

SOTL in the Global South: Implications for University Teachers Researching their Practice

10th Annual Conference on the
Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
(SoTL) 24 – 25 October 2017

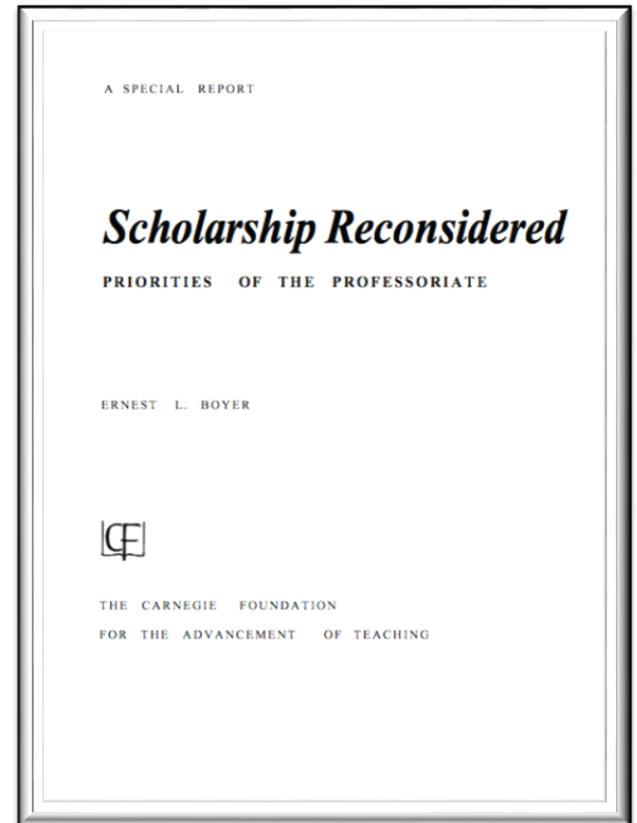
Brenda Leibowitz

Focus of this Talk

- What is “SOTL in the global South” and why do we need it?
 - Decolonising the curriculum
 - Southern Theory
 - Cognitive Justice
- Potential and challenges of conducting SOTL under this banner
- Ethical obligations
- Avenues for SOTL in the global South

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

- What we urgently need today is a more inclusive view of what it means to be a scholar--a recognition that knowledge is acquired through research, through synthesis, through practice, and through teaching. We acknowledge that these four categories--the scholarship of discovery, of integration, of application, and of teaching divide intellectual functions that are tied inseparably to each other (Boyer, 1990)
- “where academics frame questions that they systematically investigate in relation to their teaching and their students’ learning” (Brew, 2007)



Why We Need SOTL in the South?

- Much research in the global South does not take contextual specificity into account (Guzman 2017)
- Much research in the global South uses 'Northern' schemas and theories unquestioningly
- These schemas can be useful but might at times be harmful as well
- It is both a question of mindset as well as of infrastructure and support



Global South as a Concept

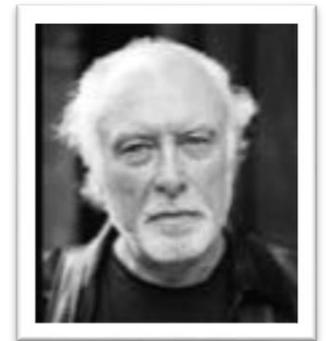
The 'global South' is a combination of geographical location and socio-economic disadvantage and history of colonial dispossession



What is the South?

- When you part of the system?
- If you are a 'settler'

'Of course, European immigrants in former colonial worlds, such as Argentina, do not have the same experience as Native Americans. However, both groups experience the colonial difference that can either be narcotized or revealed they both choose to reveal and think from it' (Mignolo 2002, p. 68).



The Role of South Africa in Africa

- SA produces 50% of Africa's research articles annually, Nigeria 16.5, Kenya 8.1 and Namibia .9
(Ngomezulu and Maposa, 2017 p. 83)



Coloniality is Visceral

‘As I said before, decolonial thinking is more akin to the skin and the geo-historical locations of migrants from the Third World, than to the skin of “native Europeans” in the First World. Nothing prevents a white body in Western Europe from sensing how coloniality works in non-European bodies. That understanding would be rational and intellectual, not experiential.’ (Mignolo 2011)

Need for Reflexivity Amongst Teacher/Researchers

‘Very specifically my work is focused on giving students access to discursive resources. Kinds of language and knowledge that they may not have. ‘

