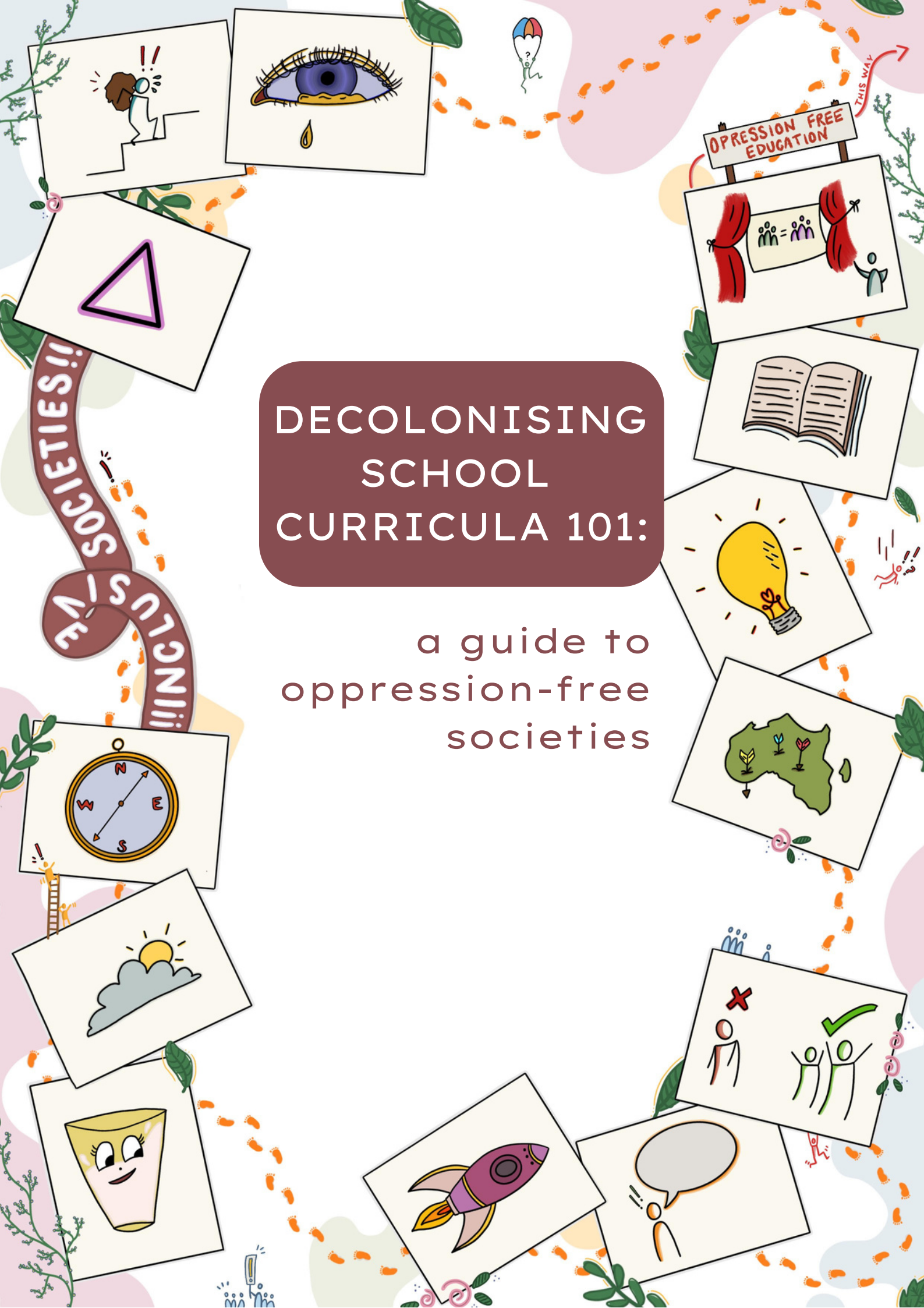

DECOLONISING SCHOOL CURRICULA 101:

a guide to oppression-free societies

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Foreword of the Pedagogical Team

“In May of 2022, the Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions, together with the Global Student Forum, organised a week-long Study Session at the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg with the support of the Council of Europe. Around 30 participants, student representatives, and activists from all across the world took part in discussions on decolonising school curricula as a way to build more inclusive, less oppressive societies.

This Study Session is expected to produce several outcomes. One such outcome is the toolkit you are reading, which will serve as a guide for putting the outcomes of the Study Session into practice. We also expect the student representatives that took part to implement the action plans they drafted during the event, and organise their own initiatives aimed at mobilising their communities and spreading the Study Session’s findings.

Content-wise, it was not only the knowledge about the history of colonisation, intercultural perspectives, and the theory of oppression in education that emerged, but also the key attitudes, skills, and other competences needed for further advocacy, with special regard given to methodological diversity and the engagement of the Pedagogical Team not as that of teachers, but as that of facilitators, and anti-colonial educators…

We are education activists. And as such, as much as we may differ in our approaches, our values are the same: free, high-quality education, accessible and welcoming to all. We believe that to build inclusive and peaceful societies, one must acknowledge and deconstruct the scourges of the past, and, with this objective in mind, the topic of decolonisation cannot go unnoticed.

Having said that, what we have done together in Strasbourg, as educators and participants, only amounts to first steps, to serving as the change makers. It is up to you to take the baton and bring about the change we want to see in the world.”

– The Pedagogical Team

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1.INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the topic

"The liberation of the colonies poses a theoretical problem of crucial importance at the current time: When can it be said that the situation is ripe for a national liberation movement? What should be the first line of action? Because decolonization comes in many shapes, reason wavers and abstains from declaring what is a true decolonization and what is not."

-FANON, Franz. (1961). The Wreched of the Earth

With these words, Franz Fanon, arguably the most important postwar thinker that deals with this topic, brings us closer to understanding decolonisation as a word and as a force of history, but also highlights how tricky it can be to grasp the subject to the full extent of its meaning. The "current time" he speaks of were the 1960s, when most African colonies fully engaged in the struggle for their national liberation from colonial rule.

