological access, it is not clear how it could be realised in reality or what measures will be used to judge whether epistemological access has been obtained. In other words, how does one gain access to the processes of knowledge construction? From the discussions above it is clear that the term epistemological access was mainly used as Morrow intended, as one dimension to understanding access to higher education. Morrow does however suggest that new ways of thinking about teaching are needed if we are to meet the challenges of enabling all learners to gain epistemological access (Morrow 2007:11–25). He goes further to posit that what is needed is a *realist focus* Lotz-Sisitka (2009:11) argues that the meaning of realist focus is not explicit in Morrow's work. She notes that one should

> move away from technical solutions to embrace an open-ended notion of epistemological access; to enhance reflexivity, agency and responsiveness to risk and vulnerability given that such conditions characterise the contemporary context in which children learn…

Similarly, Slonimsky and Shalem (2006:37) suggest *curriculum responsiveness* as a way to gain epistemological access. They draw on the work of Moll (2004:4), who writes about the notion of curriculum responsiveness, to the difficulties experienced by "under-prepared" students (Slonimsky & Shalem 2006:36). Moll (2004:4–7) notes that curriculum responsiveness embraces economic, cultural/institutional, disciplinary and learning responsiveness. Economic responsiveness to the curriculum means

> the extent to which the teaching and learning in a university meet the changing needs of employers by producing graduates that are innovative, skilful and competitive (Moll 2004:4).

Cultural or institutional responsiveness to the curriculum "entails accommodating diversity of socio-cultural realities of students, by developing a wider variety of instructional strategies and learning pathways" (Moll 2004:4). Disciplinary responsiveness of the curriculum entails

> a curriculum that is responsive to the nature of its underlying knowledge discipline by ensuring a close coupling between the way in which knowledge is produced and the way students are educated and trained in the discipline area (Moll 2004:7) .

Learning responsiveness of the curriculum entails teaching and assessing students in ways that are accessible to them. This includes making available what is valued about the underlying discipline, how it is assessed, and which evaluative criteria are of significance, but also adjusting the teaching to rhythms, and tensions and emotions of learning. Slonimsky and Shalem (2006:37) focus on the latter two ways of being curriculum responsive. Both Lotz-Sisitka (2009) and Slonimsky and Shalem (2006) expanded on Morrow's notion of epistemological access by shifting the focus away from external peripheral factors impacting on schooling to the internal processes of schooling.

In brief, it appears that Morrow's conception of how to gain epistemological access differs from the ways in which others have used it. For Lotz-Sisitka (2009) and Slonimsky and Shalem (2006) epistemological access appears to be the work of the institution's academic activities, whereas Morrow felt strongly about the individual student's role, noting that these are aspects that could facilitate, but not guarantee one's epistemological access. He does however propose that systematic learning is a necessary way forward, when he suggest "that teaching is the practice of organising systematic learning", noting that the

> practice of teaching is the practice that centres around the design of learning programmes that foster the gradual development of competences that cannot be learnt in an instant (Morrow 2007:15).

What the above discussion affords us are the debates around what constitutes epistemological access. We now turn to a discussion on what epistemological access to basic education could mean.

Epistemological access to basic education: What this could mean in reality

Drawing from the literature presented throughout this paper, this section attempts to unpack the notion of "epistemological access for whom and for what purpose?". Pendlebury (2008/2009), Jansen (2008/2009), Gamede (2005), Chimombo (2005) and Motala (2001) provide us with some understanding of how epistemological access can

be realised in basic education, thus shifting our focus away from higher education. For Pendlebury

> access is meaningful only when schools ensure epistemological access, and support children's systematic learning of basic skills, knowledge, values and practices, and do so in a manner that respects children's dignity and background (Pendlebury 2008/2009:24–25) .

