



Invitation | Public Seminar

Transforming knowledge & research for just & sustainable futures: Implications for higher education policy & practice

Presenter: Prof Leon Tikly

SUMMARY: In this seminar, the speaker will explore the urgent need to transform knowledge and research, emphasizing that such transformation is essential for achieving epistemic justice and addressing the complex challenges of unsustainable development. Higher Education (HE) plays a pivotal role in knowledge generation, dissemination, and governance; however, for HE to fulfill this role effectively, it must undergo significant transformation. The speaker will argue that the prevailing neoliberal social imaginary—rooted in markets and competition—is fundamentally at odds with the changes required. Instead, he will propose a new social imaginary inspired by Mbembe's concept of planetary consciousness as a more robust foundation for reform. The seminar will highlight key priorities for transformation in teaching, research, global and civic engagement, and university governance. It will also emphasize the need for a holistic approach, recognizing the critical role of governments, civil society, and multilateral organizations such as UNESCO in reshaping the broader knowledge ecosystem within which HE operates.

Hosted by the Centre for Education Rights and Transformation (CERT) in the Faculty of Education at UJ



Bio: Leon Tikly is a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences and UNESCO Chair on Transforming Knowledge and Research for Just and Sustainable Futures at the University of Bristol. Leon is a visiting Professor at the Centre for Education Rights and Transformation, University of Johannesburg. He is currently working on a project with colleagues at the University of Cape Town on embedding socially engaged research at UCT. He has recently directed a UKRI-funded network plus on Transforming Education for Sustainable Futures with partners in India, Rwanda, Somalia/Somaliland, and South Africa (UKRI; £4.75 million; 2019-23). His scholarship over many years has focused on globalization and education policy in the postcolonial world and on initiatives to improve the quality of education for disadvantaged learners, particularly in Africa. Between 2005 and 2011, he directed a research programme consortium on Improving Education Quality in Low-Income Countries (EdQual) (DfID; £2.5 million). He has also conducted several research projects and written extensively on race,

ethnicity, and education issues in the UK and globally. More recently, he has written at the intersection between decolonial scholarship and education for sustainable futures. His work is informed theoretically by critical realism, post-colonial, and decolonial perspectives and is underpinned by a commitment to social, environmental, and epistemic justice.

DATE: 25 March 2025 | TIME: 10:00-12:00 (SAST) | FORMAT: Hybrid

VENUE: Cottage 3, Research Village, UJ's Bunting Road Campus

MS TEAMS: Click [HERE](#) to join

Meeting ID: 382 907 298 501 | Passcode: bk6vG6gg

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