However, the overt domination over these swaths of land has been replaced by economic dependence and other – more subtle – means of control. The process of decolonisation is still ongoing, and as this neocolonial control is challenged, one of the main battlegrounds is the school, which can serve as a subtle means of colonial domination. THAT'S WHERE YOU COME IN!

Decolonisation in this sense means to actively dig at the roots of structural oppression in our education system, and to radically reimagine the systems of our institutions through anti-racist and anti-oppression lens. And as we'll see later, education can only be changed by those who are subject to it.

2. DEFINING DECOLONISATION

Colonisation is a societal process more than a political process as it delves into a deeper set of undoing and consciousness. This session served as the catalyst to the theme of the study session which is decolonisation. As many participants did not have background knowledge of the topic, one main aim of the session was to simplify it and make it applicable to the lived experiences of the oppressed. In any socio-economic challenge in society, the important factor is the cause and effect ideology. This theory simply refers to identify the root cause of a problem eg. an illness and the effect or solution eg. treatment. In this case the illness is colonisation and the treatment is the process of decolonisation. The term decolonisation has been broadly examined and many scholars differ in their views of how the process of decolonisation should occur. According to Dascal, decolonisation is, “Subtle manifestations of political, economic, cultural and religious beliefs taking possession of and control of victims' minds and lives by the colonisers”. Colonisation refers to the oppressive groupings imposing new forms of seeing reality and unconsciously or consciously relinquishing the marginalised groups cultural norms and forcefully leading them to adopt new ones.

The coloniser twists the logic of the victims, and imposes on their own thoughts and actions to its victims. This may often not be in a belligerent or violent manner, however it results in a violent reaction as the victims begin to resist. This correlates with Newton's second law which states that every action has an equal and opposite reaction. Therefore, as the oppressor gradually and passively controls the victims’ mind, the victim will equally oppose the control in a violent manner which contrasts the passive-aggressiveness of the coloniser. As digitalisation rapidly grows the term “decolonisation” has been distorted and weaponised by the mainstream media as well as colonial and eurocentric discourses. According to Ngugi wa Thiong’o, colonisation can occur with the occupation of resources, culture, religion, language and most crucially the mind. It develops certain social structures as time progresses. Hotep, who writes from an African-American background, equates the process of colonisation of the mind to deculturalisation, seasoning and mis-education. Deculturalisation refers to the pacification and control in conjunction with the process of stripping a group from its culture, language, history and ancestral education, and replacing it with external values.

The main aims of decolonisation are:

Self-definition, self-determination, self-affirmation, self-love, and self-defense

Diminishing fear in their minds

The abolishment of any form of superiority

Transfer of power and realignment

Decolonisation is work that belongs to all of us, everywhere. It asks us to think about our relationship with Indigenous lands that colonists have unjustly claimed, re-defined and repurposed all over the world. It also asks us to embrace responsibility as opposed to accepting fault for what our ancestors did.

Decolonisation can start in many places. This is largely because colonialism's influence spans across so many different aspects of our lives. Capitalism, racism, heteropatriarchy, white supremacy, and Eurocentric forms of knowledge production are all things that perpetuate colonial power dynamics and structures that determine the distribution of power among people.

By deconstructing each of these aspects of colonialism — among others — we can begin to decolonise.

3. HISTORY OF COLONIALISM

Defining Colonialism

Colonialism has been a very dark and seemingly endless struggle for many countries and its people, with its impact resulting in inequalities that are present to this day. Colonialism can be described as the direct and overall domination of one country by another. The state that dominates can be termed the coloniser and the state that is dominated, the colony.

Colonialism as identified by Steve Biko relates to the deeper subjugation of the mind, as it instils a sense of unworthiness, the lack of determination and the continued acceptance of oppression in the minds of the colony's people. Colonialism occurred globally, however the most common example of this harsh phenomenon is that of the African continent where the colonial powers sat and chopped up that beautiful, resource-rich country as if it were a cake, stripping Africa of her culture, freedom and growth.

The process of colonisation involved World powers such as Great Britain, Belgium, Spain, France and various other now recognized economically developed states. Those largely affected and dominated were India, Africa, Cuba and Southern and Central America. In today's unequal global arena this division persists, as some countries are identified as Lesser economically developed countries (LEDC's) and others as More economically developed countries (MEDC's).

Various scholars argue that the main reasons the process of colonisation occurred rapidly was because of the industrial revolution and the earlier slave-based economy. These reasons included the dire need of these competing powers to own the world's resources, increase their labour capital and ultimately act as a super-power.

The process of colonisation

The process of colonisation has been identified as the invasion, annexation, division and occupation of land by a foreign power, often with the direct use of force. To list some of these occupations, the occupation of Constantinople by the Ottomans in 1453, which resulted in the empires of Western Europe (Spain and Portugal) having to find alternative sea routes to the Far East (China and India). With this aim in mind, the Dutch East Indies route was established with countries of Western Africa. This prompted the rise of the slave trade as well as continuous cycle of land dispossession and the stripping of the dignity as conceptualised in these five steps:

1. **Denial and withdrawal**
2. **Destruction / eradication**
3. **Denigration / belittlement and insults**
4. **Surface accommodation / tokenism**
5. **Transformation / exploitation**

1.Denial and withdrawal

This refers to the complete denial and lack of recognition that colonists pose onto the people that they aim to colonise. When beginning the first steps of occupying this land the oppressors will ultimately disregard any form of humanity that the indigenous have as they degrade these human beings and proudly articulate that they are superior to them and that the indigenous have no culture, values or importance. They then embed this narrative in the minds of the oppressed to alleviate their resistance to subjugation, causing the oppressed to feel unworthy and fear the oppressor. This creates a long-lasting, generational form of oppression that still lurks to this day. Many indigenous groups still have to battle with a sense of cultural inferiority, often feeling the need to be assimilated in their colonial cultures to feel worthy and recognized. This speaks to Mahmood Mamdani's work of the citizen and the subject.

