Positioning open access in a transformative paradigm

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Overview

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- Critical theory concepts - scholarly communication
  - Alienation
  - Labour exploitation
  - Power control and monopoly
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Introduction

- University knowledge & research should transfer to goods and services for social justice goals
- Open access and social justice calls for the transformative worldview in the scholarly communication
- Commodification and alienation of knowledge as the norm (Pyati, 2007)
- Social justice driven open access models support African development
  - social justice concept
- Participation in the open access movement should be driven by unrestricted scholarly communication
• Transformative worldview interrogates dominant social structures that marginalise humanity
  ➢ alienation, power control, exploitation, etc. (Creswell & Creswell, 2018)

• Transformative paradigm theories include *inter alia*, critical theory, feminist theory, queer theory, critical race theory (Creswell & Creswell, 2018)

• Transformative theoretical lenses are the basis on which social justice service is built

• **Critical theory** lens is “inclusive of gender, sexuality and race; and emphasises on human emancipation and social inclusion” (Held, 1980)
Contextualising critical theory

- Traditional scholarly publishing is a dominant system – commodification of knowledge (Pyati, 2007)
- Global capitalism on the information industry violates rights to information and to education
- Obstruction of knowledge transfer to industries thus affecting production and service provision
  - effects on the economy, improvement of primary health and other services
- Commodification and control of knowledge flow (copyright restrictions) impact education sector
  - unaffordable cost of textbooks affecting higher education (Mishra, 2019)
Contextualising critical theory

Power

Knowledge

Subjects

Institutions
Critical theory concepts & scholarly communication

- Alienation
- Labour exploitation
- Power control and monopoly
- Social exclusion and marginalisation
- Empowerment and social justice
Alienation

- Alienation concept explains labour in the capitalist society (Crossely, 2005)
- Labour has much wider context than paid labour
  - labour is a practice through which humans transform their world
- Alienation is utilised to achieve total control as powerful stakeholders control individuals’ products of labour
- Traditional scholarly communication publishing alienates intellectual property
  - copyright, subscriptions & APCs
Alienation and conformation

• Publishing behaviour in the industry promotes conformism
• Research impact evolution is driven by metrics like high impact factor (Cochrane et al., 2018)
  ➢ focusing on prestige (individualism)
  ➢ promotion and tenure is linked to metrics from commercial databases
  ➢ research impact on society is not a priority
• Culture of research publishing and evaluation forces content creators to conform to alienation of knowledge
• Who benefits? - capitalists
Labour exploitation

• Funders and universities - tax payers – fund research

• Submission of manuscripts to journals is followed by voluntary peer-review (Raju et al., 2016)

• Copy-editing could be outsourced for a fee

• The cost of the final output is not affordable
  ➢ university libraries cancel journals yearly
  ➢ licenses for knowledge use restrict users
  ➢ knowledge transfer into policy development, goods, services will not be achieved
Power control and monopoly

• Author contracts require signing away of copyright prior to content publishing
• Publishers/journals hold copyright and terms of use depend on copyright holder
• Publishers of books and textbooks follow a similar system
  ➢ prohibit redistribution and re-use
  ➢ prohibit derivatives and sharing – OERs and open textbooks
• Copyright transfer bestows power in publishers & promotes monopoly
Social exclusion & marginalisation

- Purpose of research is to uplift the society
- Knowledge is a critical tool in developing an information economy - inclusivity
- Commodification of content has adverse effects as they exclude creators of content
- Lack of access to knowledge excludes individuals or groups in diverse activities
- Social exclusion exacerbates marginalisation thus strengthens colonial social classes
  - income gaps, gender salary imbalances
Empowerment and social justice

• Open access movement emerged to democratise the scholarly communication industry and some of its objectives include:
  ➢ disrupting the subscription model
  ➢ open licensing of knowledge to share knowledge – equal access – equity

• Open publishing of knowledge with open (creative commons) licenses promote sharing of content and re-use

• Access to open licensed knowledge permit further creation of content
Empowerment and social justice

- Users freely access knowledge that can fast track development through:
  - health service provision
  - economic projects, critical for low-income communities
  - agricultural projects at grass routes level as small scale farming is critical for food security
  - educational development in diverse sectors

- These activities empower humanity and thus driving social justices goals
Conclusion

• Research is meant to support development and should be driven by social justice

• Publishing in proprietary journals alienates knowledge and hinders human progress

• Commodification of knowledge further marginalises low income communities and historically disadvantaged groups

• Open access should be the default and is only complete when equitable access to knowledge and participation in knowledge creation is attained
"The first people a dictator puts in jail after a coup are the writers, the teachers, the librarians — because these people are dangerous. They have enough vocabulary to recognize injustice and to speak out loudly about it. Let us have the courage to go on being dangerous people." ~ Madeleine L'Engle

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