She further states that epistemological access and systematic learning imply that learning must be structured so that children develop coherent ways of understanding and engaging with different learning areas. Teaching for meaningful access is about carefully designed learning programmes and materials that enable children to gradually develop competencies that cannot be learned in an instant, and that go beyond the informal learning that goes on daily at home (Pendlebury 2008/2009:24–25). Here the meaning of epistemological access dovetails with *meaningful access* and *systematic learning*, which extends beyond mere physical access and includes ways to ensure quality teaching and learning. Jansen (2008/2009:8) warns that in South Africa, especially in the early years of schooling, "access does not result in success for more than 50% of children". It appears from Jansen's reflections that for access or epistemological access to lead to success in schooling, one should reflect on the following: Access for whom (equity), access for how long (retention), access to what (curriculum) and access for what success (achievement)? In addition, for Gamede (2005), epistemological access at classroom level should be expanded to include the political and social dimensions such as

> who provides knowledge, what kind of knowledge is made accessible, what kind of knowledge is valued, who is being taught and what is the time allocation to the topic and the language of learning and teaching as well as various teaching styles employed … (Gamede 2005:4).

Chimombo (2005) offers thoughts on the manifold challenges and dilemmas facing developing countries like South Africa in providing quality basic education. Here he discusses opportunity cost of schooling, equity and gender issues, cultural and religious attitudes, efficiency and quality, relevance of education and financial issues as reasons for the challenges in achieving EFA in developing countries (Chimombo 2005:131–144). From his findings he concludes that

> all evidence is pointing to the fact that education should be inclusive, responding to the diverse needs and circumstances of learners and giving appropriate weight to the abilities, skills and knowledge they bring to the teaching learning process (2005:147).

There appears to be two key debates developing out of the literature presented in this paper relating to how learners could gain access to school knowledge (the goods distributed by the school), especially the more than 50% of South African learners who do not have meaningful, epistemological access to early schooling. On the one hand there are those who are strictly in favour of separating horizontal knowledge (everyday knowledge) and vertical knowledge (school knowledge)(see Bernstein, 1990; Moore & Muller, 1999), and on the other there are those who believe in bringing the two together in the teaching and learning process (Lingard & Mills, 2007; Hattam

& Zipin, 2009). Marrying school knowledge and children's everyday worlds appears to be one way of allowing all children, especially previously marginalised children, to gain epistemological access to early schooling. This idea of marrying the two knowledge discourses emanates from the work done in Australia and dovetails with the notion of productive pedagogies (Lingard & Mills 2007:233), and the RPiN (Redesigning Pedagogies in the North) project (Hattam & Zipin 2009:297–301). They aimed at designing a curriculum and pedagogy which engages students in meaningfully relevant learning that at the same time enables academic successes. The RPiN project used the "funds of knowledge" approach developed by Moll, Amanti, Neff and Gonzalez (1993:132) among Hispanic communities in the USA, to capitalise on the students' household and other community resources in the classroom (Fataar 2012:12). Fataar (2012), argues that drawing on the funds of knowledge approach is not enough; he suggests

> a further "pedagogical modality"; the necessity of scaffolding from life-world knowledge engagement (everyday knowledge) to explicit and practical learning of the cultural codes (school knowledge) needed for success in mainstream school work (Fataar 2012:12).

In this way, according to Fataar, one could establish a pedagogical relationship between these two knowledge discourses, one which respects the importance of the vertical knowledge of school knowledge and would provide a useful bridge between the life-world context of disadvantaged students and the knowledge codes that inform school knowledge (Fataar 2012:4). It is interesting to note that both the funds of knowledge approach of Moll et al (1993:132) and the pedagogical modality offered by Fataar (2012) are based on the social justice approach to education. Henning (2012:185) warns that

> a country cannot claim social justice in education if teachers do not know their subjects, and if they do not know how the children and youth that they teach learn these subjects.

In South Africa teachers are often accused of not having sufficient content knowledge, and this has implications for adopting a social justice approach to education.

In closing, in this paper we attempted to conceptualise the term epistemological access, especially in terms of foundation phase schooling. After perusing the literature we came to understand that epistemological access goes far beyond mere physical access. It appears to refer to what happens after children are enrolled in school, shifting the focus from institutional access to meaningful or expanded access. What is certain from the literature is a cry for more research into pedagogical sites, where teachers and learners interact for the purpose of teaching and learning. In other words, a move away from placing too much emphasis on redistribution (Fraser 1996:3–6), to concentrating on what Alexander (2008:43) calls the "missing ingredient" to quality education, which is pedagogy. This, we argue, would mean less research

philosophising about *what* is needed to ensure that all learners achieve success in schools and more research into *how* this could be made possible.

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