2. Destruction / eradication

The colonists further remove and abolish any forms of traditional use of the land in favour of their economic objectives and trading establishments. They discard the symbolic land and structures that the indigenous people value, to further illustrate that their views and norms are of no worth. They strive to remove and destroy the historical worth of the culture to impose their values. This can be witnessed with land dispossession in South Africa where indigenous activists still advocate for land to be returned to its original owners after the British had stripped them of it.

3. Denigration / belittlement and insults

As colonisation grows stronger in a geographical area, the settlers may then develop systems and institutions that serve to reinforce and reproduce it. These systems are sowed in division and oppression as they always seek to elevate and favour colonists, while oppressing and subjugating the indigenous people. Examples of these institutions and systems include churches, health-care systems and legal institutions. These systems were western, Christian and male dominated. Christianity was very exclusive and skewed as scriptures were taken literally to mean that other racial groups were impure and not favoured by God. Additionally, any traditional or other religious practices such as traditional healing methods were seen as heathen and therefore close to the devil, thus needing to be removed with urgency. In terms of legal systems, the traditional chief operating system was stripped of its power or alternatively, patronage networks de facto controlled by the colonists but nominally still traditional were created to ensure that indigenous people were controlled and silenced.

4. Surface accommodation / tokenism

This refers to the point where the colonists could no longer contain or suppress uprisings or unrest and would then make concessions to indigenous people. This served as a form of 'taming' the oppressed as they sought full liberation. An example of this is when the British would allow African tribes to sing and dance around the fire, always at a great distance from the colonists' living space, as they found it barbaric to act in such a manner whereas this represented for the indigenous peoples a way to express hope and connectedness with their ancestral culture.

5. Transformation / exploitation

The traditional culture which simply refuses to die or go away is now transformed into the culture of the dominating colonial society. A Christian church may now allow an indigenous person to be a priest, allowing the use of the indigenous language, to incorporate some indigenous terms and practices within the church's framework of worship. Indigenous art which has survived may gain in popularity and now forms the basis for economic exploitation. Indigenous symbols in print may decorate modern clothes. Indigenous musical instruments may be incorporated into modern music. To support indigenous causes within the general colonial structure may become the popular political thing to do so the culture is further exploited. This exploitation may be enforced by indigenous as well as non-indigenous people.

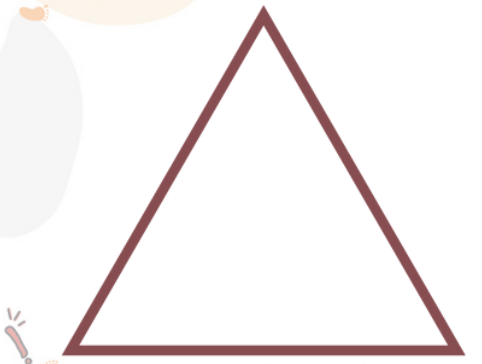
4. OPPRESSION IN EDUCATION

The domination of the coloniser over the colonised, the roles of the oppressed and the oppressor described above seep into the minds of the oppressed. The oppressed internalises them and this exploitative relationship becomes like a second nature to them. The student movement in the age of postcolonialism realises that it is not sufficient to decolonise territories[1], and that one must also decolonise the mind.[2] Now, how else might one accomplish such a task, if not by calling into question the very classroom where one acquires the skills for life, and in which one's mind takes shape?

The classroom, more often than not, serves to reproduce the story from the point of view of the coloniser: it does not allow for the learning material to be questioned or challenged by the lived experience and knowledge of students. Instead, students are viewed as a glass, and it is the teacher's role to be the hand that pours a liquid – knowledge – into this glass. Yet this notion of both *knowledge* and *students* is misleading. Knowledge is not something one may possess and enforce upon others. Instead, knowledge emerges from dialogue. As for the student, they – unlike a glass of milk – are a human being with the capacity to enquire about the outside world, strive toward happiness, set goals for themselves and attain a fulfilled existence.

1 YOUNG, Robert J. C. (2020). Postcolonialism: A Very Short Summary
2 WA THIONG'O, Ngugi (1986). Decolonising the Mind: the Politics of Language in African Literature

The facilitated discussion of the participating student activists soon revealed that we can all make an intuitive distinction between a classroom that views students as dignified subjects with a capacity to co-create knowledge and to affirm themselves in the process of becoming, or as an unequal object, fit only to be filled by preconceived knowledge the same way a glass may be filled with milk.[3]



BANKING MODEL

PROBLEM - POSING MODEL

Banking Model of Education mirrors oppressive society

- The teacher teaches and the students are taught
- The teacher knows everything and the students know nothing
- The teacher thinks and the students are thought about
- The teacher talks and the students listen, meekly
- The teacher disciplines and the students are disciplined
- The teacher chooses and enforces their choice, and the students comply

Problem-Posing Model of Education affirm students in the process of becoming

- The teacher-student division is surpassed
- Everyone's information is limited and knowledge emerges from the permutations in which individual limited information is combined
- Everyone thinks and is thought about
- Everyone is a subject in the learning process
- Material is to be called into question

3 FREIRE, Paulo. (1970). Pedagogy of the Oppressed

• The teacher acts and the students have the illusion of acting through the actions of the teacher • The teacher chooses the program content, and the students (who were not consulted) adapt to it • The teacher confuses the authority of knowledge with their own professional authority, which they set in opposition to the freedom of the students • The teacher is the subject of the learning process while pupils are mere objects **Information is deposited into students the way one might deposit finances into a bank**	• Regards dialogue as indispensable to the act of cognition, which unveils reality [4] • Everyone develops the power to perceive the world critically, and ask "why" • Regards education as the practice of freedom rather than the practice of domination, and unlike the banking model, rejects hierarchy • Regards the humanist educator as a person who should strive to weed out the internalised oppression from the classroom by facilitating dialogue **Problems are posed to the group, which attempts to solve them, and from this solution emerges new information**

4 FRANC, Petr. (2021). Hegelian Dialectics of Decolonized Education: 'Virtue' and the 'Way of the World' in Emancipated Classrooms

The participants within the Pluriverse Study Session were asked to imagine an oppression-free education. They described their vision in terms of the following attitudes and practices:

“The teacher can be enlightened by the students who are knowledgeable on the subject.”

