

In the 1970s, Gordon Training International developed a theory to explain the stages involved in acquiring a new skill. At first, learners are likely to be unconsciously incompetent. They may be completely unaware that any deficit exists. But as they become aware, and as they come to understand the value in developing a certain skill, they move to a stage of conscious incompetence. It is only at this point that they are able to begin to learn. They will attempt to master the skill, and fail often. But those failures are the beginnings of competence. At some point, the learners will master the skill but will only be able to execute it with deliberate effort and concentration. They will be consciously competent. In time, though, through regular use, those learners will be able to execute the skill without thinking about it and become unconsciously competent.

Moving towards a decolonised education could follow very much the same route. Perhaps a good starting point is to make ourselves aware of what the challenge is, and to reach an understanding of and conviction for the need to change. It is a vital stage, because so long as our endeavouring to acquire this new 'skill' is half-hearted, we will always be drawn to the familiar and comfortable. It might seem far easier – better even – especially after the bitterness of a few failures, to abandon the project altogether. Developing a new 'skill' is never simple. It requires dedication in terms of time and effort. It means reprioritising. It means shedding old habits. It means a more frequent sense of failure. It might mean criticism from others who see no value in the task. And unless we are utterly convinced of the importance of what we are embarking on, we are likely to fail.

As educators, we are in the business of developing Achebe's educated, participatory citizenry and his educated, morally-grounded leadership. It is a responsibility that educational institutions have long embraced. But the world as it is now is not the world the existing institutions were designed to serve. We need a new type of citizen, a different kind of leader. We need educational institutions that are willing to accept the challenge.

**Peter Ruddock: Assessment specialist:
Official Languages and the Arts**

FRENCH PUPILS GIVE MEALS ON WHEELS A PUSH

Meals on Wheels received more than R40 000 in donations this week from pupils studying French in matric. The pupils were inspired to donate to the non-profit organisation – which provides nutritious meals to affected communities and the elderly in South Africa – thanks to the generosity of the authors of their prescribed works, who provided all matrics with their short stories at no cost.



Pictured, from left, are Meals on Wheels Western Cape director Norman Ryan, French writer Agnes Ledig, deputy head of Reddam House Atlantic Seaboard Wouter Oelofse, and Meals on Wheels Western Cape financial director Simba Madzana.

Sponsored by the South African French Teachers' Associations (SAFTA), the French Embassy and the IEB (Independent Examinations Board), the idea of paying it forward was conceived by Wouter Oelofse, French teacher at Reddam House Atlantic Seaboard, and Michele Cassuto of Herschel Girls' School, and included events held in Cape Town, Durban, Johannesburg and Pretoria.

Pupils across the country had the opportunity to meet Agnes Ledig, the winner of the Readers' Prize for *Femme Actuelle* in 2011 and the *Maison de la Presse* Prize in 2013. Agnes talked about the art and craft of writing fiction and what it takes to succeed and in so doing, reminded pupils of the importance of giving back to people in need.

She encouraged pupils to cherish every moment in their lives and to relish the beauty of creative writing and of the simple things in life, like the act of giving to a person in need, since she firmly believes that a single act of kindness often inspires many more acts of kindness in a world desperately in need of all the kindness it can get.

Note: this article appeared in the IOL – Atlantic Sun: <http://www.iol.co.za/atlantic-sun/news/french-pupils-give-meals-on-wheels-a-push-9185805>, 18 May 2017

COMMENTS ON THE U21 RANKING OF NATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEMS 2017

This article has been written in response to the report released in May 2017 by the Melbourne Institute of Applied and Social Research. The main authors are R. Williams, A. Leahy, and P. Jensen. The report can be found at: <http://www.universitas21.com/article/projects/details/152/u21-ranking-of-national-higher-education-systems-2017>.

Universitas 21 is an international network of 26 research intensive, comprehensive member universities, founded in 2007. The rankings report does not specify the selection process for the 50 national systems on which the rankings are based, but it would appear that a wide range of geographical and socio-economic diversity is represented.

The U21 Ranking provides interesting and complementary information to more traditional rankings.

First, it shifts focus from individual institutions to national systems. In so doing, it not only provides a more holistic picture but helps to challenge the trend for all institutions to morph into the 'research-intensive' university model on which other rankings are based. This is a welcome corrective, as systems of higher education need a range of institutions to cater for individual and societal needs and abilities.

