**CITATION: EDWARD WEBSTER**

Edward Webster was born on 29 March 1942 and educated Selbourne College. He has a BA Hons and University Education Diploma from Rhodes University, an MA in Politics, Philosophy and Economics from Oxford University, England, BPhil from York University England and PhD from University of the Witwatersrand.

Websteris currently Professor Emeritus in the Society, Work and Development Institute (SWOP), at the University of the Witwatersrand which he has served for almost 40 years. He is recognized by locally and internationally for his significant contribution to scholarship, especially in the field of Industrial Sociology. His *Cast in a Racial Mould (*1985), showing how the labour movement in South Africa was shaped by changes in the labour process, remains a classic.

More recently his book with Rob Lambert and Andries Bezuidenhout *Grounding Globalization: Labor in the Age of Insecurity* was awarded the prestigious American Sociological Association award for the best scholarly monograph published on labour in 2008. He is the author of seven books and 108 academic articles, as well as numerous research reports.

He pioneered the academic study of the sociology of work and labour in South Africa. As Head of the Department of Sociology at Wits University for ten years (1988- 1995; 2000-2002) he focused on transformation of the curriculum and staff development (particularly of young, African scholars). Webster transformed it into the leading department of sociology in Africa. He introduced an MA by course work and an honours programme in Industrial Sociology which has produced many of the key industrial relations scholars and actors in South Africa. Professor Webster founded, and was Director of the Sociology of Work Unit (SWOP), for twenty-four years.

He also developed the discipline of Sociology through his active membership in the South African Sociological Association (SASA) of which he was President for three years. Through the creation of working groups on the public issues of the time, such as education, labour, gender, militarization and the state, he gave the association new energy and direction.

Professor Webster was active in attempts at transformation of the university since his appointment in January 1976. He led the historic research report by Wits Academics in 1986 *Perspectives of Wits*, which was aimed at changing the university from a bastion of white privilege to a more open and inclusive institution that would produce a new generation of black sociologists committed to serving society. He served as senate representative on the University Council for eight years and contributed to the resolution of many highly contentious issues and debates.

In 2008, SWOP was recognized as a strategic area of Wits University’s research and granted Institute status. SWOP is globally recognized as a model of what has been termed “Public Sociology” (Burawoy, 1991) which seeks to broaden public dialogue. The SWOP breakfast seminars reporting on completed scholarly research have become widely known for their capacity to attract a diverse audience including many members of the public, ranging from corporate executives to trade unionists. Working with a wide range of different research partners, Webster has held fast to his commitment to what he called ‘critical engagement’. He established an ambitious research programme to train young students, attaching them to research projects on the transition to democracy.

An internationally recognized sociologist, Professor Webster was rated in 2004 as the top sociologist in South Africa by the National Research Foundation (NRF) for his scholarly work. He has connections to several research institutes locally and around the world.

He is a Visiting Professor at the Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER) at Rhodes University. Earlier this year, he was a fellow at the Stellenbosch Institute of Advanced Studies (STIAS) where he began his book-length manuscript on Labour after Globalisation. In 2014, he was appointed a fellow at the Institute of Sociology, Friebrich-Schiller University, Jena, Germany. Professor Webster was the first Ela Bhatt Visiting Professor of Development and Decent Work at the newly established International Centre for Development and Decent Work (ICDD) at Kassel University, Germany in 2009–2010. He was a Senior Fulbright Scholar at the University of Wisconsin, Madison in 1995–1996.

Webster is on the International Advisory Board of the Economic and Labour Relations Review, *Labour, Capital* and *Society, Work, Employment and Society, Social Forces,* and the *Labour Studies Journal.* He was founder and Editor-in Chief of the *Global Labour Journal*, a joint venture of Wits University and Mc Master University in Canada. He was also President of the Research Committee on Labour Movements of the International Sociological Association 2002–2006.

He was founder and Chair of the Global Labour University at the University of the Witwatersrand 2006–2009, a global initiative by the International Labour Organization (ILO) that connects universities in Germany, India, South Africa and Brazil.

He was a Founder Member in 1974 of the *South African Labour Bulletin*, South Africa’s premier journal of labour and continues as an honorary board member. He co-founded the first workers college in South Africa, the Institute for Industrial Education (IIE) in 1973. He was a Non-executive Director of the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA), a Board Member of the following: Chris Hani Institute CHI), the Labour Job Creation Trust, the Human Science Research Council (HSRC). He is currently on the Human Resources Development Council of South Africa (HRDC) chaired by South Africa’s Deputy President.

He currently leads a south-south interdisciplinary research project examining how India, Ghana, Brazil and South Africa are responding to the growing informalisation of work. He recently completed the research projects in his research cluster in SWOP, the Decent Work and Development Initiative, and in August published the results in the leading international journal in the field, the *International Labour Review*, Geneva. He is the leader of a ‘catalytic research project’ titled Hidden Voices: Left thought under Apartheid, in the newly established National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIHSS).

He continues to do a great deal of postgraduate supervision and has to date produced a total of 42 masters and PhD graduates (17 PhDs and 25 MA graduates).

In his keynote address at the colloquium to mark Webster’s formal retirement Professor Michael Burawoy from the University of California pointed to SWOP as a model of universal relevance to defending the university in difficult times. “SWOP has universal relevance. It provides a vision that defends the integrity of the university, not as a retreat into the ivory tower but as an advance into the trenches of civil society, that sees the sociological imagination and political engagement not as antagonists but as partners.” (Burawoy, 2010)

For his scholarly contributions, commitment and advancement of democracy through labour activism and nurturing of several generations of leading labour sociologists it is befitting that Professor Eddie Webster is awarded an honorary doctorate degree from the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.