“The teacher and the students have a dialogue and receive feedback from one another. The material can be called into question.”

“Students' opinions are valued.”

“Power is shared within the classroom.”

“The teachers and the students engage in a dialogue to co-create the curricula”

“Negotiation and cooperation: Almost always curricula and the ways of learning are served to us as a final decision. Students must have a part in choosing how they want to be taught.”

“The teacher is objective and doesn't manipulate the students from a position of authority.”

“Diverse points of view are ensured.”

“Student opinions are valued.”

“Grades aren't based on just one type of students' outcome.”

“Education isn't discipline.”

“The educator and the student find relevant topics together.”

5. ATTITUDES AND SKILLS

What makes the ideal advocate? The kind that takes the streets in protest – The kind that spends days amidst pages of literature to learn about a given systemic issue – The kind that knows how to develop pressure on a teaching institution, demanding wide scale revision of study materials? Whether we join the struggle of decolonisation as Westerners reflecting the European colonial past, or we continue the battle for national liberation as the descendants of subjugated peoples, the reality of who we are as people influences the way we fight.

Our strength as activists comes, among other things, from two sources. The first source is the union or other democratic structure that we are a part of, and that allows for representation, thereby combining our individual needs and demands into a singular collective will. The other source is who we are as people, and which of the qualities that we possess we can offer to the movement to strengthen its negotiational power.

The personal is political. The simple fact of us being people means that we have some needs that can only be met through political demands. It also means that we put our very personhood (knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values to name a few) into voicing these political demands. The type of qualities this personhood entails can very well make the difference between succeeding and failing in gaining power, having political demands met and satisfying our needs.

Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes and Values
Mandela said that knowledge is a powerful weapon. Of these three characteristics, knowledge is the easiest to gain, and its emergence is the main objective of education. It is what you are arming yourself with as you are reading this toolkit.	Unlike with knowledge, skills are not acquired by being read about. They are predispositions one has to continuously work on enhancing and training over time. Through them you can channel your knowledge and values, expressing them in the real world.	As advocates for students' rights, we do what we do, not as a purely logical induction of what has to be done, nor just to further our skills, but because we care. We care about the growth and wellbeing of our peers, and we care about the world we inhabit.
Examples		
Analytical and Critical Thought Working with data and transforming input into substantive demands is a question of knowing. Identifying a problem through analysis is important not only for your actions to stem from the material needs of your constituency, but also to use this data towards relevant stakeholders to further our needs.	**Mobilising** All organisations have different means of achieving change. Some take the route of policy-driven suggestions, others focus on capacity building, and others yet take the streets. Mobilising your constituency and allied groups for your cause is a skill that requires practice.	**Solidarity and Empathy** The capacity for unity and camaraderie, as well as the ability to feel for another human being are both essential. Empathy allows us to feel for others – even those whose lived experience we cannot fully fathom –, and with solidarity, we can become one with our movement.

Examples		
Theoretical Framework Every effect has its cause and so does our movement. Knowing its theoretical basis as well as its history enables us to better predict where it is headed. What analysis of the world that we live in does the movement subscribe to? And do we?	**Negotiation** We do not always have all of our demands met. The act of negotiating ensures that the maximum of our wishes are fulfilled at the smallest possible cost. Sometimes we only make little steps forward, but those count as well!	**Courage** Rather than it being the absence of fear, courage is the capacity to act and take hard decisions in spite of the fear that is present. Risk-taking is not always avoidable and courage allows us to see when it is necessary.
Systemic Consciousness When we are aware of how our world works, and can name the cases of systemic discrimination, violence, and exploitation, suddenly, the question of gaining people committed to our cause changes into the question of conveying the reality of the world to others, in other words, *getting them* to see.	**Facilitation** A facilitator has to know how to foster dialogical learning without being a teacher. The art of facilitation is that of sparking a discussion whilst engaging others and letting the group take the lead. Contrary to intuition, the most skillful facilitator usually talks the least and perceives the most.	**Confidence** When we have trust in ourselves, we are much more effective in executing the actions we deem the best. As long as this faith in oneself is not blind and is accompanied by a healthy amount of reflection, so that we trust our ends but always refine our means.

Examples		
Reflection *To know to reflect* is what can ultimately drive your cause forward. It appears as the last evaluative step of many models of problem-solving, because without it, your attempts would amount to what Freire calls *pure activism*, spontaneous and aimless eruptions of passion, that are not followed up on.	**Revising Curricula** The way to approach something we have reservations towards is not merely pure resentment, but rather critical, constructive action. The way to introduce new curricula is to first dismantle the existing ones through anti-racist, anti-oppressive, and anti-colonial lens.	**Kindness** Should we wish to embody the world in which we would like to live, then being kind, accepting, and welcoming is what we ought to embrace. Much like with all of these attitudes, kindness has its limits, but can be thought of as the default, from which one has to sometimes divert.
Research If knowledge is power then research is nothing but the hoarding of said power. It means to actively go out and seek all of the tools necessary to further our personhood from the knowledge to gain, to the skills to learn and the attitudes to foster.	**Public Speaking** Public speaking is the necessary synthesis of systemic consciousness and the commitment to sharing this knowledge of how the world works. To give a speech is essentially to try to impact others and sway their future decisions.	**Commitment** When someone truly believes in something, it is easier for them to fully commit to it. It is the resilient consistency in continuing to work towards a certain goal no matter how difficult it may be.