I have to keep in mind that my students see me as somebody from a different race group. What does she know? Ja she knows everything. And I get that, I absolutely get it, but I can’t change that for them. I can give them the information, what they do with that is up to them. ‘

‘Yes, so for me being a darkie like the students, most students were—actually this year I didn’t have any non-darkies—so that made it a little bit easier. That dynamic, you know when a white person tells a black child that they’re lazy or whatever when a black mama says, “Hey, you get off your backside, you are going to do this and this and that now, or by this time.” It’s so different, and I find that no matter how much I shout at them in class, they will come to me and say, “You know, this is what’s happening with me.”’ (Leibowitz and Naidoo 2017)

Identities and Spaces Give Rise to Contestation

The world, therefore, is not becoming, nor can it be conceived of as, a global village. Instead, it is a “series of non-homogeneous pockets of identity that must eventually come into conflict because they represent different historical arrangements of emotional energy.’ (Mignolo, 2002)

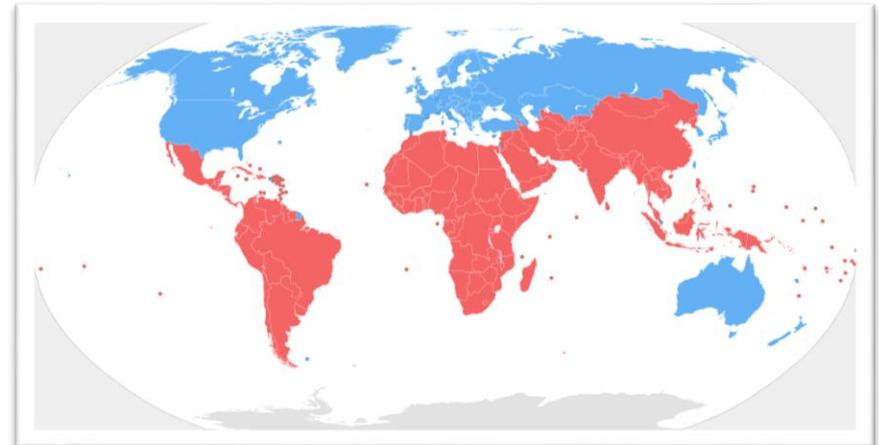
What is SOTL *in the South*?

The 'global South' is conceived of as a cluster of features which need to take into account issues of power differentials, technological and financial resourcing and the recognition of indigenous knowledges. The term 'Global South' is traditionally conceived of as including countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America but it is not conceived of solely in geographic terms. The global South, more often than not, is faced with challenges typical of the post-colonial moment: income inequality, fractured identities, and contestation about knowledges.

SOTL in the South

Aspiration:

- To generate awareness for need for contextually sensitive research
- To contribute to greater consolidation of scholarly production in the global South
 - Via South, and South-South dialogue
- To contribute to South-North dialogue



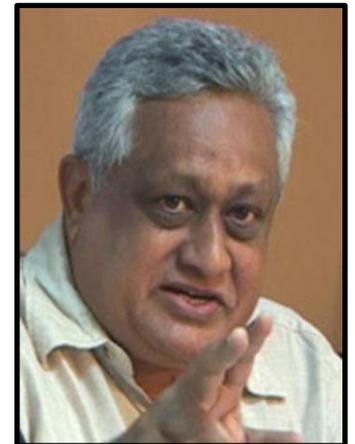
Cognitive Justice

The concept of 'cognitive justice' is a 'normative principle for the equal treatment of all forms of knowledge' (Van der Velden, n.d., p.12). This does not mean that all forms of knowledge are equal, but that the equality of knowers forms the basis of dialogue between knowledges, and that what is required for democracy is a dialogue amongst knowers and their knowledges. Cognitive justice requires the bringing into relation of different knowledges, 'the plural availability of knowledges' (Visvanathan, 2016, p. 4/8).

Cognitive Justice

1. Each knowledge system if it is to be democratic must realise it is iatrogenic in some context.
2. Each knowledge system must realise that in moments of dominance it may destroy life-giving alternatives available in the other. ...
3. No knowledge system may 'museumify' the other. No knowledge system should be overtly deskilling.
4. Each knowledge system must practice cognitive indifference to itself in some consciously chosen domains.
5. All major technical projects legitimised through dominant knowledge forms must be subject to referendum and recall.

