

# Open education and social justice: Future imperatives

By

Glenda Cox, University of Cape Town  
Future of Open Education, 17 May 2023



UNESCO CHAIR  
IN OPEN EDUCATION  
AND SOCIAL JUSTICE



Open is based on the philosophical view of  
“knowledge as a collective social product and the desirability of  
making it a social property”

(Prasad & Ambedkar in Downes, 2007:1)



Photo by [freestocks.org](https://www.freestocks.org) on [Unsplash](https://www.unsplash.com)

# OER World Map



(Project ended 2022)



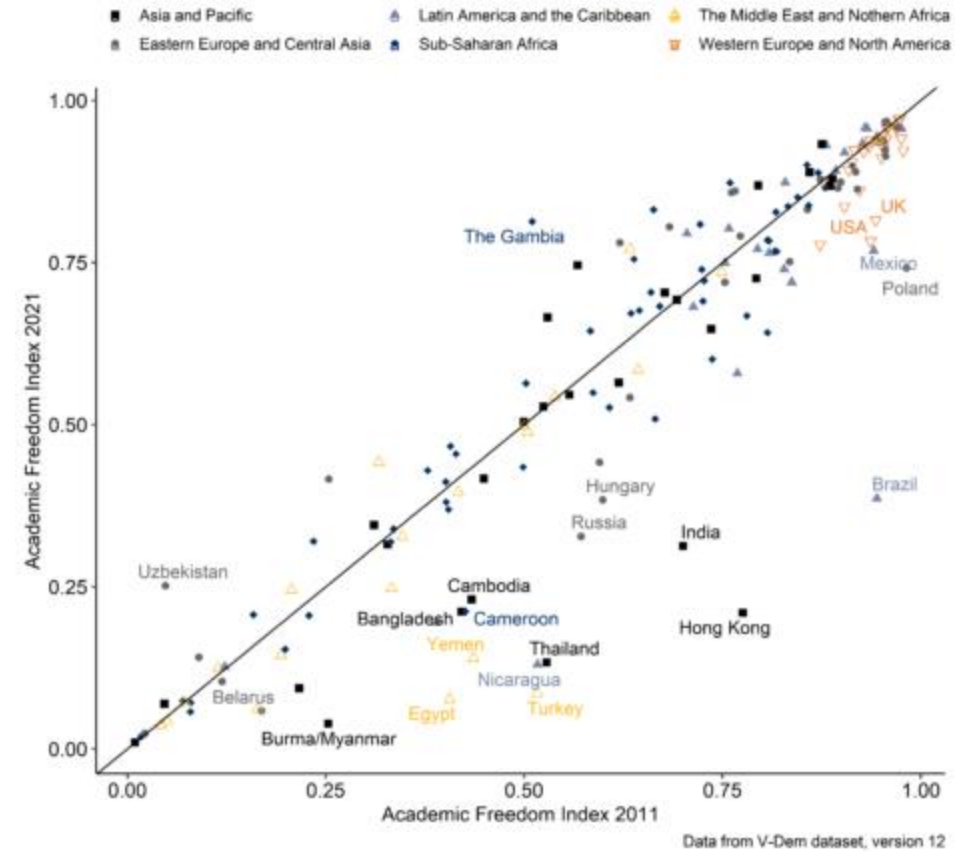
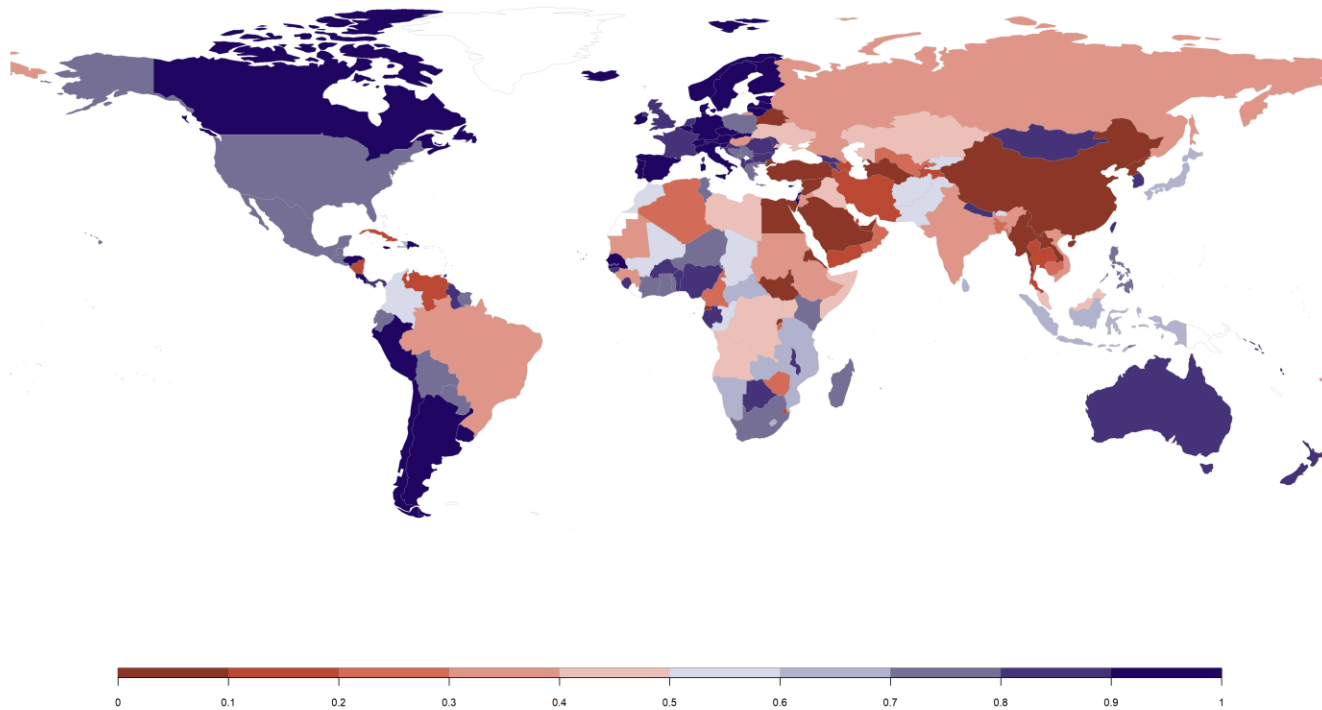
# The world in crisis