Examples		
Evaluation Unlike reflection – which allows us to analyse our experiences, make changes based on our mistakes, keep doing what is successful, and build upon our knowledge – evaluation looks at original objectives, at what was accomplished and how it was accomplished.	**Leadership & Doership** Skills are built on predispositions. While some may be natural leaders, others favour a more hands on approach as doers. Both are equally as important, since fulfilling daily tasks and functions would not be possible without the execution of a strategic vision, and vice versa.	**Self-Preservation** Oftentimes, we feel that we have to diminish the self and become the voice of the struggle at the expense of our own agency. Our end goal is to affirm ourselves as growing and becoming human beings, and this should be reflected by our method, so that our devotion to the movement is balanced and not self-destructive.
Methodology To know a method is to know the means to an end. While implementing methodology is a question of skill, being aware of it allows us to see the roadmap to achieving the contents of our efforts, and know what steps have to be undertaken.	**Project Management** Directing a project throughout all phases of its implementation within the given constraints is a skill requiring a lot of trial and error. More often than not, skilled project managers start off with one or two failures, as they have to juggle many responsibilities.	**Inclusion and Diversity** The welcoming attitude towards inclusivity and diversity allows us to view problems in an intercultural perspective, and be more creative in resolving them. Inclusive and accessible education is strong in diversity.

*Remember that through dialogue emerges public opinion. In many cases, you will find yourself having to not only follow your singular goal no matter what, but also having to care in what regard you are being held by public opinion. When you present your knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values, you are regarded as a spokesperson for the entire movement. One sometimes has to care and tailor how they are being perceived. This is what we call optics. Moreover, shaping public opinion (with optics for instance) can shape the decisions governments make.

Example:
During the 1980s, popular activism was so strong in the United States, that the Reagan administration was not able to directly intervene in Central America. They were unable to do anything like what Kennedy and Johnson did in Southeast Asia in the 1960s. That is – according to Noam Chomsky – because there was far too much public opposition. (The administration had to do it indirectly, through the so-called clandestine terror.)

By working on personal drawbacks (nervousness, lack of confidence, prejudices, etc.), we strengthen the movement.

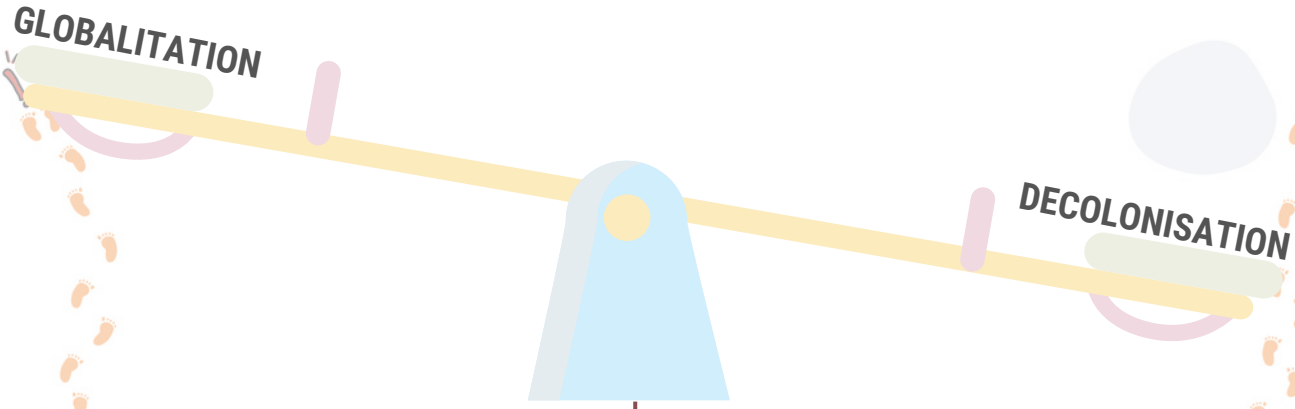
Tip: If you would like to find out more about advocacy action, check out our Advocacy Toolkit!

6. GLOBAL EDUCATION

"Global education is education that opens people's eyes and minds to the realities of the globalised world and awakens them to bring about a world of greater justice, equity and Human Rights for all."

– The Maastricht Declaration, 2002.

BUT! Decolonisation and globalisation don't always go hand in hand, and one can sometimes hinder the efforts of the other and vice versa.



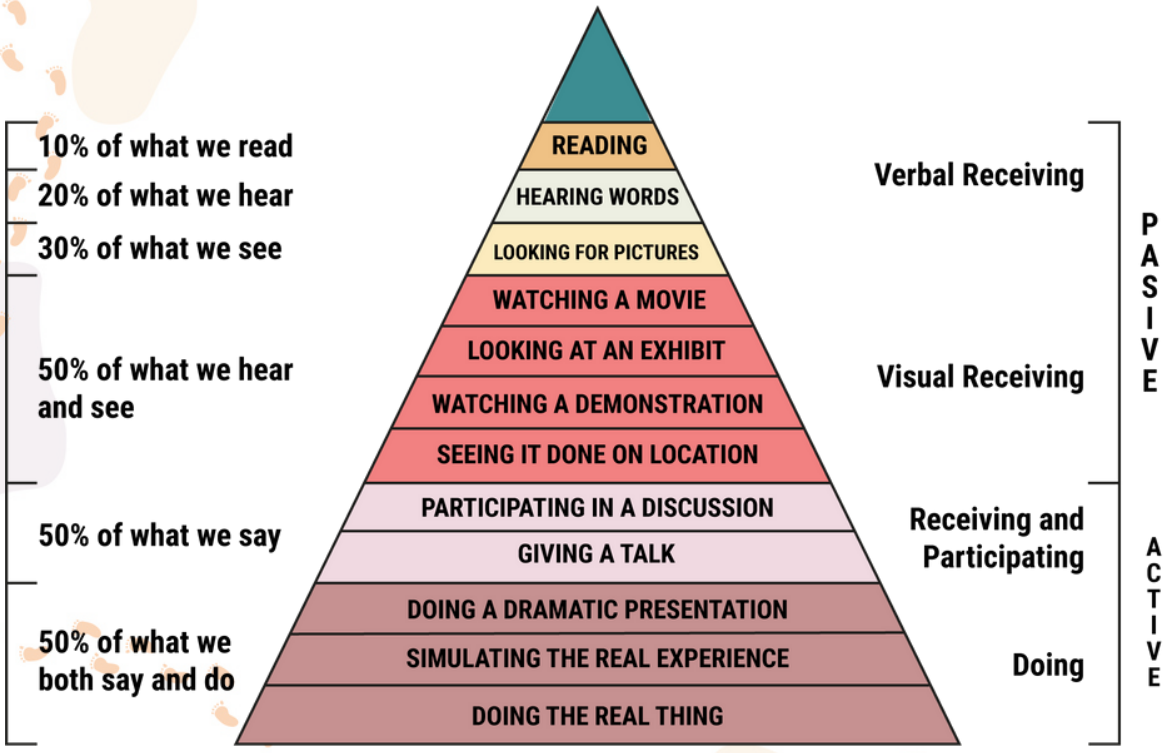
- Emphasis on the global
- The need to de-emphasise one's allegiance to nationality in favour of global citizenship
- Merging cultures
- Seeks to universalise the notions of human rights, rule of law and Western democracy
- Regards the nation-state as its building block and the sole form of inhabitation
- Promotes financial international integration

