

Ollscoil Mhá Nuad
Maynooth University

Roinn na Forbartha Idirnáisiúnta
Department of International Development



Looking back and looking forward: Conversations on Paulo Freire's Influence on Global Development Practice

Edited by Paddy Reilly and Mags Liddy



Paulo Freire 1921-1987 by Peter Dorman

**Papers from a Conference to mark the
Centenary of the Birth of Paulo Freire (1921-1997)**

Hosted by the Maynooth University Department of International Development
(MU DID) on October 28, 2021

Who We Are

The Department of International Development at Maynooth University offers programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, through full-time, part-time and distance options. The Department has run programmes at Maynooth University since 2013 in collaboration with the former Kimmage Development Studies Centre (see note below).

The programmes focus on the relationship between the global North and Global South and the opportunities and challenges people face in a rapidly changing international context. International Development highlights local-global connections and how we need to think globally when acting locally. Issues such as globalisation, climate change, food security, poverty, human rights, health, education, gender, inequality, and empowerment are explored within an international development perspective. In addition to the academic programmes, the Department provides capacity development services devoted to the continuous professional development of personnel involved in the international development sector in Ireland and around the world.

The Department of International Development includes staff who draw on their experience of the former Kimmage DSC, which for over 40 years facilitated education and learning opportunities for development practitioners working in a range of occupations from over 65 countries in the Global North and South. Based on this previous experience and in tandem with other departments at Maynooth University, the Department offers learners an inter-cultural and experience-based learning environment. The ethos of the Department is embodied in a teaching approach based on participatory learning and critical thinking which seeks to empower participants with critical understanding, skills, and knowledge essential for engaging with issues and challenges today.

Dedication

*We wish to dedicate this collection of writings to two exceptional people who have passed away since this conference ended. One known to us through her writing, **bell hooks**, died in December 2021, was a celebrated African American feminist, academic and author, and whose critiques of Paulo Freire were cited by several contributors to this event and subsequent papers in this document.*

*The other, **Dr. Sinéad McGrath**, whose untimely death was on 20 January 2022, was a valued colleague within the Department of International Development. Sinéad was an excellent teacher, mentor to students, dedicated researcher, and writer. Sinéad would surely have participated in this event but for her illness and we sorely miss her many contributions to the work of this Department.*

Background to the Conference on 28 October 2021

Due to the continuing Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the event was run online. It was presented using Zoom, from 11.00 – 16.30 that day. The proceedings were formally opened by Professor Aidan Mulkeen, Vice-President of Maynooth University. Professor Mulkeen provided some interesting reflections on the ‘end of history’ debate popularised by Francis Fukuyama some 20 years ago, outlining the fragility of such assertions in the light of recent unpredictable events in politics globally. This underlined his views on Paulo Freire and of how relevant this conference was to Maynooth generally, with its interest in the main areas and ideas focused upon in our conversations, ideas embraced by many faculties and departments across the university. He remarked,

One of Paulo Freire's real contributions was the idea that ordinary people have power, and that power can change their lives and their communities. A second important idea from Paulo Freire was that education and awareness of the economic, social and political systems was key to unlocking their power. It seems to me that this message is as relevant today as it was in 1968 when he wrote *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

The conference was divided into two main sessions: the morning consisted of three keynote speakers, followed by a facilitated question and answer session in which the speakers responded to points raised by conference participants. The morning session concluded at 12.30 with a short break, before the afternoon workshops opened at 13.30. There were three workshops which ran concurrently, before concluding with presentations from the moderators of each workshop at a final plenary session. A final reflection paper was presented to conclude the conference. YouTube recordings of the conference (except for the workshops which were not recorded) can be reviewed at [this link](#)¹.

¹ <https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/international-development/news/recent-dept-international-development-conference-influence-paulo-freire>

Contents

Introduction to the conference by Paddy Reilly	1
The Relevance of Paulo Freire’s work for Higher Education Today – Towards a Critical Pedagogy of Global Connection by Eilish Dillon	8
Freire and international development practice: Personal, Professional and Political Reflections by David Archer	23
Three Readings of Freire: A Personal Journey of Praxis by Zoryana Pshyk.....	31
Conversations on Freire: introduction to the afternoon sessions by Mags Liddy	42
Freire and Higher Education by Mags Liddy.....	47
The Prospects of Paulo Freire’s Methods in Higher Education in Africa by David Kaulem	51
Paulo Freire within and beyond the university walls by Fergal Finnegan	61
What relevance has Freire to our world today in the community? by Patrick Marren.....	66
The oppressed educator: Perception of power and its impact on the learning experience by Amel Yacef.....	69
Freire in action in today’s radical community development by Peter Dorman.....	73
Freire’s influence in global development practice by Niamh Rooney	78
Conversations on Freire’s Influence on Global Development Practice: The Liberian Experience by Dorothy K. Toomann.....	83
Freire’s influence on Trócaire’s programming in Sierra Leone by Michael Solis	87
Afterword: Some Thoughts on Freire’s Continuing Relevance by Paddy Reilly	91
List of all contributors.....	104