(Visvanathan, 2007, p. 215)



Ecology of Knowledges

‘a plurality of knowledges and practices. Since no knowledge or practice in isolation provides reliable guidance, and for an edifying, socially responsible, rather than technical, application of science, fully aware that the consequences of scientific actions tend to be less scientific than the actions themselves.’ (de Sousa Santos, 2014: 127)

- A sociology of absences
- Translation
- Alliances



Ecology of Knowledges

‘Preference must be given to the forms of knowledge that guarantees the greatest level of participation to the social groups involved in its design, execution, and control and in the benefits of the intervention’. (de Sousa Santos, 2014: 205)

Coherent Knowledge System

‘Even in postcolonial situations, the fragility of the institutional base for social science, the crisis of organicity in South America, the failure to establish a coherent social science tradition in Australia all show the unsuitability of a mosaic theory of multiple knowledges’ (Connell, 2007: 223).

‘only knowledge produced on a planetary scale is adequate to support the self-understanding of societies now being forcibly reshaped on a planetary scale’ (Connell, 2007, vii).



DeCentring, Centring and Recentring



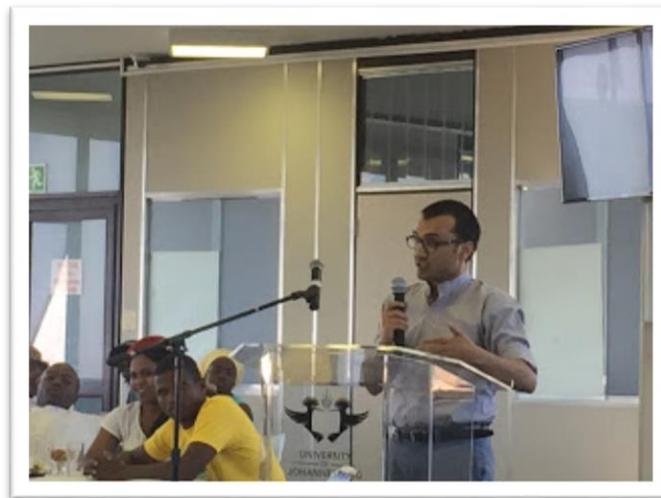
‘In Ngugi’s terms, the call for ‘Africanization’ is a project of ‘re-centering’. It is about rejecting the assumption that the modern West is the central root of Africa’s consciousness and cultural heritage. It is about rejecting the notion that Africa is merely an extension of the West. It is not about closing the door to European or other traditions. It is about defining clearly what the centre is. (Mbembe, 2016)

Radiating Outwards

‘Education is a means of knowledge about ourselves. . . . After we have examined ourselves, we radiate outwards and discover peoples and worlds around us. With Africa at the centre of things, not existing as an appendix or a satellite of other countries and literatures, things must be seen from the African perspective’. ‘All other things are to be considered in their relevance to our situation and their contribution towards understanding ourselves. In suggesting this we are not rejecting other streams, especially the western stream. We are only clearly mapping out the directions and perspectives the study of culture and literature will inevitably take in an African university’. (Ngugi, 1986/2005)

Problem of Essentialising

‘Vineet Thakur spoke last, with some sobering realities from the Indian context where the romanticisation of the precolonial past (despite patriarchy and the caste system) has prompted the nationalist government to exercise oppressive actions against those who criticize it, charging one student with sedition. For him, "decolonialisation involves continuous critique, a dialectical engagement”’. (SOTLforsocialjustice.blogspot.com 2016)

