

DOING SOUTHERN THEORY: TOWARDS ALTERNATIVE KNOWLEDGES AND KNOWLEDGE PRACTICES IN/FOR EDUCATION

SPECIAL ISSUE EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

**Keita Takayama, Stephen Heimans,
Rose Amazan and Vegneskumar Maniam,**
University of New England, Australia

KEYWORDS Southern theory, postcolonial,
decolonial, alternative knowledge practices

Southern theory in and for education

Debates have been under way for some time over the very nature of 'foundational knowledge' in many social science disciplines. At the core of the debates lies the collapse of the universalist premises of disciplinary knowledge. Many scholars have exposed the highly provincial nature of what has been considered 'theory' and its exclusive process of knowledge production which centres largely on the institutions in the global North (Alatas, 2006a, 2013, Chen 2010; Connell, 2007, 2014, 2015; Mignolo, 2011; de Sousa Santos, 2014). For instance, modernity, the central concept in sociological theorizing, has long been conceptualized as a peculiarly Western social phenomenon, disconnected from its underside, coloniality (Bhambra, 2007; Go, 2013). These critiques have shown how the uneven flows of intellectual influence and the intellectual division of labour, which designates the West as the source of 'theories' and the Rest as 'data mine,' underpins the contemporary geopolitics of academic knowledge. Raewyn Connell's (2007) *Southern Theory: The global dynamics of knowledge in social science* from which this special issue has taken its cues, has both

initiated and emerged out of these ongoing critiques of the state of academic knowledge and its processes of production on a global scale.

Building on Connell's *Southern Theory* and others' decolonizing knowledge projects, this special issue aims to explore the implications of these alternative knowledge projects for education scholarship. Education, as one of the 'applied' or 'subordinate' disciplines in social science and humanities, is always attentive to the intellectual trends in more established disciplines such as philosophy, sociology and anthropology. And yet the emerging debate over *Southern Theory* in these disciplines, generated partly by Connell's (2007) work, has resulted in little impact so far on educational scholarship, although there are some exceptions (Hickling-Hudson 2009; Singh 2010, 2015; Zhang, Chan & Kenway, 2015). *Doing Southern Theory* contributes to reversing these trends by positioning Southern Theory at the centre of theoretical and methodological debates in education scholarship. More importantly it suggests positioning education at the forefront of Southern Theory work by acknowledging that Southern Theory is essentially a pedagogic project.

Indeed, the significance of this special issue lies partly in the fact that we view Southern Theory as a fundamentally pedagogic project. This is because Southern Theory requires us to take up a role as a 'teacher' in relation to fellow researchers both in and outside education. That is, it involves inviting others to take the risk of venturing into the unfamiliar intellectual world that sits outside the academic centres of the 'West' so as to broaden their epistemic horizons. Second, Southern Theory is pedagogic in that education scholars can play a leading role. The ironic consequence of the institutional vulnerability of education as an 'applied' field of study is that it has become more open to different intellectual work and pedagogic traditions outside the West. For instance, much of the scholarship on critical pedagogy in the English-using academia has drawn considerably from the rich intellectual tradition of popular education in South America (see Apple, Au & Gandin, 2010). The continuing scholarly attention given to non-formal education work in South America—including Cuban adult literacy campaigns (Boughton 2010; Hickling-Hudson, 2011) and the alternative educational movement of

Brazilian landless workers (Tarlau 2013) both of which are informed by Paulo Freire's writings—testifies the existence of long traditions of learning from the South in critical scholarship of education.

But it is not just within the radical tradition of education scholarship that learning from the South has long been practiced. Even quintessentially Western education thinkers have learned from non-Western philosophies and pedagogic traditions. For instance, the considerable intellectual influence that John Dewey received during his two-year visit to China, and which subsequently shaped his thinking (Wang, 2007), testifies to the long history of transcultural learning in Western education scholarship, though oftentimes the intellectual influence from 'elsewhere' is not explicitly acknowledged by such Western education thinkers. Perhaps the field of comparative and international education is an exception in this regard as many scholars explicitly use their knowledge of non-Western pedagogic traditions to broaden the discussion of teaching and learning in the West (e.g., Cave, 2007; Hayhoe, 2007; Lewis, 1994). By recognizing and building on this rich tradition of Southern Theory work in education scholarship, this special issue attempts to reposition the field of education at the forefront of this alternative epistemic project.

Hence, this special issue does not merely discuss moral, ethical and empirical imperatives for learning from the South. Rather, it aims to put Southern Theory to use—hence the idea of *doing* Southern Theory, in order to explore alternative research methodologies in and for education. But of course there have been some, if not many, attempts to do Southern theory in education scholarship. For instance, Michael Singh (2010, 2015) has developed an innovative knowledge exchange project at the University of Western Sydney, Australia where Chinese and Indian higher degree research students' knowledge of intellectual and pedagogic work is fully utilized as a source of education theory development. Likewise, a group of Asian education scholars at Monash University, Australia (Zhang, Chan & Kenway. 2015) have drawn upon Kuan-Shin Chen's (2010) *Asia as method: Towards deimperialization* to develop alternative, Asia-focused methodological approaches to education research. This new education scholarship, produced in Australia, has highlighted

both the possibilities and challenges of doing alternative knowledge practice in education research on the basis of the epistemic critique of Northern theory that Connell and others have initiated. The fact that researchers based in Australian institutions have been driving this southern theory work in education is significant to our special issue, which has been put together by a group of education researchers based in an Australian institution. This special issue embraces as a useful epistemic resource the contradictory location of Australia—aptly described by Connell (2007) as ‘a rich periphery country’ (see Takayama, 2016).