- **Climate change**
- **Uncertain futures (pandemics, war, refugees)**
- **Continued unacceptable inequalities**

# Academic freedom on the decline

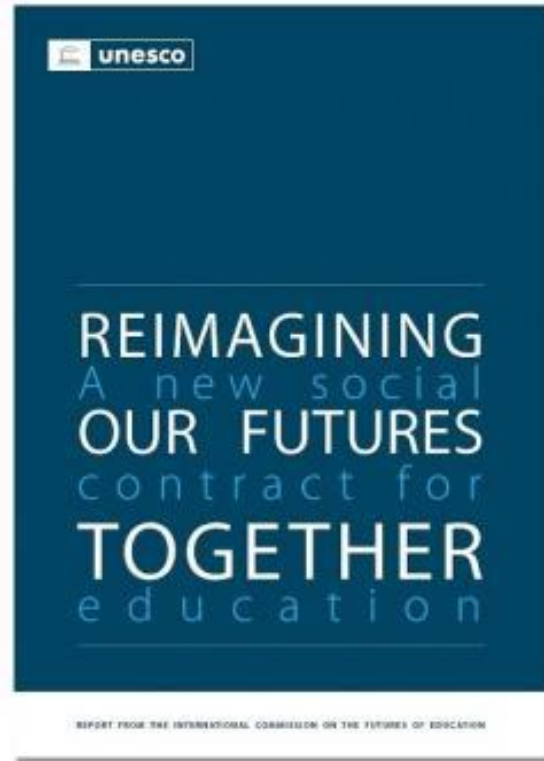
(0 Low-1 High)

Countries on the decline are India, China, Britain, Mexico and United States



Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Institute of Political Science (FAUIPS, Erlangen-Nuremberg), Germany, and the V-Dem Institute in Gothenburg, Sweden.