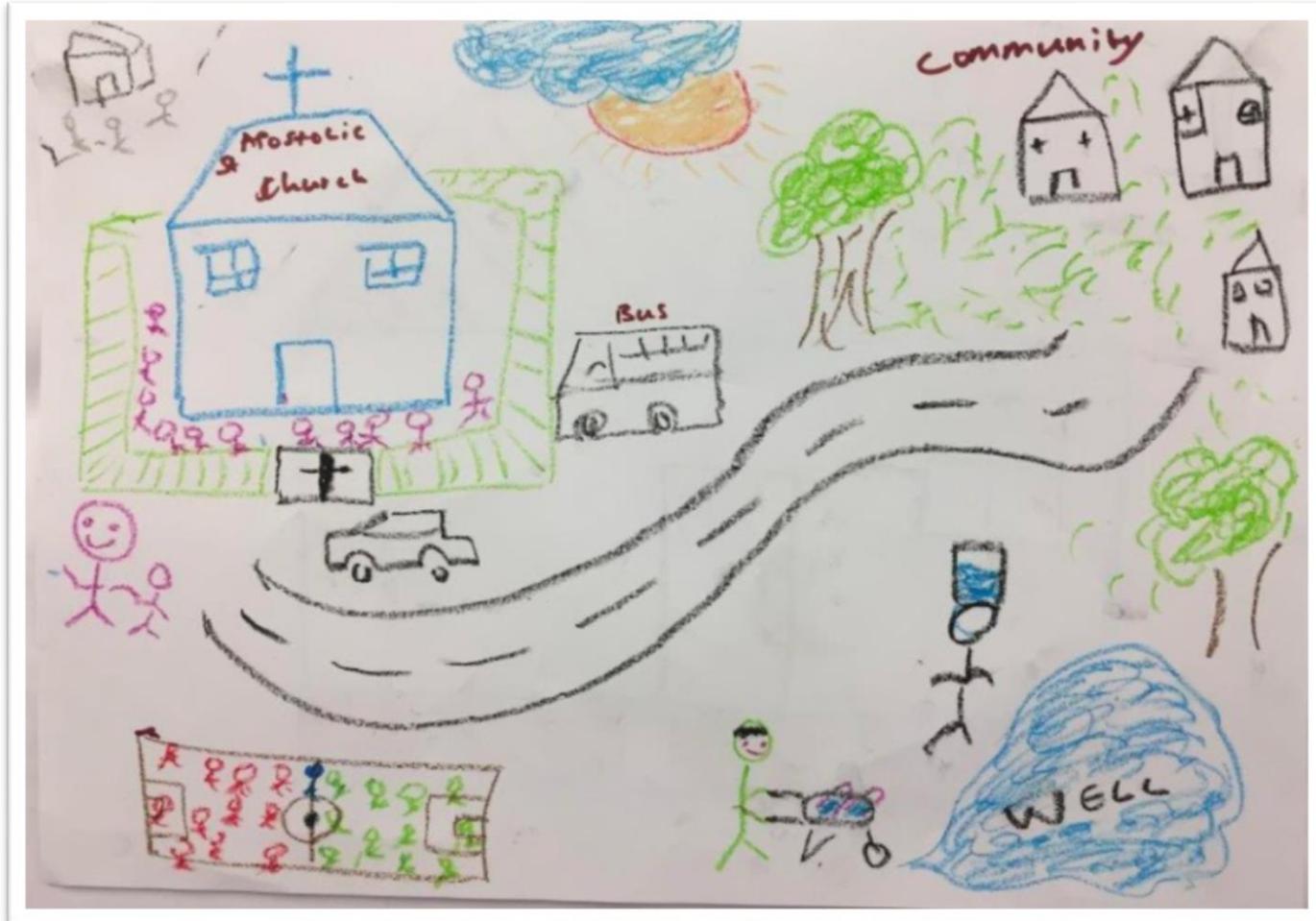


Potential of SOTL in the South

- According to Johnathan Jansen, gaze has actually shifted
- Immense enthusiasm
- As de Sousa Santos argues, there is a tiredness about critical theory; there is also a tiredness about government in the North, a tiredness about higher education policies
- We in SA and other contexts do have important contributions to make



South African Rurality in Higher Education (SARiHE)



Barriers regarding SOTL in the South

- Performativity – in the South too
- SOTL not a well known or understood concept
- SOTL a ‘Western construct’ that still needs to be translated into and engaged with in the East/Singapore (Hoon and Looker 2013)
- Cannot ignore economic factors, infrastructure, (workload) brain drain, need for communal conversation/critical mass, confidence

Barriers cont.

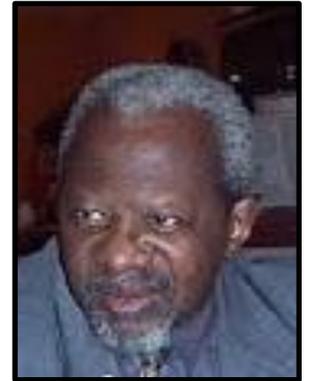


- When different discourses eg IKS and 'Scientific Western' discourses interact

Ethical Challenges and Responsibilities

'Extroversion':

'African scholars ... implicitly agree to act as informants, though learned informants for Western Science and scientists' (Hountondji 1995: 4, in Connell, 2007)