While *Doing Southern Theory* builds on such emerging scholarship on Southern theory in education produced in Australia, it also attempts to extend the existing discussion further. Our work begins with an explicit recognition that doing Southern Theory in and for education poses some questions for both education and southern theory. For example, we could ask: What does Southern Theory ‘do’ for education? What new ways are made thinkable about what education ‘is’ or what its purposes are? How might ‘doing’ Southern Theory in education change its practices and education research? How does Southern Theory change the possibilities for conceptualizing education? How does it change what education might become? Perhaps ‘doing’ Southern Theory might offer resources that help rearrange how educators (and education researchers) think about knowledge and the institutional and political practices that are involved in its production.

Additionally we might ask how would doing southern theory in, and for, education change Southern Theory itself? What does education ‘do’ for Southern Theory and how would the former influence the latter? To engage with these questions creates the need to think seriously about what education ‘is,’ or what it was ‘before’ its ‘contact’ with Southern Theory. Here we would make the point that education is not just that which is done in schools (or other education institutions), and maybe education is not done in these places at all. From this point of view Southern Theory might help us disarticulate education from the places in whose names it is done- by offering resources to work to undo the hierarchical orders in which knowledge is produced.

We suggest that education needs Southern Theory as much as the other way around. We need to be attentive to how doing Southern Theory can change what education 'is' and/ or what it is 'for' and how doing Southern Theory in education could potentially reshape the way in which we understand Southern theory. Answering any of these questions posed above can be disturbing and yet exhilarating as it could open up new ways of thinking. It is always incomplete, because the process of doing so is necessarily fraught with contradictions and tensions. To honestly come to terms with such challenges arising from doing Southern Theory in education in a particular institutional context of Australia universities is what we aim to achieve in this special issue and what might set it apart from the existing research literature.

The South

Central to *Doing Southern Theory* is the notion of the *South*. A number of scholars, many of whom, if not all, are based in the Global South, have used it to intervene in the global processes of the production and circulation of social science knowledge dominated by the select institutions of the global North (Alatas, 2006a; Connell, 2007; Mignolo, 2011, de Sousa Santos, 2014). In much of this discussion, the 'South' is articulated out of the critique of the complicit relationship between the historical evolution of social science as a discipline and the processes of Western imperialism and colonialism of the 'rest of the world.' Reflecting this critique, the term South is articulated to denote the regions of the world—south of the equator—that have histories of colonial oppression and anti-colonial, post-colonial and de-colonizing struggles. 'South' is a geographical as well as temporal marker for the regions of the world that continue to live with the consequences of colonial legacy in culture, subjectivity and knowledge.

But in this special issue we are particularly interested in the epistemic significance of the notion of the *South*. According to Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2014), the South symbolizes people's suffering vis-à-vis and struggles against capitalism, colonialism, patriarchy and imperialism and *the unique epistemologies that have emerged out of them*

(emphasis added). What we see in de Sousa Santos's assertion of *epistemologies of the South* then is the epistemic privileging of the South, akin to the epistemic privileging of women in the feminist standpoint theory (Harding, 2004). Here, the South is not just a geographical and temporal but, more importantly, an epistemic marker; the South is constituted as a source of unique knowledge in that it has emerged directly out of the experience of various forms of oppression, including colonialism and the struggles against them.

Furthermore, the South is a source of 'unique' knowledge in a slightly different sense. That is, the South is defined as an epistemic location that sits on the margin, if not entirely outside, of the global hegemony of Northern modernity. It symbolizes where the global spread of rationality and empiricism has reached and yet has been intensely contested or recontextualized to such an extent that it has failed to colonize knowledge production (de Sousa Santos, 2014). Hence, the South is positioned as a location where different knowledges continue to be produced and practiced enabling those in the North to understand the limits of Northern knowing. That is, it is a critical epistemic resource with which those in the North can unlearn its privilege of 'knowingness' (Hokari, 2011) or to remain epistemologically diffident (Appadurai, 2000). In this sense, the current turn to the South as a source of 'new' knowledge ('new' only to those in/of the North, of course) reflects the 'crisis' of Northern intellectual work increasingly recognized in the post-postmodern and post-positivist era (de Sousa Santos, 2014).

But there is something more to be said about the notion of the South. That is, it is an inherently relational, oppositional and hence political concept. It is a concept that relies strategically upon the artificial binary division of the world—the North and the South which are in and of themselves colonial constructs—in order to expose the uneven global power relations which perpetuate the existing inequalities both in material wealth and cultural and intellectual influence. It is a relational concept in that both North and South need each other in order for them to mean anything. The South is an inherently oppositional term in that it serves to generate an imagined sense of commonality among those who oppose the cultural and economic dominations of the powerful countries and globalised corporations of the

North. Indeed, the concept has generated considerable political momentum as witnessed in the success of World Social Forum meetings over the last decade, and now it is gaining momentum in intellectual domains. All of this is despite the fact that the dividing line between the global haves and have-nots does not neatly correspond to the equatorial line.

Hence, it is important to recognize that our use of the term *South* is strategic. We are using it as a heuristic device—a temporary, imaginary point of enunciating—that we recognize contains the seeds of its own possible destruction. It is self-destructive because, when unreflectively used, it dangerously erases internal relations of domination and subordination within the South and ignores the existence of the South within the North. The South-North binary upon which the term rests could also prevent us from exploring the global relational aspects of various forms of oppression that cut across the South-North binary (Go, 2013). These issues suggest that doing Southern Theory requires us to be highly vigilant about the kind of politics of knowledge we inevitably participate in with our assertion of a Southern perspective. Crucially, the tensions and paradoxes of doing Southern Theory have been underexplored in the existing literature about Southern Theory (Connell, 2007, Singh, 2010, 2015; see Takayama, 2016).

