A slow reading [of] notes and some possibilities of liberated, open, becoming universities

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Background and purpose

University similar to church is one of the oldest institutions passing and preserving cultural heritage. In addition, universities are active societal contributors and influential communal contingences also in our contemporary societies. However, recently increasing number of these traditional and historical functions of universities have become hijacked by neoliberal practices and values. Oftentimes alternatives to the restructured and liberated universities are considered as unwanted exceptions. Furthermore, potential higher education anomalies cannot be fully materialized or practiced due to the limited resources, paralyzing normative practices, market-driven beliefs, and capitalistic values of dominant higher education systems and structures. Many neoliberal universities have also a totalizing function or highly stipulated position as Biesta (2011) notes “as if there is no alternative” (p. 36). In fact he called for imagination, a response that shows that there is always an alternative to the logic of competition and the culture of fear. He would like to see more “smaller gestures” and “creativity that is political in that it seeks to insert other ways of being and doing into the university” (p. 45-46).

Rather than continuing neoliberal discourses we would like to take a step forward, discuss, dream, and image diverse possibilities or universities to come, to open up “spaces of difference where new possibilities might emerge from the previously unthought or unknown” (Davies & Bansel, 2010, p. 12).

Design
In this paper stepping forward, discussing, and visioning will be done through hesitation and slowness. We draw from Wittgenstein’s (1980) notes and his experimentation with slow reading and writing. Wittgenstein emphasized how a text should be read in the right tempo and sentences ought to be read slowly. More specifically, we follow Wittgenstein’s aphoristic style (notes, short and individual thoughts, and paragraphs separated by spaces) to make readers think more than read (fast) especially since speed and need for speed could also be seen as one symptom or outcome of ever ticking and producing neoliberal higher education machinery. Hesitation and slowness as a research practice follows also the fragment(ed) note by Fichte (2012) who writes that “[W]hy do scientific findings have to be more complete than the first outline? Voids, mistakes and gaps reformulate the question of freedom and change” (p. 416). Similar to first outline we imagine, ponder alternatives, and write notes about fragile futures of liberated, open, and becoming universities, and suggest some potentialities for inserting other ways of being and doing into the university systems.

References