However, taking a national perspective is a challenge for systems in which there is great diversity in quality, such as South Africa, where only three universities make it into the top 500 ranking – the University of Cape Town at 191, the University of the Witwatersrand at 359, and Stellenbosch University at 395 (QS World University Rankings® 2016-2017).

Second, it recognises the huge impact of resources on the ability of higher education systems and universities to achieve high levels of quality, and factors these into a complementary set of listings. As can be seen below, this dramatically changes the relative performance of South Africa.

The U21 ranking uses 25 measures of performance, clustered into four categories. These are briefly glossed below – see the report for the full explanation of the variables taken into account.



SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2017

IN THIS ISSUE

Comments on the U21 Ranking of National Higher Education Systems 2017

He who is reluctant to recognize me opposes me – *Frantz Fanon*

French pupils give Meals on Wheels a push

5 Anerley Road Parktown
Johannesburg
2193
P O Box 875
Highlands North
2037

Tel: 011 483 9700

Fax: 011 486 2654

Email: assess@ieb.co.za

www.ieb.co.za

The four categories are:

- i. Resources: e.g. state subsidy (percentage of GDP and quantum per student), other forms of income, research support;
- ii. Environment: e.g. gender proportions of staff and students, factors relating to the policy environment, private/public mix in systems, and data quality;
- iii. Connectivity: e.g. internationalisation of staff, students, international research and publications, university/industry and research transfer partnerships and publications;
- iv. Output: e.g. numbers of articles produced, number of institutions in the 2016 Shanghai Jiao Tong scores, enrolment ratios (participation rates), unemployment rates of graduates.

Tables 1 and 2 show how South Africa fares in comparison to the other systems in the study.

	Place in rank	Score ¹
Resource	41	42
Environment	28	78.5
Connectivity	31	42.2
Output	28	27.2
Overall	37	46.6

	Place in rank	% dev ²
Resource	11	17.1
Environment	34	-5.6
Connectivity	1	52.2
Output	9	18.6
Overall	3	20.2

Notes:

1. The 'Score' is calculated by allocating a score of 100 to the best-performing system on a variable, and expressing the scores of other systems as a percentage of this. So, for the 'Resource' category in the National U21 rankings, South Africa is placed 41st out of 50, and its score of 42 signifies that its level of resourcing is 42% of that of the best-performing system, in this case Sweden.

2. '% dev' refers to the percentage deviation from expected value at a nation's level of GDP per capita. By way of example, in Table 2, South Africa is ranked 11th with a score 17.1% higher than would have been expected, given its level of resourcing.

Discussion of Table 1: In general, the ranking results are unsurprising, and consistently show countries such as the United States, Canada, Sweden, Australia and Singapore at or near the top of the lists. South Africa, as can be seen, places in the bottom half for all categories, faring particularly badly in respect of resources.

The efficiency of the United States system is vividly illustrated by its pole position in the category of 'Output' and by the extent to which it exceeds that of the country in 2nd position, the United Kingdom, which achieves only 69% of the USA's output.

Discussion of Table 2: When the level of economic development is taken into account, South Africa's position changes considerably. In the 'Connectivity' category, it occupies the 'best-performing' place, achieving a much higher score than would have been predicted relative to its level of per capita income. Its lowest score in this ranking is in the 'Environment' category, where general quality issues bear on achievements. These include policy implementation, governance, and stability, where the South African system has known challenges. Importantly, this category also includes the private/public provision mix based on the percentage of students enrolled in private institutions, and the numbers of students registered for Level 5 TVET-type qualifications – both of these tend to disadvantage South Africa. Overall, South Africa is placed at rank position 3 out of 50, with Serbia and the United Kingdom taking the top two places – this is a notable achievement.

It could be argued that the Universitas 21 ranking system provides convincing evidence for the need for more effective differentiation in the South African higher education system. Rather than expensive and probably unachievable attempts to create research-intensive universities across the board, resources and capacity should be aimed at

Along with this bias towards the 'West', comes the adoption and normalising of a paradigm for understanding the world. Learning and understanding occur within an Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment European framework, which might be at odds with some African or Asian ways of understanding the world and how people function within it. While most will be familiar with the ideas of Marx, Nietzsche or Freud, for example, few will know of Henry Odera Okura, Kwame Nkrumah or John Mbiti. Not only our knowledge, but how we receive that knowledge and interpret it, how we integrate it into our thinking and thus our behaviour, is limited by a colonial legacy.