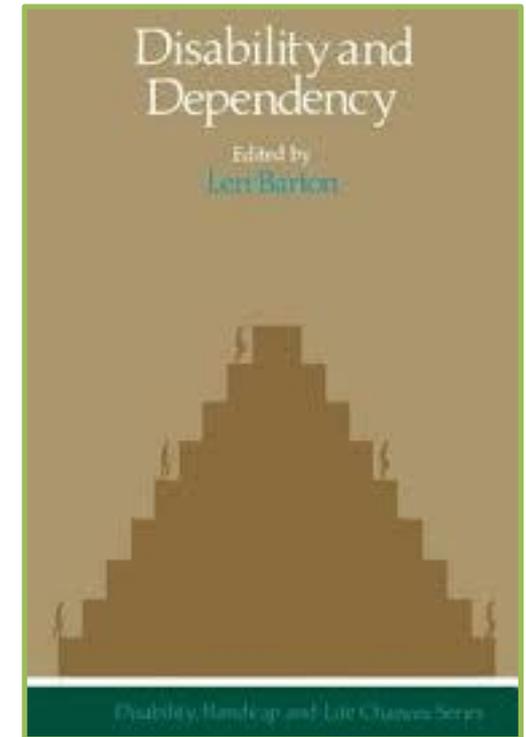
'the global inequalities that have constituted the metropole as the home of theory, or 'science' as such, and the periphery as either the sources of data, or the arena in which metropolitan knowledge is applied' (Connell, 2007: 106)

Extractive research

“We felt that SWOP was seemingly oblivious of its position within a white neoliberal university and that white academics have always capitalised on Black wretchedness and struggles (experiences) for their own gains. They often write the so called ‘high rated’ books and journals about Black lives and experience while they are literally disengaged from the real Black experience. (p. 19)” (Wits Fallists 2017)

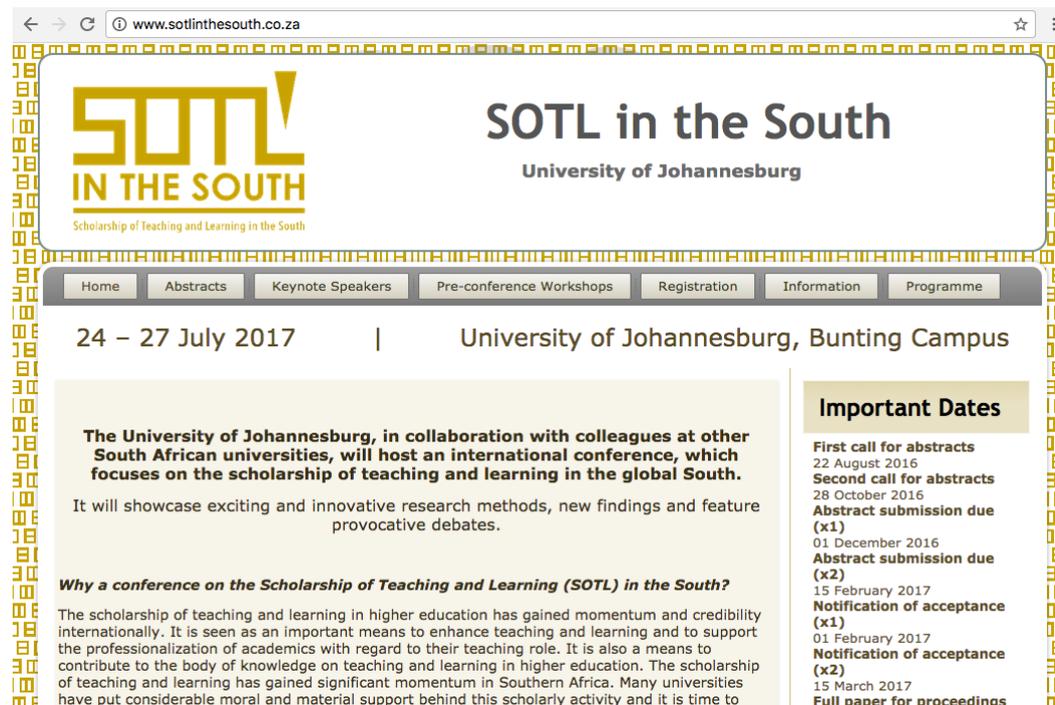
Responsibility

What responsibilities arise from the privileges I have as a result of my social position? How can I use my knowledge and skills to challenge, for example, the forms of oppression disabled people experience? Does my writing and speaking reproduce a system of domination or challenge that system? (Len Barton, in context of disability research, quoted in Gristy, 2014.)