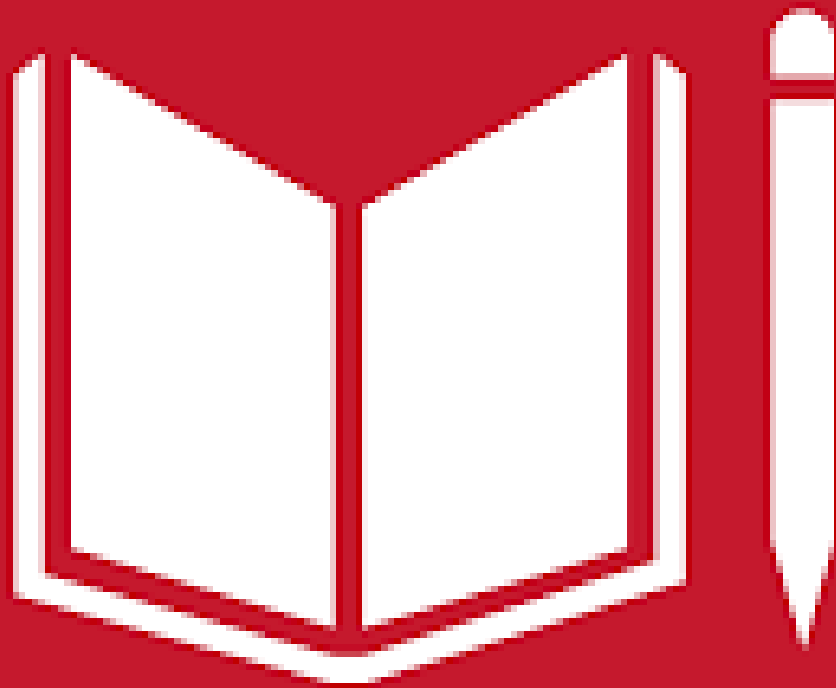
# Futures of Higher Education: A new social contract (UNESCO, 2021)



This new social contract calls for:

- radically different approach to higher education with a focus on **openness, inclusivity and diversity**.
- moving away from neoliberal competition towards **higher education as a public and common good**.
- **rethinking** of existing pedagogy
- continuing but also moving forward from the intergenerational relationship between lecturers and students to 'intragenerational' pedagogy where the presence of **students are foregrounded, building a truly inclusive democratic higher education where students feel a sense of belonging**.

# 4 QUALITY EDUCATION

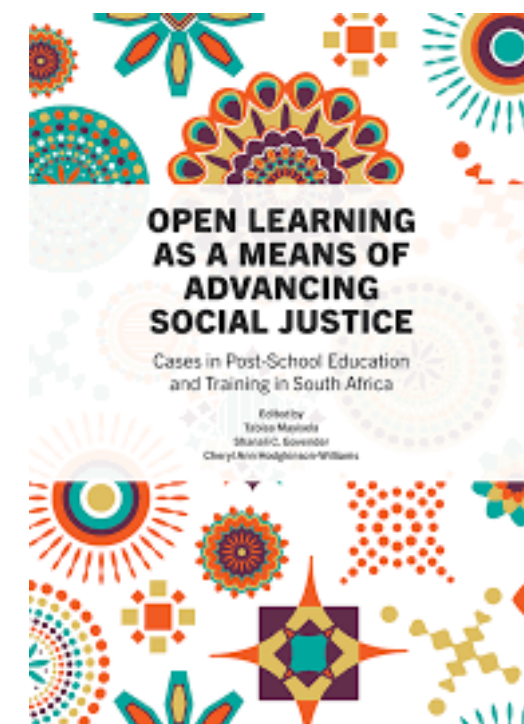
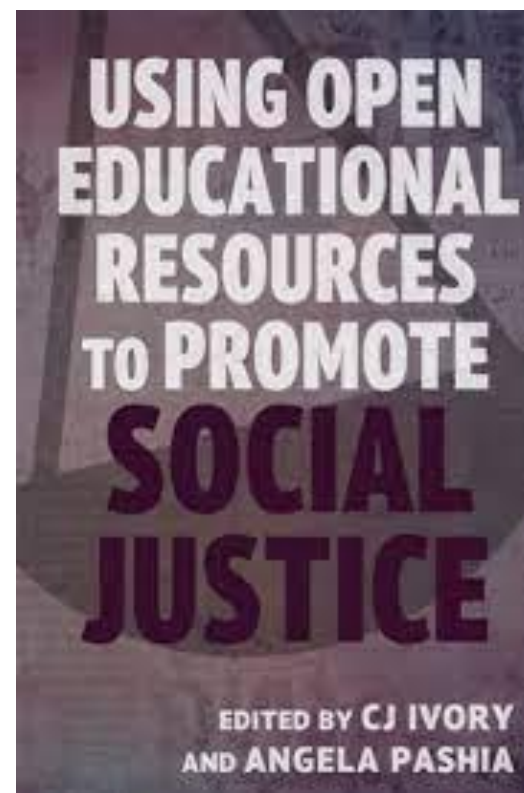