‘Sources’ of Southern Theory

In this special issue we follow Raewyn Connell’s idea of four sources of Southern Theory: 1. Indigenous knowledge, 2. Alternative universalism, 3. Anti-colonial knowledge and 4. Southern critical engagement with Northern theories. These are in no way mutually exclusive, discrete or static categories. Rather, we see them as a set of heuristic devices that guide our thinking and overall direction of this special issue. They are particularly useful as they remind us of the distinctive epistemic contribution that the Southern Theory project aims to achieve, helping us differentiate our work from the usual critical scholarship in education that tends to rely heavily on Northern theoretical constructs and their particular articulations. While we use these four categories as an overall framework of the special issue under which five articles are

assembled in the follow pages, we also acknowledge that often times the articles often draw upon more than one source of Southern Theory.

According to UNESCO (2015) local indigenous knowledge refers to the understandings, skills and philosophies developed by societies with long histories of interaction with their natural surroundings. For Indigenous peoples in many parts of the world, local knowledge informs decision-making about fundamental aspects of day-to-day life. This knowledge can be related to a cultural complex that encompasses language, systems of classification, resource use, social interactions, group rituals and spirituality. Many Indigenous scholars in education have explored these indigenous knowledges as a source of new insights with which to rethink current conceptualizations of teaching and learning in schools and research methodology (e.g., Martin, 2008; Smith, 1999).

But the notion of Indigenous knowledges has been appropriated not just to refer to Indigenous people's knowledge but also to the knowledges produced by non-Indigenous people. According to Syed Hussein Alatas (2006a), there is much indigenous knowledge 'hidden' in various parts of the globe. Intellectual work produced in South East Asia and the Middle East has been largely ignored by academics both in the West and the East because of the presumption of inferiority and irrelevance to the current Western-dominated model of academic knowledge development. In *The Myth of the Lazy Native*, Syed Hussein Alatas (1977) highlights how indigenous knowledge was treated by the colonial administrators, especially in Southeast Asia. It was considered as inferior and irrelevant, compared to the Western knowledge production by the colonial masters. Syed Farid Alatas's (2006a, 2006b, 2013) recent scholarship recognizes such 'indigenous' knowledges as a source of social theories, as seen in his extensive volume on influential Islamic scholar Ibn Khaldun's writings (Alatas, 2006b, 2013). In our special issue, Aaron Sigauke's article that explores contemporary implications of the indigenous Southern African concept of *Ubuntu*, and Vegneskumar Maniam's explication of implications of Islamic scholar Ibn Khaldun's work for education scholarship, fall into this category.

The second source of Southern Theory is alternative universalism. According to Connell (2015), alternative universalism in the context of Southern Theory refers to the systematized body of scriptural, philosophical, and historical knowledge developed over centuries outside the Judeo-Christian civilisational influence. For example, in the context of the Indian subcontinent, the local knowledge which was produced by scholars from Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism and Jainism can be explored and debated far more widely as an alternative source of educational thoughts. The various sects or traditions of Hinduism, upheld by those following the way of life Shaivism, Vaishnavism and Shaktism, are also worthy of investigation, as are the two major teaching branches of Buddhism, the Theravada and Mahayana (Rahula, 1978). In the Middle East context, the knowledge produced by Muslim scholars, especially from the different Muslim sects such as Sunni, Shia, Sufi, Kharijiyyah, Ahmadiyyah and Mahdavia, have hardly been recognized as a legitimate source of knowledge in and for education, despite that each one of these sects has contributed significantly towards the development of Muslim scholarship including education (Rane, 2010). The religious knowledge of other minorities from the Middle East—for instance the Baha'i faith, Yezidism, Zoroastrianism, Samaritans and Druze—can also be explored systematically from an academic perspective (Maadad, 2009). Further study into all these different sources of Eastern religious knowledge would surely enrich the field of social science. From the education perspective, it would provide a source of alternative knowledge to compare with the Indio-Christian and Muscular-Christianity orientation of Western education which currently dominates so much of Western and Eastern education systems (Mangan, 1987). In this special issue, Siri Gamage's article that looks closely at the Sri Lankan Buddhist intellectual tradition illustrates the value of this approach, as does the aforementioned article by Maniam on Ibn Khaldun.

The next two sources of Southern Theory are closely interrelated and yet some noteworthy differences can be discerned for our heuristic purposes. The third source of Southern Theory is anti-colonial knowledge; the body of knowledge that has emerged directly from anti-colonial struggles. Many of the anti-colonial leaders/intellectuals from Africa and Asia—such as Amílcar Cabral, Frantz Fanon,

Mahatma Gandhi and Albert Memmi just to name a few—continue to influence contemporary critical social analyses today (see Chen, 2010). Some of these writings constituted the intellectual basis of what is later known as postcolonial theories, while anti-colonial politics of the earlier generation has been transformed due to the strong influence of post-structuralism in contemporary postcolonial thinking (e.g., Chibber, 2014; Dirlik, 1994). In fact, many social analysts continue to rely on these anti-colonial intellectual works to point to the partial nature of social theories developed primarily in the West which often left undertheorized the underside of Western modernity, ‘coloniality of the rest’ (Bhambra, 2007; see also Connell, 2007; Go, 2013). This line of analysis has been undertaken by Hickling-Hudson (2011) in education where she draws upon anti-colonial Southern Theories in disrupting received notions of education as conceptualized in the North. Paul Reader’s article in this special issue, exploring the notion of place in learning, can be placed in the first (Indigenous knowledge) as well as in this camp, as it draws upon his experience of working with three generations of Antakerinja and Lower Southern Aranda men in the Lake Eyre Basin of South Australia and their insights into colonial dispossession and land enclosure.