- Emphasis on the local
- The need of self-determination of nations
- Maintaining cultures
- Seeks to acknowledge that the notions of human rights, rule of law and Western democracy emerged in the Western world, and may differ from place to place
- Sees the nation-state as just another form of inhabitation, next to nomadism, tribal settlements etc.
- Promotes national liberation

Despite the formal decolonisation, the countries of the Global South remain under the control of the Western world through less apparent means of domination. Education in tricontinental countries may be controlled through international development programs, which limit the capacity of low-income countries to determine their own educational agenda[5]. Globalisation here is a process promoting the culture and economical interests of Western countries, and thus is contrary to decolonisation.[6]

Another way such subtle control manifests in education can be standardised testing, as both the contents and skills these tests are designed to evaluate are focused on Western culture, languages, realities, and culturally-based knowledge: often being guilty of cognitive colonialism. Global education recognizes the dynamic between globalisation and decolonisation. When done right, it reflects both processes and is mindful of the conflict between them.

One of the core terms for global education is 'experience', because purely theoretical understanding is insufficient for the practice of empathy, which is required for intercultural perspective and for the ability to see the world through the eyes of the other. That is why global pedagogies practice learning by doing, but also because such practice leads to a higher rate of information retention: We remember what we experience.



DALE, Edgar. Audio-Visual Methods In Teaching (3rd Edition). Holt, Rinehart, and Winston (1969)

5 TIKLY, Leon. (2009). Education and the new imperialism
6 SHIELDS, Robin. (2013). Globalisation and international education

"Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world."

-Paulo Freire

7. ANALYSING EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS

Education remains central to the development of a nation as Mandela has stated, "Education is the most powerful weapon", this can be interpreted in terms of diplomatic tools, the weapon in emancipating the marginalised groups within society against the hierarchical and oppressive structures as well as undoing the westernisation that is ongoing in the global sphere.

In the Study Session, the history of South Africa's educational system was analysed as a case study. This history remains a painful, harsh and challenging one due to the long term effects of colonialism and inequality. Many participants experienced emotional challenges in this section as it indicated the pain and suffering that many generations endured and continue to endure around the world. It led to all participants tapping into their humanity and understanding the depth and intensity as well as the importance of this topic. Decolonisation must occur at all levels in order to be a reality, education remains a key avenue for this to be a success.
Let's analyse South Africa's education system and join the dots of decolonisation and education in order to understand this on a more practical level.

Timeline of South Africa's education system

Pre-colonisation Pre 1652

Late Stone Age people (San/Tsam//Xam) taught their children how to hunt and gather food, skin animals, prepare and cook food and also how to make and use stone tools, self-sufficiency was prominent in societies. Chiefs ruled the villages.

1652 - 1658

First white settlers arrive at the Cape, Jan van Riebeeck is among the Dutch settlers as they encounter a number of different groups of black people who are living on the land.
17 April, The first formal school in South Africa is opened by the Dutch East India Company. It is specifically intended for the slaves from The Amersfoort. Pieter van der Stael teaches the class.

1682

A colonial decree requires compulsory school attendance from all slave children under 12 years of age. Older slave children have to attend school twice a week. Both settlers and slaves ignore this and some slaves even hide in mountain caves on one occasion to avoid going to school.

1799

The first school specifically for Africans opens near what is now King William's Town. Previous to this only a handful of Khoi and black South Africans received formal education.

1806-1824

The British forcibly occupy the Cape. This interrupts educational reforms put in place by the School Ordinance. Free schools are established and are originally intended to be multiracial, but soon they begin to provide for white children only.

1953

The Bantu Education Act is passed. The Act forces all schools for Africans to register with the government, resulting in almost all of the mission schools as well as night schools closing down.

1976

4th of March, The BPC, SASO, and SASM become active in Soweto schools over the issue of instruction in Afrikaans.

20 April, Pupils at Orlando West Junior School go on strike against the use of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction.

27 April, Police confront some 10,000 students demonstrating against rent increases in Soweto and violence ensues.

11 June, The recently appointed deputy minister of "Bantu education", Andries Treurnicht, rejects applications by five Soweto schools to depart from the so-called 50-50 policy in secondary education, which entailed equal use of English and Afrikaans in schooling.

16 June, the June 16th demonstrations take place on the day that the Internal Security Amendment Act comes into operation. The Internal Security Amendment Act, which replaced the Suppression of Communism Act, gives the minister of Justice enhanced powers to declare organisations unlawful, to ban publications, to prohibit attendance at gatherings, to restrict access to certain areas and to detain witnesses in custody.

1987

31 July-3 August, the International Student Conference in Solidarity with the Struggle of the Students of Southern Africa, is held in London. COSAS and NECC declare themselves unbanned. SANSCO and its branches and affiliates publicly declare themselves unbanned when a defiance campaign to defy amongst other things, restrictions on organisations is launched.

