

Preface

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We are today facing some of the greatest challenges in human history: growing inequalities in the distribution of wealth, unwavering racism and social exclusion, and the consequences of accelerating climate change. This transdisciplinary issue of the *International Journal of Development Education and Global Learning* brings a forceful perspective from the South on these unacceptable global injustices.

The contributors argue that meanings derived from dominant liberal world views are tacitly assumed to exist objectively and to impose themselves on discourses and on minds quite independently of who expresses them. At a deeper level, Africa has long borne witness to cultural and epistemological oppression and the concerted efforts of generations of Western discourses across disciplinary borders that unsuccessfully tried to subjugate and silence knowledge local to the Global South. Some held a distorted view of Africa as a blank slate, while others regarded knowledge, education, and civilization as a uniquely Western achievement.

The key effect of this outlook on the disciplines that drive the academy is indescribable. Based as it is on the conceits of objectivity and neutrality, it creates suspicion of all other forms of knowing, and most critically that of indigenous knowledge, culminating in the vicious process of 'othering' that we see promoted by the academy even today.

This issue argues that we need to 'go further back in history beyond the point where commerce replaced kinship, to find the premises of a viable future' (Richards, 9). The genealogy of the sciences of law and economics can be traced back to the Roman and British empires and basic constitutive rules remain in discourses about, and practices in, development. As Bhaskar argues, quoted by Richards, 'standard science as it stands today has many useful practical applications, but it does not have a metaphysical monopoly on the right way to talk about what *is*'. The business school curriculum in recent years has had to be revised to enable graduates to promote a more inclusive and sustainable growth agenda, in a world that faces growing levels of inequality and other social and ecological threats.

Epistemological preferences in Western academia over the centuries became the measure of what was to count as valid knowledge in thinking about development.

The question now raised is how academia may contribute to human development by the inclusion of epistemological and ethical characteristics of modernity's 'other'.

Is it true that the beautiful ones are not yet born? The answer to this can be found by 'rethinking thinking' itself from its constitutive rules: how paradigms are made; how rules are policed; how the architecture of modern institutions is being fashioned to behave the way it does. In practical terms, transforming the previously colonized into participants in a new moral and cognitive venture against oppression requires more than just periodic elections. As I wrote in another context in 2009:

The atrophy of human capabilities that has characterised human development in the context of both bandit colonialism and the modern triage society demands the development of a plurality of insights, of critical traditions, and a deepening of the tools for diagnosis and hence the quality of prognosis.

(Odora Hoppers, 2009: 168)

This issue outlines a number of transformative trajectories, pedagogical approaches, and an alternative canonical perspective. Together these have a global significance providing an important contribution to learning the world over.

Reference

Odora Hoppers, C. (2009) 'From bandit colonialism to the modern triage society: Towards a moral and cognitive reconstruction of knowledge and citizenship'. *International Journal of African Renaissance Studies – Multi-, Inter- and Transdisciplinarity*, 4 (2), 168–80. Online. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/18186870903481210> (accessed 21 September 2015).