## UNESCO OER recommendation (2019)

The Recommendation is structured around five actions areas

1. Building capacity of stakeholders to create, access, re-use, adapt and redistribute OER
2. Developing supportive policy
3. Encouraging effective, inclusive and equitable access to quality OER
4. Nurturing the creation of sustainability models for OER
5. Promoting and reinforcing international cooperation

# Social justice imperative



**KEYNOTES**



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KEYNOTE TITLE: THE WARP AND WEFT OF OPEN EDUCATION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE



Serving **SOCIAL JUSTICE PEDAGOGICAL INNOVATION**  
**OPEN EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES**

**Rajiv Jhangiani, Ph.D.**  
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Open Education Advisor, BCcampus  
Associate Editor, Psychology Learning and Teaching  
Ambassador, Center for Open Science



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# Social Justice as a framework to understand the potential of Open Education

“

*At the heart of the open educational resource movement is the intention to provide affordable access to culturally relevant education to all. This imperative could be described as a desire to provide education in a manner consistent with social justice*

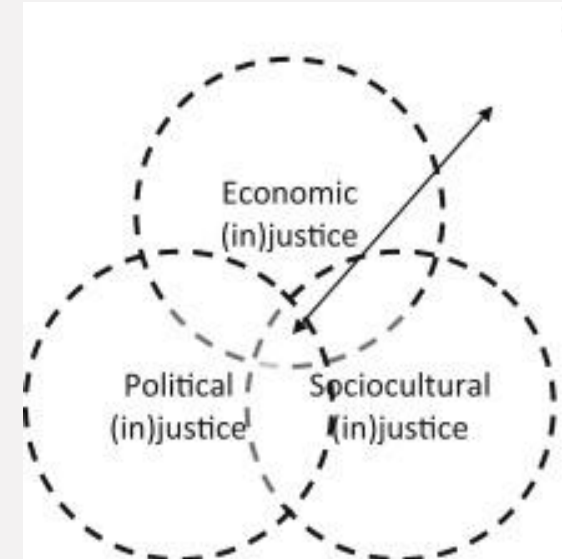
”

Hodgkinson-Williams, C.A. & Trotter, H. (2018).

# What is Social Justice?



*Social justice is a concept that requires the organisation of social arrangements that make it possible for **everyone to participate equally in society**. Nancy Fraser (2005) considers social justice as 'participatory parity' economically, culturally and politically.*



# Social Justice as participatory parity (Fraser)

## Economic Dimension

- Material resources
- Maldistribution and redistribution

## Cultural Dimension

- Cultural attributes
- Misrecognition and recognition

## Political Dimension

- Political voice
- Mis/representation mis/framing

> **Participatory parity looks at the *what*, *who* and *how* of social justice**

> **Justice in each dimension can be remedied through *affirmative* or *transformative* responses.**

# Overcoming injustices: Affirmative or transformative

Fraser identifies two types of strategies to overcome injustice: ***affirmative*** strategies, which include activities aimed at ameliorating the scope or intensity of a particular injustice; and ***transformative*** strategies, which seek to address the root cause of an injustice.