Avenues for SOTL in the Global South

- Colloquium on Geopolitics of Knowledge on Higher Education – June 2018
- Sotl in the South Conference – July 2019



The screenshot shows the website for the SOTL in the South conference. The browser address bar displays 'www.sotlinsouth.co.za'. The page features the SOTL logo on the left and the title 'SOTL in the South' with the 'University of Johannesburg' affiliation on the right. A navigation menu includes links for Home, Abstracts, Keynote Speakers, Pre-conference Workshops, Registration, Information, and Programme. The main content area is framed by a decorative border and contains the following text:

24 – 27 July 2017 | University of Johannesburg, Bunting Campus

The University of Johannesburg, in collaboration with colleagues at other South African universities, will host an international conference, which focuses on the scholarship of teaching and learning in the global South.

It will showcase exciting and innovative research methods, new findings and feature provocative debates.

Why a conference on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL) in the South?

The scholarship of teaching and learning in higher education has gained momentum and credibility internationally. It is seen as an important means to enhance teaching and learning and to support the professionalization of academics with regard to their teaching role. It is also a means to contribute to the body of knowledge on teaching and learning in higher education. The scholarship of teaching and learning has gained significant momentum in Southern Africa. Many universities have put considerable moral and material support behind this scholarly activity and it is time to

Important Dates

- First call for abstracts: 22 August 2016
- Second call for abstracts: 28 October 2016
- Abstract submission due (x1): 01 December 2016
- Abstract submission due (x2): 15 February 2017
- Notification of acceptance (x1): 01 February 2017
- Notification of acceptance (x2): 15 March 2017
- Full paper for proceedings

Keynotes 2017

- Carolina Guzman-Valenzuela (University of Chile)
- Cheryl Hendricks (UJ, SA)
- Catherine Manathunga (Victoria University, Australia)
- Peter Looker (Nanyang Technological University, Singapore)
- Maitseo Bolaane (Univeristy of Botswana)
- N'Dri Thérèse Assié-Lumumba (Cornell, USA etc)
- Yunus Ballim (Sol Plaatjie, SA)





SOTL IN THE SOUTH

A journal dedicated to the scholarship of teaching and learning in the 'global South'

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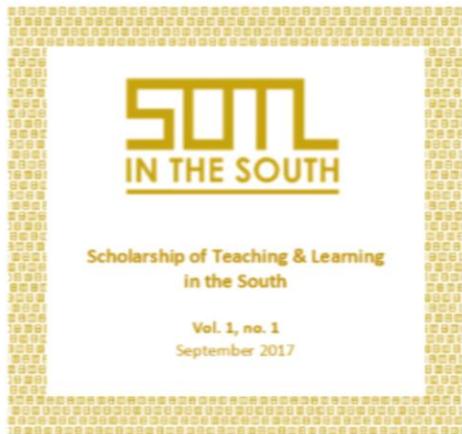
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This is the first issue of the *SOTL in the South* journal. It includes articles from Zambia, South Africa, New Zealand and Australia.

Published: 2017-09-19

Editorial

The significance of SOTL in the South

Brenda Leibowitz

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AJHPE is an online, bi-annual, peer-reviewed journal that covers matters related to education for health professionals.

Announcements

AJHPE goes live with Editorial Manager

The Health and Medical Publishing Group is pleased to announce that it has launched a new submission and tracking system for the AJHPE as of 11 January 2017.

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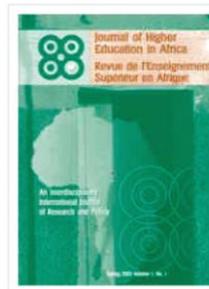
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The JHEA accepts contributions in English and French from researchers, practitioners and policymakers.

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 - Journal of Higher Education in Africa, Volume 11, n° 1 & n° 2, 2013
 - Journal of Higher Education in Africa, Volume 10, n° 2, 2012
 - Journal of Higher Education in Africa, Volume 10, n° 1, 2012

August 4 2016



Implications

‘Epistemic breaks’ or ‘reflexivity’ amongst all role-players

A more aggressive or confident as well as systematic approach from colleagues in the South

The need for strategic alliances across contexts, that are carefully managed



Conclusion

- There is North in the South and South in the North
- Proceed with humility and a sense of accountability
- SOTL research in the South is not entirely sweet and cozy

- disruption is uncomfortable



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