In December, SANSCO convenes its eighth congress at the University of Western Cape to celebrate its tenth anniversary and defies its ban. The recently released African National Congress (ANC) leader, Ahmed Kathrada, gives a keynote address.

1994

In May, President Nelson Mandela appoints Prof. Sibusiso Bhengu as South Africa's first black Minister of Education in a single, non-racial national Department of Education.

2014-2015

Students across the country stand for their right to affordable education, with protests kicking off in at least seven other institutions. Students in Cape Town march to the Parliament, where a meeting of the National Assembly is ongoing.

Two days later, hundreds of students in the United Kingdom gather in front of South Africa House to show support for South Africa's protesting students. There, former High Commissioner to the UK, Obed Mlaba, signs a memorandum of grievances handed to him by South African students in London.

On October 23, former president Jacob Zuma announces that there would be no fee increases for 2016. The Commission of Inquiry into Higher Education and Training, whose role it is to find and create opportunities for free education at tertiary institutions, is formed soon after.

2017

The Commission of Inquiry into Higher Education and Training announces on August 14 that fee increases are to continue in 2017. Social media erupts with calls for a national shutdown of all universities on August 15. The origins of this call are unclear, but it is circulated with protests taking place across the country on the day. As he ends his presidency, Zuma announces that the government would provide free higher education to students from households with a combined annual income of up to R350,000 from 2018. President Cyril Ramaphosa carries through this commitment the following year.

2019

At the beginning of the 2019 academic year in February, students across the country — but mainly at Wits, the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), the Durban University of Technology (DUT), as well as University of Johannesburg (UJ) — hold similar demonstrations calling for free accommodation for those affected by historical debt. Some even go on a hunger strike to bring attention to the matter at Wits.

As protests continue at DUT, one student is killed as campus security initiates violence at the scene.
DUT officials condemn the violence and left investigations to the police.
#AmINext march

2021

WITS AsinaMali On March 8, Minister of Higher Education, Blade Nzimande, announces that the National Treasury would decrease its contribution to the National Students Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), and the country's first year students would not be able to benefit from it in 2021.
Wits students begin a peaceful protest the following day near the Braamfontein campus. The purpose of the protests is to call for students with historical debts to be allowed to register, and for the government to increase national funding. As the day goes on, police presence is evident at the scene. Protests begin to trend on social media with the hashtag, #WitsAsinamali, which translates to "we do not have money" from isiZulu.
Protests continue at the same campus into March 10, where students use rocks and burning tyres to block roads surrounding the campus. Police presence is visibly strong on the day and around 10 a.m. they begin to fire rubber bullets at unarmed protesters and an innocent bystander is killed.
Following these events, Wits releases a statement condemning all violence. Since then, the university has made COVID-19 relief funds available for student registration and made amendments to their policy with regard to students with historical debt who are now allowed to register.
Wits SRC is continuing efforts to support students through fundraising measures.

8. METHODOLOGY

Intro to Non-formal and Informal education

What do we think of when the word *EDUCATION* is spoken? What usually comes to mind is an image of an auditorium, where an enrolled student works toward some sort of a certification, all the while being aided by educators; in other words, a process that is part of a structured and institutionalised system, running from kindergarten to university and encompassing various programmes and trainings – this is what we call **formal education**.

But if we allow ourselves to widen our understanding of the term and see it as any activity aimed at generating, cultivating and/or transferring knowledge, quite quickly, we start to see that we also practise education outside the classroom, too, and that school curricula are not the only blueprint to learning.

Non-formal education

As opposed to the notion of formal learning, in which the completion of a certain scholar period results in achieving a certain level of education, non-formal learning may provide those who complete it with various certifications. What this category entails in practice is different types of courses, learning activities and exercises, dialogical learning, workshops, or the very Study Session that resulted in this Toolkit!

Non-formal education is based on the needs of the learner and aims to holistically engage them not only insofar as they are to take part intellectually, but also to the extent of their feelings and their bodies – Not merely passing down information vertically, but providing experiences, being mindful of the need of methodological diversity and of the need for learning by doing.

Non-formal education is learner centered, yet planned and learning objective driven, using different methods in order to reach that objectives.

Informal learning

But even when education is not structured, we as humans cannot seem to stop ourselves from learning. In everyday life, we learn from family and friends, neighbours and coworkers, acquaintances and strangers and this is considered **informal learning**. We learn at the library, at the grocery store, at art exhibitions, at protests… Education is a lifelong process that goes on continuously even when we're not in school (formal education) or at a study session or a different organised learning event (non-formal education).

As student activists, we are also learning even when we are taking the streets, debating during rallies, holding protests and voicing our demands. This sort of education in the streets is what is called *public sphere pedagogy*. The public sphere is a discursive space, where the members of society gather, discuss, and debate over the issues of the day.

As we learnt before, dialogue is the encounter between human beings mediated by the world around them.[7] If dialogue is mediated by the public sphere, the knowledge that emerges through informal education is public opinion. Deliberations – guided by this public opinion – then constitute the civil society that fills the gap between people and their governments. In this sense, education is what makes the world go around!

Our participants did not learn only during the non-formal sessions, presentations and activities: their knowledge also came about from the informal conversations among themselves during breaks, in bars and coffeeshops, from the late night talks and from moments of genuine human connection.

On the topic of human connection as a means of learning, it would be apt to mention that during the Study Session in Strasbourg, the learning experience flagged as most memorable by the participants was a moment where they found themselves emotionally moved by the first-hand accounts of student bravery and activism, as retold by someone directly involved in several protests. Indeed, the topic of colonialism itself deals with generational trauma and hurting of subjugated peoples, and hence can never be viewed in a theoretical vacuum: emotivity and feelings of angst need to be factored in as well.

7 FREIRE, Paulo (1970). Pedagogy of the oppressed

9. MOBILISATION AND DIALOGUE

The situation is dire. The Study Session in Strasbourg serves as groundwork for future action, and its purpose is actualised only within its follow-up advocacy; within the events that its participants go on to organise in order to spread its key messages and contribute to change.