The last source of Southern Theory Connell identifies is the knowledge generated out of Southern intellectuals’ critical engagement with Northern theories. This group should include the aforementioned anti-colonial intellectuals given that all of them engaged substantially with the Western critical scholarship of their time. Perhaps, one of the most noted cases of this source of Southern Theory is the body of knowledge that has been developed in South Asia, the so called Subaltern Studies. Subaltern Studies began in the beginning of 1980s with an explicit aim of promoting the study and discussion of the subalternist themes in South Asian Studies. The principle aim was to rectify the elitist bias found in most of the academic works in South Asian Studies that ignored the experiences of those on the periphery of society. They also contested the Marxist School owing to the fact that mode of production-based narratives had the tendency to merge inevitably into a nationalist ideology of modernity and progress. Moreover, Subaltern Studies contributed to the development of neo-Marxist scholarship by identifying the limitation of Marxist work that fails to take

account of the ideologies of caste and religion as crucial factors in Indian Subcontinent Studies (see Ranajit Guha & Gayatri Spivak, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Amrita Biswas).

It is important to stress that this fourth source of Southern Theory is generated out of the practice of transnational knowledge 'transfer.' For instance, many diasporic intellectuals, including the aforementioned anticolonial and postcolonial thinkers, engaged in a form of knowledge transfer, the very process which necessarily involves a critical reassessment of Northern theories in order to make sense of the specificities of their local context. This appropriation of Northern theory could be done for the purpose of explicit political projects as pursued by anticolonial thinkers or for more pragmatic ends of national economic development as pursued by diasporic skilled expatriates. Much in the same way anti-colonial thinkers did, those diasporic expatriates engage in the process of knowledge localization through which some, if not all, begin to develop critical insights into the very presumption of 'universality' upon which much of Northern development theory is premised.

Doing Southern Theory

So what does 'doing Southern Theory' actually mean in practical terms? We propose that it entails any, or all, of the following:

1. Identifying and contesting the processes and mechanisms of academic knowledge production that sustain the uneven knowledge producing relationship both within and across nation-states,
2. Bearing witness to the consequences of the epistemic indifference of the global North,
3. Serving as a 'curator' or a 'translator' of neglected intellectual work produced in/of the South so that those discredited/disenfranchised knowledges are re-acknowledged and resuscitated; and
4. Mobilizing Southern experiences and knowledges as legitimate intellectual resources to illuminate the provinciality and parochiality of Northern knowledge.

Doing Southern Theory, hence, is inherently dangerous for the following reasons. Firstly, its explicit aim is to challenge the existing structure of knowledge production and dissemination and various institutional mechanisms that sustain it (publishing, peer review, promotion, grant, research, postgraduate supervision and teaching etc). Doing so could potentially mean that one would have to question the very legitimacy of the institutional hierarchies and mechanisms that underpin much of what we academics/researchers do. This could have dire consequences for one's professional life and career prospects etc.

Secondly, it necessarily involves navigating the minefield of politics of knowledge that pertain both within and across nation states and beyond. It forces us to acknowledge the essentially political nature of our knowledge and knowledge practice and hence to remain vigilant about the consequences, including unintended ones, of what we choose to produce (or not to produce, by implication) and how we produce it. It could potentially make our conventional intellectual work very difficult, if not impossible.

Thirdly, it is 'dangerous' to the established field or discipline, because doing Southern Theory could require us to seek alternative epistemologies that sit on the very margin of disciplinary knowledge work. It is an attempt to seek, validate and resuscitate knowledges (and knowledge-producing practices) that have been marginalized in defiance of an underpinning Northern ways of knowing.

Doing Southern Theory at a Regional University in Australia

One of the problems of metropolitan theory—a body of knowledge typically produced in the powerful institutions of the global North—is its automatic elevation to the status of 'universality.' That is, those who produce 'theories' in the global North often ignore the temporal, geographical and cultural specificities of the knowledge they produce and problematically apply it to the 'rest of the world' (Hall, 1992). Indeed, what we know as 'theory' in social science in general is actually 'ethno-theory' (Connell, 2007) in that it is a particular kind of knowledge that has emerged out of a particular condition and hence meaningful to a specific group

of people under a given historical circumstance. Though we do not wish to take the essentialist view of knowledge and the context of its production that presumes that the relevance of knowledge is strictly contained within a given space and time of its production, we also believe that the knowledge we produce needs to be explicitly located in order for us to stay vigilant about the implicit universalist claim to which knowledge work, including this special issue itself, might subscribe.

This special issue challenges the artificial disconnection of knowledge from the very context and process of its production, and we believe that this is part of what *Doing Southern Theory* must entail. So what are the contexts and the processes out of which this special issue has emerged and how have they shaped its intellectual direction? Answering these questions necessitates some analyses of the particular institutional context within which those of us who contributed to this special issue operate today and how we have positioned our special issue in relation to it.

Neoliberal logics have fully infiltrated into the day-to-day operation of universities in advanced industrial countries. Activities previously cherished (i.e. deep thinking and reading, rigorous debate, reflection and meaningful research) in the scholarly world have been replaced with consumer-oriented, corporatization and marketization models. As such “public interest intellectuals” are [being] replaced with “commercially oriented professionals” (Lynch, 2006, p.2). This shift over the last two decades or so is evident in many Australian universities today, including institutions which employ all the contributors to this special issue.

We are surrounded by a plethora of performance metrics not only measuring but also driving particular kinds of research ‘productivity.’ So much so that quantity and speed now dominate the criteria against which the value of our scholarship is determined. On top of this, the success of our professional career now depends not just on how well we as individual researchers perform on the basis of these metrics, but also on how our institutions are ranked based on our collective research ‘outputs.’ The intense pressure created as a result of these measures has resulted in a pervasive sense of fear and anxiety in academia. This has the potential to render our intellectual work less meaningful, not just to ourselves

but to the world outside academia. The competitive pressure has also atomized academics, forcing us to act as possessive and competing entrepreneurs driven more by self-promotion than collaboration and collegiality.