Open education at the University of Cape Town

# Digital open textbooks for Development (DOT4D)

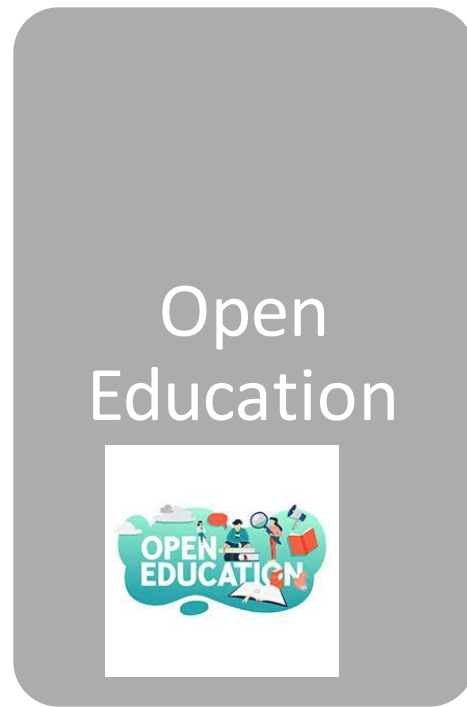
Initiated as a three-year (2018–2021) research, advocacy and implementation project funded by the Canadian IDRC, following in wake of Research on Open Educational Resources for Development (ROER4D) and other CILT open education initiatives (since 2007). ***Now an institutionally funded initiative.***



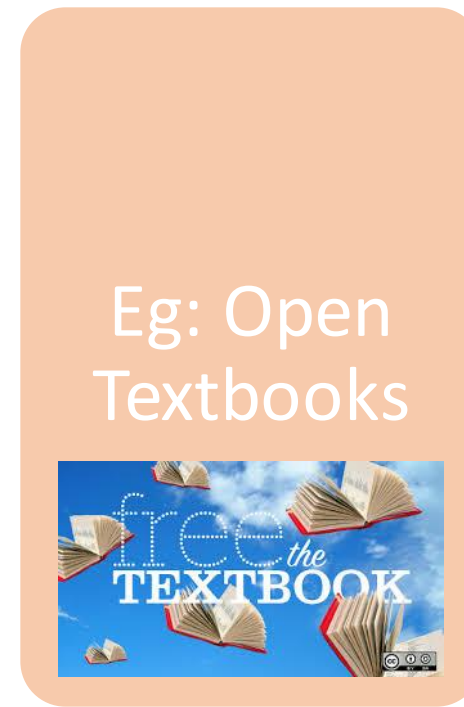
**Glenda Cox, PI, Michelle Willmers, Publishing & Implementation Manager, Bianca Masuku, Researcher**



- Economic 'distribution'
- Cultural 'recognition'
- Political 'representation'



- Open licences
- Localisation
- Voices of collaborators and students



- Free
- Digital affordance: adaptability
- Co-creation

# Economic *distribution*, cultural *recognition* and political *representation*



#feesmustfall



openstax

We visited Rice University and spoke with students about their perspectives on free textbooks. Check back tomorrow to see another student's perspective. [#ForStudentsForever](#)



Cape Town U Must Fall protests



<https://www.buzzfeed.com/husseinkesvani/oxford-campaign-rhodes-must-fall>

<https://africanarguments.org/2021/06/fallisms-faultlines-the-paradoxes-of-fees-must-fall/>



# Student co-creation of open textbooks (UCT case study)

Authors found ways in which to not only capture “*persons’ own embodied experience and their lived realities*” in the authorship process, but also to include their feedback in quality assurance.

Student participation is a critical aspect of the **institutional transformation agenda**, in that it addresses social justice and inequity in the classroom.