Although activism without reflection is aimless, reflection without activism – as would be the case if this session was not followed up – is empty. Change is materialised only within you. You, the activist, bear the responsibility for being the catalyst of transformation, because none other will bring it about. To hope that it may emerge on its own is not only an absolute submission to the status quo; such vain hope is also the death of the movement.

What is it that you can do to help the cause then?
Many things. Educate yourself on the topic. Work on your qualities as an advocate. Notice the assumptions and biases around you: in your day-to-day life, in your curriculum, in the media, in the arts, in all aspects of your social and professional life. Do not underestimate the small deeds of opening this topic with a friend or a group of friends. Dialogue is what we are trying to achieve, as well as the method of achieving it. Make colonialism from an abstract problem to a personal one. Contribute to building a movement, and if possible, organise your own session using this Toolkit as a template. However, what is perhaps the most important thing, is to never lose the belief that change is possible. One might feel like giving up on the world, when it seemingly rejects change, but working through this feeling has been the only way movements of the past achieved transformation.

Keep in mind that building the power to bring about change is not an easy task. Oftentimes, you will feel like you are building a dam with a single stick. Margaret Mead, an important figure in the history of feminism, said: "Never underestimate the power of a small group of committed people to change the world. In fact, it is the only thing that ever has."... Many postwar anticolonial movements in tricontinental territories organised in the spirit of this quote, and started *on a bench*.

The reason why colonised curricula persist is the nature of contemporary education as a means to preserve the current way our society is structured; passed down vertically from one generation to another, often reproducing injustices of the past.[8] The way formal education is currently set up is such that it dissuades situational thinking, and encourages thinking in purely abstract categories. As a result, one might be led to believe – confined within the learned abstract categories – that there is nothing to be done. That the world is static.

Such sentiment is – as you will see below – one of the five traits that oppressive education fosters within the subjugated consciousness. The objective of the anticolonial educators is to do away with these five traits using dialogue.

Fear of freedom To reject the need to continuously and responsibly work toward one's freedom is to fear it. Both the oppressor and the oppressed have this fear: one to gain agency, the other to suppress it. The oppressed, guided by dialogue, have to liberate both, so that these categories are replaced with the singular classification: "human".	**Dual consciousness** Subjugated peoples are forced to look at themselves through the eyes of the other, "measuring their souls by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt or pity". They soon develop a dual identity. The goal is to revalue one's language or culture through merging these two identities, as was the case with intellectual Frenchmen of colour in the 1930s or the Dalits in India.	**Submerged consciousness** Whilst human beings are unique in their ability to reflect on the past and ponder the future, animals do neither; they are static. For the consciousness of a colonised mind to be submerged means it is robbed of this reflective and prospective ability.

8 Leonardo Garnier, Special Advisor to the UN Secretary General

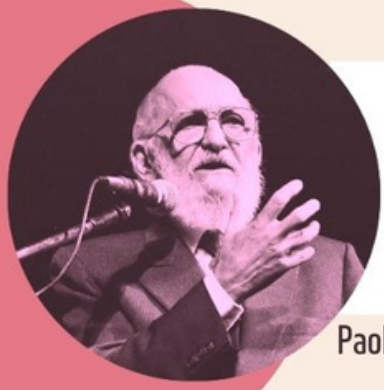
Fatalism The oppressed rationalise their situation of oppression as a result of the natural order of things, viewing their oppression not as something to be changed, but as the will of a divine entity or mechanism. This rationalisation serves the oppressors, for it absolves them from accountability.	**Self-denigration** The accountability is shifted from the oppressor onto the oppressed, who are led to believe that their strife is of their own doing. Poverty, exploitation, the aggression against them – all is understood as personal responsibility.The colonised mind starts asking itself the question: "Have I just not been working hard enough?"

Only through dialogue – the exchange of ideas among more people, genuinely interested in naming the world and resolving problems – can educators help emancipation and enlightenment. You now have the opportunity of being one of them. Do you wish to become a lantern-bearer?

Oppression-free education serves to...

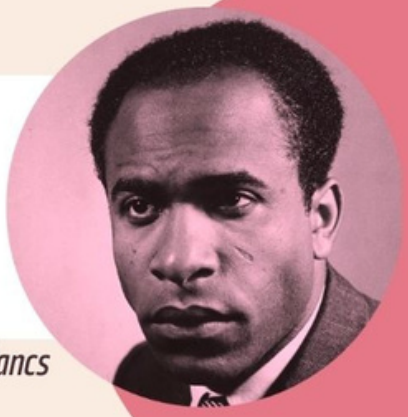
...non-coercively rearrange the desires and wishes of students to allow basic democratic reflexes to emerge.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak; *Righting Wrongs*



...help emancipate mankind: to liberate both the oppressor and the oppressed by the means of fostering dialogue, wherein people become the masters of their own thinking and discuss in a systematised, organised and developed manner that, which they wish to know more about.

Paolo Freire; *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*



...cultivate humanism, which doesn't deal in absolutes, and pays heed to the fact that to be human is to be a yes: yes to to life, yes to love, yes to generosity. But it is also to be a no: no to indignity, no to exploitation, no to the murder of that, which is most human about us – Freedom.

Frantz Fanon; *Peau noire, masques blancs*

...dismantle the sub-human sexual categorisation which was formed during the colonial structuring. This dismantling is then the only way to disrupt epistemic violence and hegemony by reconstructing the curriculum in a feminist and radical manner.

Pumla Dineo Nqola; *Ufanele Uqavile: Blackwomen, Feminisms and Postcoloniality in Africa*

...decolonise the most powerful source, The Mind. It aims to diminish the fear in the minds of the oppressed. The oppressed must raise their voices, and no longer be defined by western values and standards, but rather by authenticity and their power of knowledge and freedom.

Steve Bantu Biko; *I Write What I Like*

handout created by Petr Franc and Lutfiyya Dean for the purposes of the 2022 Pluriverse Study Session

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