This institutional context has immense implications not just for the way we produce knowledge but also to what kind of knowledge we produce. This is because the majority of internationally recognized, ‘high-impact’ academic journals in which we have been pressured to publish our intellectual work, are based in a handful of academic power house nations, namely USA, UK and some select Western European countries (Connell, 2014). These journals’ editorial boards are virtually monopolized by those who are affiliated with metropolitan institutions, the source of ‘theories,’ though there have been some modest attempts to diversify the regional and cultural origins of editors and board members. The universality of Northern theories are carefully protected in such journals, as ‘dangerous’ knowledges are often excluded through the peer review process (Singh & Han, 2010). Hence, unless challenged, this new knowledge economy could seriously undermine the kind of alternative knowledge and knowledge practice initiated by Southern Theory.

This special issue is underpinned by our collective critique of the very institutional context described above. All the contributors, including the guest editors, currently work or have worked at the School of Education University of New England (UNE), one of the oldest regional universities located in a semi-rural town of Armidale, Australia. UNE, just like many other regional universities in Australia, has been marginalized in the emerging two tier university system where the government research funding concentrates increasingly in the so called ‘Group of Eight’ (G8), research-intense universities all located in metropolitan cities such as Adelaide, Brisbane, Perth, Melbourne and Sydney. The school was ranked Level 2 (5 is the highest)—‘below the world standard’—by the Australian Research Council’s 2012 Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA). Since then our school has recognized this poor rating as “having direct implications for funding for higher Degree Research Scholarships, particularly for the international cohort, and attracting competitive external grant income” and thus set it as a goal to achieve an ERA rating of 3 or above by 2018 (UNE School of Education,

2015, p. 14). This has resulted in termination of funding support for academic activities that bear zero value in the current ERA system (e.g., conference presentations and papers) and more push towards 'high impact' research outputs.

It was as part of this effort that the school introduced a new research structure at the end of 2013. It identified 10 (later reduced to 8) strategic research areas in our school that are "reflective of the major strengths in research performance, grant successes and Higher Degree Research student numbers..." (UNE School of Education, 2015, p. 9). Subsequently 10 research network leaders were identified around whom academic staff were encouraged to form networks and through which all internal research funding was to be distributed. This was our school's effort to closely align individual research with the school's and university's strategic priorities. All the guest editors and contributors to this special issue belong to one of the research networks, Comparative and International Education Research Network (CIERN), which one of the authors (Keita) leads.

Instead of aligning ourselves with the competitive and individualistic ethos out of which research networks were created in the first instance, we have turned the space created by the ERA-driven initiative into something that critiques it and engages us in alternative knowledge-producing practices and relationships. Since February 2014, we have pursued a series of discussions over what kind of knowledge-producing relationship we should aim for and what collective knowledge project we are to pursue. It was on the basis of this discussion that we identified Raewyn Connell's *Southern Theory* as a starting point of our collective discussion and writing project. Throughout the first half of 2014 we read *Southern Theory* chapter by chapter, workshopped each other's abstracts and then drafted papers, organized a panel at the Australia and New Zealand Comparative and International Education annual meeting in November 2014 and then hosted Professor Connell for a two day workshop in March 2015 where our manuscripts were further developed.

Most notably, our approach to this collective writing project began with the recognition of our differences over which each of us needed to negotiate. Our research network CIERN houses 11 active members who are immensely different

in research interest, theoretical, philosophical and methodological orientations and specialization in the discipline of education. We are also extremely diverse in terms of national, linguistic and cultural backgrounds, with many of us born or trained overseas and bringing diverse life histories from around the world. For instance, Aaron Sigauke, born and schooled in Zimbabwe and trained in Scotland, is a social science curriculum specialist interested in citizenship education, Siri Gamage, born and bred in Sri Lanka, is an education sociologist trained in Hawaii and Melbourne with a focus on multicultural/anti-racist education, Rose Amazan, born in a Haitian immigrant family in the USA and educated in New York and Sydney, specializes in gender and development with a particular focus on diaspora knowledge and gender in Africa, Vegneskumar Maniam, born and bred in Malaysia and trained in Adelaide, has keen interest in Florian Znaniecki's humanist sociology, Keita Takayama, raised in Tokyo Japan and trained in North America, does Southern theory work from a postcolonial perspective, Stephen Heimans, raised in Cairns and a son of a Dutch immigrant father and a Australian mother, draws intellectual inspiration from post-humanist thinkers, and Paul Reader is an art-based community educator who migrated from England. Working with these enormous cultural, biographical and disciplinary differences can be exciting but also enormously challenging. It required us to spend many hours first of all trying to understand where each of us had come from and figuring out how our different interests and expertise could fit together coherently as a scholarly volume.

The challenges we faced as a group were further amplified by the current institutional context where speed and the drive for quantifiable outputs are constant pressures. But we have explicitly recognized our difference as a valuable resource for our knowledge work and agreed to accept the challenges associated with it. In so doing, we have tried to push back against the current institutional practice that privileges competition, efficiency and quantitative productivity and deliberately used slowness as "a catalyst for conducting inter-disciplinary conversations and critical research that may disrupt, lead us to think deeply and critically" (O'Neill, 2014, p.16).

The idea of putting together this special issue around doing Southern Theory was not at all planned from the beginning but rather slowly evolved, in the early part of 2014, out of a series of fortnightly meetings where we read Connell's *Southern Theory* and other cognate literature. Throughout the course of our collective work, we have explored an alternative disposition towards academic life; a change in the rhythm and pace in which academic work and the cultural practices around research and knowledge production are usually carried out. We stick to this approach as much as we could, though some were less comfortable with this approach and some left our group partly because of this 'slowness.'