While it is true that educational systems can be – and have been – deliberately designed to serve specific ideological agendas, often the problematic ideologies perpetuated through education are simply the consequence of a society that has, over time and through familiarity and constant use, 'normalised' the worldview embedded in the educational system. But as educational leaders, it is imperative that we acknowledge that the ideological frameworks on which our education systems are founded are not neutral. They serve to legitimise certain worldviews at the expense of others. They serve certain political, social and economic agendas. What is centralised and prominent on the internal 'maps' we use to navigate our understandings of the world will have more power than what is not. And as educators, we need to be aware that European ways of learning are currently at the centre. The consequence of this is that those individuals and groups in society who identify closely with the dominant ideologies undergirding education will always have political, economic and social advantages, which those who cannot identify as readily, will not.

But what if things looked different? That is the question decolonisation seeks to address. Bigotry and prejudice of any sort exist because the systemic structures in which we operate create worldviews that perpetuate these problematic ways of seeing the world. If the very systems that created the problems are still the primary vehicles through which we educate young people, how can we expect a different outcome? By embracing decolonisation, we

choose to recognise that if we are responsible for having assembled this framework in the first place, even though we may not have done so deliberately, we also have the capacity to dismantle and begin building anew, with a different outcome in mind.

We can begin by making choices that place non-European understandings in the centre of our maps. We can turn the map upside down and put South Africa in the position of greatest prominence. If we wish to serve young people truly, then are we not obliged to redesign the systems of instruction so that they are fit for the purpose of meeting our children's needs? Is it not fundamental to effective pedagogy that children are able to recognise themselves in their learning in ways that empower them?

To do so, we need to ask ourselves some probing questions: Do our prescribed works selections validate the variety of learners in our classrooms? Are our school rules appropriate for these learners? Have we configured our learning programmes so that they value diverse ways of looking at the world? Do we provide learners with academic role models with whom they can identify? Do all learners really have an equal voice? Do we expect young people to have to adapt to the culture of the school before they can begin to learn, or are we genuinely learner-centred and willing to adapt the culture of the school to meet the unique individual needs of each learner? Do our schools – in their teaching and learning programmes, their codes of conduct, their dress codes, their communications, their routines – genuinely value the diversity of the student and staff bodies? Or do our schools remain monolithically European in their outlooks? If so, what do we need to do to 'spin the globe' so that we can look at the world a little differently?

The scale of the task of transforming existing educational structures towards something more inclusive is daunting. It seems clear, though, that the educational models that served colonial agendas, the assumptions that underpin what schools believe young people ought to know and how they ought to come to know it, are glaringly insufficient in meeting the needs of a multicultural, ethnically diverse South Africa. But where do we begin to change things?

promote the understanding that what is 'central' is not fixed; we compel learners to consider other potential centres; we require those who have benefitted from having their own paradigms centralised to occupy the marginal spaces too; we create the opportunities for those who may have been relegated to the periphery, a legitimate space at the centre.

This understanding of decolonising does not reduce the educational space. It is – contrary to what the prefix 'de-' might suggest – not simply a removal of everything Western. The intention behind decolonising education is not to remove Europe or the United States from the map. Doing so would mean that we have learnt nothing about the issue of discrimination, and simply replaced one set of exclusionary power relations with another. Rather, decolonising education ought to facilitate an expansion of our worldviews, a shifting of our positions in relation to knowledge. It ought to challenge the notion that any single worldview can be considered the 'normal' one.

The incidental act of early European cartographers describing their world from a European perspective has had an enormous impact. The fact that the maps of Europeans were used by the explorers whose journeys culminated in the colonisation of much of the world by England, Spain, France and Portugal, among others, and which led to a large influx of Europeans into the rest of the world, has profoundly shaped the way people construct both their own identities, and the identities of others, today. The boundaries between countries, the very notion that countries can be divided into 'East' and 'West', 'North' and 'South', with all the associated problematic connotations, can be directly linked to early European maps.

Thus in very many subtle ways, the fact that Europe currently occupies the upper central space in common map projections, influences how people come to understand themselves in relation to the rest of the world. By virtue of this positioning, European culture – its art, its music, its history, its languages, its values – has been allowed greater influence over how we shape society than cultures from places on the periphery of the map.