# 'Students as partners' and co-creators

## **Global movement to include (UG) students in course design, facilitation and research**

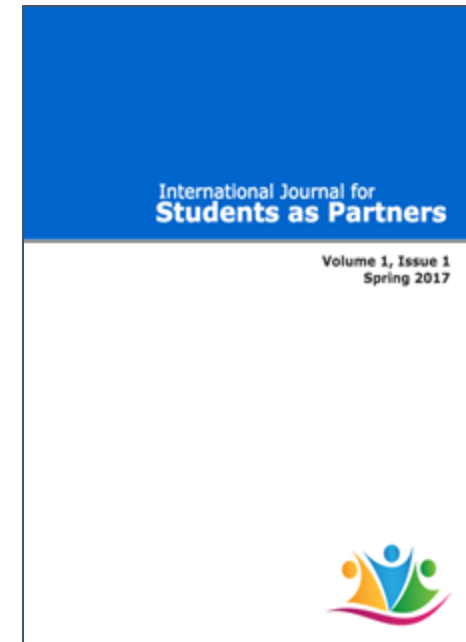
“a collaborative, reciprocal process through which all participants have the opportunity to contribute equally, although not necessarily in the same ways, to curricular or pedagogical conceptualization, decision making, implementation, investigation, or analysis” (Cook-Sather, Bovill & Felten, 2014)

## **Principles: respect, reciprocity and shared responsibility**

More recently: attempts to think about power differentials

## **“Promoting Equity and Justice Through Pedagogical Partnership”**

**De Bie et al (2021)**



Does open education address underlying structures of dominance and subordination? (transformative justice)

Only if it is created and used *across the institution and potentially across the country and globally*, in order to embrace critical reflexivity and pluralism valuing previously excluded knowledge and legitimising indigenous resources. (Individual agency to a distributed response)

Only then will we be “*dismantling (of) institutional obstacles*” or *root causes of systemic injustice* that underlie the pursuit of participatory parity present in higher education (Fraser,2005).

# A call to organise Open education...

Against

For

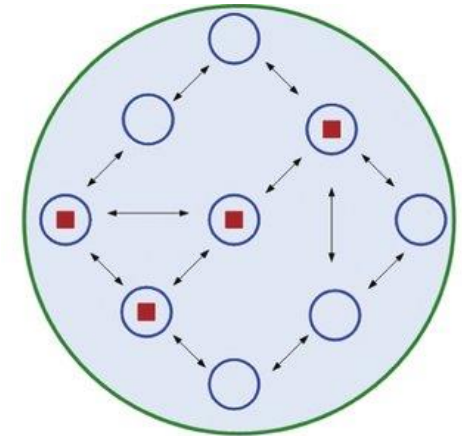
Imperitives

Emphasis in market value of HE  
 Technological monopolies (Technology is never neutral)  
 Perpetuating injustices  
 Racism  
 Economic exclusion  
 Competition for gain

Equity  
 Access  
 Intersectionality  
 Collaboration  
 Community  
 Voice  
 Generosity  
 Care

Empirical evidence for open education and its role in affirmative and transformative justice  
 Knowledge for the Public good  
 Norm creation  
 Distributed response moving beyond individual agency  
 Student co-creation  
 Student success  
 Agency to communities

*'The power of publication for all'*  
*Creative Commons*



Norm propagation stage



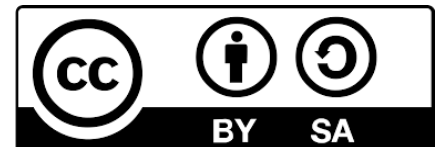
# The future is open



"Higher education needs to be a fierce advocate for free and open access to knowledge and science"

(UNESCO, 2021:75)

By Preeti Singh for Creative Commons



# References

Cox, G., Masuku, B., & Willmers M (2022a) Sustainable open textbook models for social justice. *Front. Educ.* 7:881998. doi: 10.3389/feduc.2022.881998

DOT4D. 2021. Open Textbooks in South African Higher Education: Action Brief. Cape Town: Digital Open Textbooks for Development. Available at: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1\\_BFNLHPRcPP1f94GyR9EiZ98HKKu54f1/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1_BFNLHPRcPP1f94GyR9EiZ98HKKu54f1/view?usp=sharing)

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[Savarimuthu, B & Cranefield, S. 2011](#) Norm creation, spreading and emergence: A survey of simulation models of norms in multi-agent systems. Semantic Scholar <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Norm-creation%2C-spreading-and-emergence%3A-A-survey-of-Savarimuthu-Cranefield/a7072328d1a090b145cb065e6312b0f8a3b01273>

<https://projectnile.in/2021/04/29/crowdfunding-for-social-justice/> from website

Decline in academic freedom. <https://www.fau.eu/2022/03/03/news/research/academic-freedom-on-the-decline/>