Indeed, being able to slow down is a form of privilege in the institutional context typical of Australian universities today. As Martell (2014) rightly points out, "slow is not a choice or something that is in isolation from underlying structures and pressures" (p.8). Indeed, unthought out attempts to slow down can have regressive consequences, "because it excludes those that can't afford it" (Martell, 2014, p.13). We certainly do not underestimate the powerful institutional constraints that are placed upon us, nor do we ignore the fact that some of us, especially early career researchers who are still on 'probation' (Amazan, Heimans and Maniam) and casualised academic staff (Thomas and Reader), are much more susceptible to the kind of institutional pressure characterized as 'publish or perish' than those whose institutional standings have been 'confirmed.' Treanor is correct when he states in his *Manifesto for a Slow University* (2007) "that speed is in part an institutional demand, in which individuals will suffer consequences for their employment and careers if they do not comply" (cited in Martell, 2014, p.8). Hence, the consequences of trying to engage in meaningful and yet time-consuming knowledge-producing practices and relationships needed to be carefully thought out, with particular attention to the wellbeing of those who were most vulnerable in our group. This certainly created a set of tensions and contradictions that we had to work through as a group. In addition, we had to deal with various tensions that were typical of such collective work. In particular, power inequalities in terms of gender, 'race,' language and academic status have emerged from time to time, forcing us to be constantly vigilant about the implicit ways in which they could undercut the democratic culture of the network.

Despite, or perhaps due to, these achievements none of which count towards the research output metrics designed by ERA, CIERN is under pressure at the time of this writing when the newly proposed research network structure of the school suggests merging of four existing research networks, including CIERN, into one to achieve more focused research activities in our school. More focused investment into five, as opposed to eight, research networks was supposed to enhance the school's overall research output, while allowing the school to better align its research priorities with the strategic interests of the university. This special issue you are about to read was being compiled in the midst of our ongoing struggle to protect our collective knowledge work in the context of increasing neoliberalization of university where decisions made at the university's executive level are to dictate what we are to research, and where Heads of School are more keen to account themselves for auditors and accountants than to their colleagues and students (Davies & Petersen, 2005).

All these contexts and processes of knowledge production thus far discussed suggest that our approach to this special issue contrasts with the 'business as usual' in academia around compiling such a journal special issue. Normally, special issue guest editors decide upon the theme of the special issue in consultation with the journal editors and then identify and invite researchers that they know can make the kind of contribution that the editors see as suitable for that theme. In this approach the overall narrative of the special issue is, by and large, predetermined by the guest editors. There is little negotiation between the guest editors and contributors over the focus and direction of the special issue. Rejecting this conventional approach, we saw in the process of putting together this special issue something beyond its tangible output. To us, this special issue is not an end goal in and of itself; rather it is a part of the long process of putting Southern Theory in action through which we come to rethink how we relate to each other and how the relationship conditions the knowledge we produce. It was a way of nurturing trust and collegiality among us in the network so that our knowledge-producing relationship would become further strengthened. As a direct or indirect result of this, many more intellectual projects could spring out of collaboration. This special issue, therefore, embodies the kind of alternative knowledge-producing practices and

relationships that we see at the heart of doing Southern Theory in and for education.

Overview of the articles in the special issue

This special issue contains five articles that have been written by members of our research network. As we have said above, these articles have emerged out of our combined efforts at grappling collectively with Southern Theory and education. As such the editorial process we have undertaken has been collaborative (although not usually without a deal of debate), and we hope will be productive- in an intellectual, not instrumental sense that is! The articles included here are very diverse in their foci and contexts and we hope that they may stimulate thought and offer resources for, and examples of, doing Southern Theory in Education.

In order to put Southern Theory into action, all the contributors to this special issue have either drawn on the intellectual work generated in the places of their 'origins' (Gamage in Sri Lanka and Sigauke in Zimbabwe) and by intellectuals whose background has little to do with the author (Maniam's article) or built on the critical insights provided by 'others' who are marginalized from the process of academic knowledge production and whom they were fortunate enough to come to know intimately either through PhD dissertation work (Thomas) or other professional experience (Reader). Each of the contributors has made concerted effort to move beyond the Western episteme and explore knowledges and perspectives generated in the 'rest of the world' so that other education researchers can follow suit.

The first article, written by Aaron Sigauke, is *Ubuntu/hunhu in post-colonial education policies in Southern Africa: A response to Connell's Southern Theory and the role of indigenous African knowledge(s) in the social sciences*. As suggested by the title, the article responds to Connell's 'Southern Theory' (2007) where she demonstrates how African indigenous knowledge can be a useful component of 'Southern Theory' in understanding social life. His article focuses particularly on the Zimbabwean curriculum that was put in place at independence as part of the reform process- and meant to strengthen the country's new socialist ideology. The curriculum included aspects of what Connell (2007) has

presented in her book as the ‘traditional African indigenous knowledge’ that had been side-lined during the colonial period and is now meant to challenge that position from a southern perspective. Aaron situates his analysis of curricular policy in his own personal experience as an indigenous person of Zimbabwe who went through the education systems both during and after the colonial period. That experience has led him to ask the question: How have post-colonial governments implemented aspects of Southern Theory and how serious and genuine have their attempts been?