Introduction to the conference by Paddy Reilly

Introduction

The year 2021 recognised the centenary of the birth of Paulo Freire, one of the most significant educationalists of the past century. Colleagues in the Department of International Development Maynooth University, Ireland, wanted to highlight the significance of this occasion by using it as an opportunity to enable critical reflection on Freire's influence in development and educational practice, both at home and globally. So, we held a conference (online due to the continuing pandemic) on the 28th of October. The event included contributors from Ireland and internationally, drawn from the sectors of development practice, community development and higher education. Those who presented papers provided valuable insights gathered in this collection of reflections drawn from the conversations held that day.

As suggested in the title, the conference was organised around the theme of 'conversations about Freire'. Throughout all sessions, we attempted to respectfully listen and speak with people, and in doing so, honour a key aspect in Freire's thought: the concept of dialogue. When planning the event, we sought to engage with those who perceive his influence within the three sectors of higher education, international development practice, and activism in local community development.

The authors of the three papers in this first section, were asked to respond to the main theme and share their personal reflections on how Freire influenced them, from their different vantage points within each sector. Eilish Dillon in her paper, *The Relevance of Paulo Freire's work for Higher Education Today – Towards a Critical Pedagogy of Global Connection* gives a focus on his influence within the academic sector. David Archer, under the main heading of, *Freire and International Development Practice* provides perspectives drawn from his work largely as a practitioner within the professional development arena. Zoryana Pshyk's paper, *Three Readings of Freire: A Personal Journey of Praxis* offers insights on Freirean influence, it could be said — 'from the inside-out' — drawing upon her initial experience as an asylum seeker, and later as an activist and an educator.

The papers in this section present very diverse perspectives on Freire — as we had hoped they would — yet have much in common — as we expected they would. Each author wrote

about the influence of Freire on the work they found themselves engaged with, and each of them emphasised the personal impact that Freire had on their lives also.

Eilish Dillon begins and ends her reflection with the theme of constantly 'beginning again' citing a novel combination of the poet Brendan Kennelly and Paulo Freire – both advocating for a faithful persistence in never giving up. She sees the continuing relevance of Freire as the originator of a 'critical pedagogy of global connection'. In this regard, Global Citizenship Education (GCE) is a crucial vehicle, as she maintains, 'When the connections are broken – between people and each other, people and the planet, the present and the future, actions and consequences – we need education which helps us to bridge these connections'. In her assessment of the need for a critical pedagogy within higher education, Dillon talks about 'how difficult (but necessary) it can be to challenge the status quo and create other ways, and to engage in the kinds of teaching and learning which contribute to meaningful, just and equal global transformation'. In detailing the many 'complex challenges facing our world, and those of higher education' she argues it is more important than ever to try.

In the task of maintaining the struggle to change the status quo, Dillon frames the role of a critical pedagogy of global connection as a key component. Her paper delves into the multiple views to be found in discussions around criticality and post-criticality, and then returns to Freire's influence and relevance for higher education today. She highlights three dimensions of his work in this regard. These three dimensions are: firstly, 'A critical pedagogy based on education as political, with an emphasis on praxis – action, reflection and action - reading the world, understanding and facing it for lived alternatives based on different social goods, such as freedom, justice, equality, decoloniality and human rights'; secondly, 'the importance of connection and congruence in terms of applying the principles of critical literacy and subversion to the relationships, processes and practices of higher education' and thirdly, 'a critical pedagogy of global connection emphasises radical hope – hope in action and creating change.'

Dillon details her rationale for these dimensions, outlining the key aspects of the political nature, congruence and subversion, that are needed for the task, concluding with the importance of radical hope, citing Freire 'one of the tasks of the progressive educator... is to unveil opportunities for hope, no matter what the obstacles may be'. She concludes that 'more emphasis on the political, on congruence and on radical hope through a critical pedagogy of global connection can allow us, I believe, to advance the kind of relevant and

critical global citizenship education needed in higher education today for a just and liveable future'.