Even now, that 'map' is imprinted onto various social endeavours and influences the way that institutions understand their functions. Education is no exception. For example, education prowess is still measured, to a large extent, according to the learner's ability to master one or more European languages. The texts regarded as seminal in many fields of study are written by 'Western' thinkers. Much of the literature we regard as 'classic', for example, is generated in the 'West'. Familiarity with the works of Shakespeare, as valuable as that might be, has become almost synonymous with being literate, reinforcing the Anglo-centricity of English in the modern world. Even the figures held up as pioneers and role models within our disciplines, if not actually European, at least think in European ways. The pedagogical approaches, the curriculum choices, the methods of assessment, the very ethe of our educational institutions promote European understandings of the world.



Peter Ruddock

The result is that knowledge of the world has a tendency to be determined according to European norms. Thus if a professor from a major 'Western' university posits an hypothesis, it is likely to be accorded greater credibility among academics than a similar hypothesis advanced by an African or Latin American professor, for example; and citations from 'Western' universities would tend to be regarded as weightier than citations from Asian or African universities. And this prejudice towards 'Western' knowledge is not restricted to university scholarship only. Overseas schooling systems and qualifications – particularly Western ones – are still generally perceived as superior to local ones by much of the public.

building institutional diversity (in terms of type and mission but not quality) and streamlining student and staff mobility within the system. The role of the private sector, and of industry/business, in strengthening the system, would also provide needed expertise and broaden the range of offerings.

Prof Nan Yeld is a member of the Board of Directors of the IEB. She is currently a Senior Adviser (Higher Education & Development), British Council and previously held the position of Dean of the Centre for Higher Education Development at the University of Cape Town.

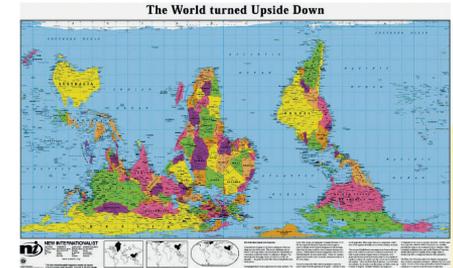
HE WHO IS RELUCTANT TO RECOGNIZE ME OPPOSES ME – Frantz Fanon

Reflecting on the notion of decolonisation

In today's world, the well-educated person is not simply the one who has acquired knowledge or skills, but the one who possesses the capacity to interrogate that knowledge. After all, the acquisition of knowledge is never a neutral process; knowledge is generated by particular groups in society for particular purposes. Without understanding the sources of the knowledge we acquire, or whose interests that knowledge serves, we risk becoming pawns to tyrants. 'A functioning, robust democracy', stated Chinua Achebe in an interview with Monitor Africa correspondent Scott Baldauf, 'requires a healthy, educated, participatory followership, and an educated, morally-grounded leadership.' The development of both of these relies on an education system fit for that purpose, an educational programme that requires critical engagement with knowledge.

The demand for decolonising education, then, is essentially a demand for critical literacy, where knowledge is presented as a social construct that is intimately linked with norms and values. This would necessitate that the focus of educational activity not be on what young people think, but on how they think, that they think. Our understanding, then, is that the drive for a decolonised education ought not to centre so much on what is or is not worth learning, but on understanding how learners are being

positioned by the educational environment with respect to what is being learned.



Accessed at <http://files.abovetopsecret.com/files/img/qz51f859ba.jpg> on 19/6/2017

Take, for example, the map projections that we have come to accept as 'normal' and 'correct'. A spherical world existing in an infinite universe has no top or bottom, no centre or sides. It is only when one is required to project such a sphere onto a flat surface that one is compelled to make decisions about what must be placed in the centre and what must be placed on the sides; what goes on the top and what goes on the bottom. Because the cartographers who developed the maps we know were European, it is Europe that occupies the central and dominant position on the map projection. But projections that place Africa or Australia or Brazil or India in the centre would be equally accurate, or inaccurate, as the case might be.

We are of the opinion that decolonising education starts with a pedagogical approach that makes these choices, and their artifice, explicit. All knowledge, all assessment, all pedagogical approaches, are articulations of power relations in society. They serve particular agendas. A decolonised education needs to expose those agendas. While it is not always the case that these agendas are deliberately generated or sustained, and while certain educational practices are often perpetuated simply because they have become normalised through familiarity, it is nevertheless inevitable that if we continue to root our educational systems in ideological frameworks that were designed, whether deliberately or not, to foster certain colonial mindsets, then we will continue – to some degree – to perpetuate those mindsets. By decolonising education, we