The second article by Paul Reader is *Knowing our place: Decentring the Metropole through place identity in the Lake Eyre Basin*. Grounded in Paul’s experience of working intimately with Antakerinja and Lower Southern Aranda men in the Lake Eyre Basin of South Australia, he explores dimensions of culture, learning, power, and land enclosure raised by Connell in the chapter called ‘Silence of the Lands’ (2007). The argument rests on the idea that all of us have antecedents in the savannah or open woodlands where human agency once maintained a balance between primordial forest and desertification. Likewise, many of us have rural forbearers who experienced land enclosure in one form or another. Paul writes from both his personal heritage of rural English artisans and their conversion into the English working class, and the meeting of the Lower Southern Aranda Men in the 1980s. The article reveals, through a *Southern* perspective and derived from contact with three generations of Central Australians, a resilience in the face of unacknowledged land enclosure. Paul hopes that the reader can share in the tensions, the loss and grief that becoming knowledgeable of the intersections between selective colonial scientism, deeper spiritual understandings and awakenings of ecological connection, brings. In a world where most humans are now corralled in the conurbations of a global *metropole*, the article raises questions about *Northern* knowledge/ignorance systems and priorities in opposition to the *Southern* episteme that may help support alternative dimensions and explanations of life and human actions.

The third article by Siri Gamage is *A Buddhist Approach to Knowledge Construction and Education in Sri Lanka (Ceylon) in the Context of Colonisation and Southern Theory*. In this article Siri looks at Sri Lanka’s Buddhist intellectual tradition

and its contribution to knowledge construction in the face of expanding and resourceful colonial language and education. The article highlights the extent to which societies like Sri Lanka had their own, long standing intellectual traditions and knowledge production methods as well as concepts, theories, approaches and formulations that enabled the consideration of human existence, its change, and various dimensions of self and society. More specifically, based on the writings of one such intellectual, David Kalupahana, the paper firstly highlights key elements and concepts of the Buddhist intellectual tradition such as sensory data and perception process, dependent arising and theory of causation, concept of non-substantiality (*anitta*), ego consciousness and prejudices, conception of society and moral life based on Buddhist ethics and values. Secondly, Siri elaborates on the nature of an alternative, contemplative education based on non-attachment and self-awakening in place of the currently dominant rational-empirical education that perpetuates self-centeredness and constructed identities. This alternative education, argues Siri, is based not only on knowledge and skills but also on attitudes and values suitable for a sustainable future of the humanity. In sum, Siri's paper demonstrates how intellectuals in the global periphery subjected to colonial domination and education based on a modernist paradigm can circumvent the obstacles and pressures emanating from such dominance to formulate different world views, foundational scholarship and education while being critical of the dominant paradigms of thought simultaneously.

The fourth article by Vegneskumar Maniam is *An Islamic Voice for Openness and Human Development in Education: The Relevance of Ibn Khaldun's Ideas to Australian Teacher Education Programs Today*. Connell (2007) in her discussion of Southern social science theories considers Ibn Khaldun's contribution to the understanding of civilisation and sociology as so rich and important that it is still relevant today. This paper builds on Connell's introduction to Ibn Khaldun's work by first reviewing his ideas of education in the *Muqaddimah* and then investigating the extent of their contemporary relevance, for example, in teacher education programs today in Australia's multicultural society. Ibn Khaldun was a Muslim scholar born in what is now called Tunisia, North Africa, in 1332. His writings, which

encompassed history, philosophy of history, sociology, education and pedagogy, are best exemplified in his greatest work, the *Muqaddimah*, written as an introduction and commentary on his universal history. Ibn Khaldun provided a long and detailed discussion of the concept of education and pedagogy in Chapter Six of the *Muqaddimah*. In this chapter, he offered his views on teaching and learning issues which have their counterparts in today's classrooms. After reviewing his key ideas around education, Vegneskumar looks at the nature of curriculum in current teacher education programs in Australia and proposes the inclusion of Ibn Khaldun's ideas as a way to develop a more inclusive teacher education vis-à-vis Islamic communities in Australia. Our last article, *Challenging understandings of adult learning with Southern Theory: Recognising everyday learning through a critical engagement with Northern theories* by Eryn Thomas attempts to practice Southern Theory through a critical engagement with Northern theories around learning, adult learning, adult education and related fields. Despite the strong influence of the South American tradition of adult literacy education, the field of adult education, increasingly redefined as 'adult training and development,' is dominated and shaped by Northern based adult learning and related theories that in her view privilege formal learning over other forms of learning. Revisiting her own PhD research project on everyday learning now with the Southern Theory lens, Eryn attempts to provincialize the key aspects of a selection of relevant Northern theories about adult learning. Through this critical engagement, she develops a 'patch-worked' theoretical framework that is more capable of recognising and responding to the localised everyday learning and knowledge from the research participant's lives. She concludes that such critical engagements with Northern theories are required to highlight their implicit localisations and challenge their reifying tendencies.

We hope that you enjoy the special issue and that the ideas presented herein will stimulate your desire, and enhance your alibility, to do Southern Theory work of your own in education.

Acknowledgement

We would like to sincerely thank Professor Emeritus Raewyn Connell at the University of Sydney for her generous guidance over the course of our preparation for this special issue.