As Eilish Dillon did, David Archer underlines the impact his initial reading of Freire had on his thinking and subsequent work, presenting a fascinating personal reflection which also documents his professional practice throughout his career. Alluding to his early years training as an educator, he describes writing a research dissertation 'on the relevance of Freire to the British education system that was being cut, squeezed and dictated to under Thatcher' and how this led to his later searches to understand the significance of Freire's work in other political contexts, beginning with work in Nicaragua during the initial phase of the revolutionary Sandinista regime. He gives a vivid account of 'the next five years travelling through Latin America investigating the literacy and popular education programmes inspired by Freire' and observed, 'his impact was everywhere - in literacy programmes run by guerrillas in Salvador, and popular education by radical NGOs in Colombia. He inspired the adult education programmes working in opposition to Pinochet in urban Chile, and huge human rights education programmes in Ecuador'. Nevertheless, despite his obvious admiration for Freire, Archer doesn't flinch from sharing how Freire's ideas were 'co-opted and abused' by both left-wing and right-wing regimes as witnessed on his journeys through Latin America. He denounced the 'programmes in Guatemala that amounted to linguistic genocide – but which still claimed adherence to Freire' and elsewhere the 'pseudo-Freirean programmes that took some design elements from Freire... but abandoned the politics'.

This perhaps was a factor behind his later reappraisal of Freirean approaches when he went to work for ActionAid, and as part of his work as an Education Adviser to projects in several countries, 'was amazed that no-one seemed to be using these participatory methods in literacy programmes'. He indicates how this realization — essentially combining Freire with methods such as Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) — was documented in the work of Karen Brock and Joshua Petit (1997), and in his paper outlines how pilot programmes run in Uganda, Bangladesh and El Salvador led eventually to the birth of Reflect². Archer tells us that 'the approach spread very rapidly – reaching 500 different organisations in 70 countries within 3 years' and moreover, 'Freire's ideas were pivotal to the spread of this approach. Everywhere we went we found practitioners and activists who were inspired by

² The educational approach originally known as an acronym for the rather unwieldy title of Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques.

Freire and wanted to find ways to translate his ideas into meaningful practice in different adult education settings.'

Archer underlines the following lessons learned through his professional practice: 'Firstly, illiteracy is just one manifestation of injustice – and as such it cannot be addressed in isolation. In the absence of a wider process of change, helping someone develop literacy skills will not be sufficient to transform their lives.' Secondly, he then underlines a key Freirean principle, 'no education is neutral – all education is political. Education can serve to reinforce the injustices in wider society or can be used to liberate people and catalyse change.' Thirdly, he argues, 'the fundamental choice is between monologue and dialogue. A domesticating or banking education system depends on an all-knowing teacher who treats learners as passive recipients of knowledge to be deposited in them and regurgitated. A liberating model of education treats teachers and learners as active co-creators of knowledge.' His fourth and fifth lessons learned include two other core principles, praxis – the ongoing cycle of reflection and action, and the process of conscientization itself, which he says, he would like to see being used and understood, much more widely.

Archer takes a critical sideswipe at the role of the World Bank, which, he implies, has ironically inherited the mantle of 'Banking Education'. He argues, that now that it has 'emerged as dominant force in shaping education policy and practice in many countries' its approach is characterized by 'a patronising, all-knowing arrogance which in fact is far from neutral — interested only in economic returns not social or political or personal development.'

He concludes with the remark 'For me Freire remains a continual inspiration even as my work has evolved' and says that in his current role, 'even when I am arguing with senior economists at the IMF, I find myself supported by Freire's ideas and methods.' He confidently states that 'looking forward I see huge potential for a continual rebirth and regeneration of Freire' and describes the various movements for change in Brazil today as a positive indication of this.

Zoryana Pshyk authors the third paper in this section. While Eilish Dillon and David Archer insightfully integrate their own personal reflections with their academic and professional assessments, hers is the most personally focused — rooted as a powerful narrative of her movement through her different 'readings of Freire'. She charts her first experience as a

learner when first encountering Freire; secondly, to her role as an empowered co-learner / co-teacher of others — gaining skills in facilitating the process of liberating learning; and on to her third reading, which describes an ever-deepening critical awareness of how we are shaped by cultures of oppression — which in her words, 'gave me an understanding of the intersectionality of these contexts, which, in turn, helped me to recognise how these contexts dehumanize and shape humans into accepting their situation, while creating self-deprecating beings and guilt-tripping them into believing that the onus is on individuals and their life choices.'

In the paper, Pshyk skillfully utilizes letters to her mother to share her experiences as an asylum seeker and her learning about a philosopher called Paulo Freire — as part of an autoethnographic study she was doing — thus enabling the reader to have a 'ringside seat' in her story. Her first encounter with Freire indicates her realization of oppression as something she was undergoing as an asylum seeker — with Freire providing her with the analysis and articulation of this reality.