REFERENCES

- Alatas, S. F. (2013). *Makers of Islamic civilization: Ibn Khaldun*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Alatas, S. F. (2006a). *Alternative discourses in Asian social science: Responses to Eurocentrism*. New Delhi: SAGE.
- Alatas, S. F. (2006b). A Khaldunian exemplar for a historical sociology for the south. *Current sociology*, 54(3), 397-411.
- Alatas, S. H. (1977). *The myth of the lazy native: A study of the image of the Malays, Filipinos, and Javanese from the 16th to the 20th century and its function in the ideology of colonial capitalism*. London: Frank Cass.
- Appadurai, A. (2000). Globalization and the research imagination. *Public Culture*, 12(1), 1-19.
- Apple, M. Au, W. & Gandin, L. (2010). Mapping critical education. In Apple, M., Au, W. & Gandin, L. (Eds.). *The Routledge International Handbook of Critical Education* (3-19). New York: Routledge.
- Bhambra, G. K. (2007). *Rethinking modernity: Postcolonialism and the sociological imagination*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Boughton, B. (2010). Back to the Future?: Timor-Leste, Cuba and the return of the mass literacy campaign. *Literacy and Numeracy Studies*, 18(2), 58-74.
- Cave, P. (2007). *Primary School in Japan: Self, Individuality and Learning in Elementary Education*. New York: Routledge.
- Chen, K. (2010). *Asia as method: Toward deimperialization*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Chibber V. (2014). Postcolonial thought's blind alley. *Le Monde Diplomatique*. <http://mondediplo.com/2014/05/10universalism>
- Collin, P. H. (2013). Critical interventions in Western social theory: reflections on power and *Southern Theory*. *Political Power and Social Theory*, 25, 137-146.
- Connell, R. (2007). *Southern theory: The Global Dynamics of Knowledge in Social Science*. Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin.
- Connell, R. (2014). Rethinking gender from the South. *Feminist Studies*, 40(3), 518-539.
- Connell, R. (2015). Sources of Southern Theory. Personal communication. Armidale, NSW.

- Davies, B. & Petersen, E. (2005). Neo-liberal discourse in the Academy: The forestalling of (collective) resistance. *LATISS – Learning and Teaching in the Social Sciences*, 2(2), 77–98.
- de Sousa Santos, B. (2014). *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide*. New York: Paradigm.
- Dirlik, A. (1994). The postcolonial aura: Third World criticism in the age of global capitalism. *Critical Inquiry*, 20, 328–356.
- Go, J. (2013). For a postcolonial sociology. *Theory and Society* (online). DOI: 10.1007/x11186-012-9184-6.
- Hall, S. (1992). The West and the rest: Discourse and power. In S. Hall & B. Gieben (Eds.). *Formations of modernity* (275–320). London: Open University Press.
- Harding, S. (Ed.). (2004). *The feminist standpoint theory Reader*. New York: Routledge.
- Hayhoe, R. (Ed.). (2007). *Portraits of influential Chinese educators*. Comparative Education Research Centre, University of Hong Kong: Springer.
- Hickling-Hudson A. (2009). Southern theory and its dynamics for postcolonial education. In Coloma R. S. (Ed.). *Postcolonial Challenges in Education* (365–376) New York: Peter Lang.
- Hickling-Hudson A. (2011). Teaching to disrupt preconceptions: Education for social justice in the imperial aftermath. *Compare*, 41(4), 453–465.
- Hokari, M. (2011). *Gurindji journey*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press.
- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) (1997). Bringing them home: National inquiry into the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families (202–207). Sydney: Commonwealth of Australia.
- Lewis, C. (1994). *Educating Hearts and Minds: Reflections on Japanese Preschool and Elementary Education*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Lynch, K. (2006). Neo-liberalism and marketization: the implications for higher education. *European Educational Research Journal*, 5(1), 1–17.
- Maadad, N. (2009). *Adaptation of Arab immigrants to Australia*. Adelaide: Shannon Research Press.
- Mangan, J. A. (1987). *The games ethic and imperialism: Aspects of the diffusion of an ideal*. Viking, Middlesex.
- Martell, L. (2014). The Slow University: Inequality, Power and Alternatives. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 15(3), Art. 10, <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs1403102>.
- Martin, K. L. (2008). *Please knock before you enter: Aboriginal regulation of Outsiders and the implications for researchers*. Teneriffe, Queensland: Post Pressed.

- Mignolo, W. D. (2011). Geopolitics of sensing and knowing: on (de)coloniality, border thinking and epistemic disobedience. *Postcolonial Studies*, 14(3), 273-283.
- O'Neill, M. (2014). The slow university: Work, time and well-being. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research*. <http://discoversociety.org/2014/06/03/the-slow-university-work-time-and-well-being/>
- Rahula, W (1978). *What the Buddha taught*. London: The Gordon Press.
- Rane, H. (2010). *Islam and contemporary civilisation: Evolving ideas, transforming relations*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press.
- Singh, M. (2010). Connecting intellectual projects in China and Australia. *Australian Journal of Education*, 54(1), 31-45.
- Singh, M. (2015). Against Asia-Centric methods: Australia-China theoretic-linguistic knowledge co-production. Zhang, H. Keung, P. & Kenway, J. (Eds.). *Asia as method in education studies: a defiant research imagination*, Critical Studies in Asian Education (144-162). New York: Routledge.
- Singh, M. & Han, J. (2010). Peer review, Bourdieu and honour: Connecting Chinese and Australian intellectual projects. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 31(2), 185-198.
- Smith, L. T. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies, research and Indigenous peoples*. London: Zed Books.
- Takayama, K. (2016). Deploying the post-colonial predicaments of researching on/with 'Asia' in education: a standpoint from a rich peripheral country. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 37(1), 70-88.
- Tarlau, R. (2013). The Social(ist) Pedagogies of the MST: Towards New Relations of Production in the Brazilian Countryside. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 21(41). DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.14507/epaa.v21n41.2013>
- UNE School of Education (2015). *Strategic Plan 2015-2019*. Armidale: UNE School of Education.
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2015). Indigenous peoples: Cultural and linguistic diversity, 2009-2014. Paris; UNESCO. www.unesco.org/new/en/indigenous-peoples/cultural-and-linguistic-diversity/
- Wang, J. C. (2007). *John Dewey in China: To teach and to learn*. Buffalo, New York: SUNY Press.
- Zhang, H. Keung, P. and Kenway, J. ed. (2015). *Asia as method in education studies: a defiant research imagination*, Critical Studies in Asian Education, New York: Routledge.