She reflects on her 'second reading' by describing an event she experienced as empowering — a process of action and reflection facilitated by practitioners of Training for Transformation, which led her to a greater understanding the power inherent in praxis. Pshyk states 'The learning that I took away from that first workshop was so inspiring, that I wanted to learn more. What was profound about the learning that nobody specified for me what the learning outcomes were, - I had an opportunity to explore the learning for myself and to take an ownership of it through the process'. She went to her actual second reading — (some years later) — of Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, strengthened by the practical experience she had by then gathered from facilitating others, and was enabled 'to unveil the deeper meaning of dialogue and praxis'.

Her 'third reading' coincided with her undertaking her MA in Adult Education a few years later and from this revisiting of Freire she developed more insight into the 'multiple contexts of oppression' that she witnessed and experienced, while in the Direct Provision System,

the political, economic and cultural contexts of Irish society shaped by contexts of capitalism and neoliberalism; the contexts of the DPS with its own specific complexity; the family context and the context of being a woman in Ireland. All these contexts interacted with one another and shaped one another.

She concludes her paper by affirming 'the relevancy of Freire's philosophy and the analysis of oppression in today's society and in relation to the DPS in particular cannot be underestimated' while acknowledging some valid criticisms of Freire. For Pshyk, her interpretations of Freire underline her convictions as articulated in the paper,

I always go back to the roots of the community, thinking: 'How can I stand in solidarity with women and those marginalised and disempowered?' And, as an adult educator 'practicing' Freire's philosophy, I am reflecting on my work and asking myself 'How can I work creatively and what I can do to help people to change their reality?'

The papers by Dillon, Archer and Pshyk — while shaped through different windows of experience — share much common ground on how Freire's influence is perceived. Eilish Dillon places emphasis on the need for the political nature, congruence and subversion, and not least, radical hope, that echoes from Freire's work in order to realise relevant and critical global citizenship education needed in higher education today. David Archer finds himself, as an actor in the international development arena, consistently drawing upon Freire's ideas and methods in his work today and sees the potential for a continual regeneration of these approaches within movements for change. Zoryana Pshyk's reflections leave the reader in no doubt about Freire's ongoing relevance and power to inspire people working at the grassroots, in local communities, at the margins of society within which various kinds of oppression still exist. A strand running through all these contributions is the ease by which they move between the personal and the political. The author's illustration of the connection between these two spheres reminds us that people are central to all the principles of education and development as advocated by Freire.

Morning session

Participating Speakers:

Dr Eilish Dillon

Assistant Professor and Head of Department, Department of International Development,
Maynooth University

Eilish Dillon is the Head of Department at the Department of International Development and has been involved in critical global education in Ireland in different capacities for many years. She is currently completing research on ethical communications among non-governmental development organisations (NGDOs) in Ireland.

David Archer

Head of Tax Justice and Public Services, ActionAid

David Archer is Head of Tax Justice and Public Services with ActionAid. In the 1980s he researched programmes inspired by Paulo Freire across Latin America and in the 1990s developed the Reflect approach www.Reflection.Action.org that has now spread to over 100 countries.

Zoryana Pshyk

Zoryana Pshyk is an ex-asylum seeker and a community educator. She is a Chair for the Kildare Integration Network (KIN), and a member of the Newbridge Asylum Seekers Support Group (NASSG). Zoryana is an active participant in local community development with an emphasis on Social Inclusion, and a board member of the County Kildare Leader Partnership (CKLP) representing Community.

The Relevance of Paulo Freire's work for Higher Education Today – Towards a Critical Pedagogy of Global Connection by Eilish Dillon

Introduction and Background

For this reflection on Paulo Freire's relevance to higher education, I wanted to start with a few lines from the poem, 'Begin', by Brendan Kennelly, an Irish poet, who sadly died earlier this month. As he says, 'though we live in a world that dreams of ending/ that always seems about to give in/ something that will not acknowledge conclusion/ insists that we forever begin' (Kennelly, 2011). In these few lines, Brendan sums up how hard it can be to keep going, especially in the face of the immense challenges that we are living with today – the confluence of the global crises of poverty, climate change and COVID-19, underpinned as they are by inequality; capitalist economic growth and self-interest; neoliberalism and consumption; disconnection from people and the environment, and from taking responsibility for the past and the future. But his poem also highlights the irrepressible human spirit, and the politics and radical hope which requires us to face these challenges, to 'begin again'.

bell hooks quotes a similar view from Paulo Freire at the beginning of her incredible book, *Teaching to Transgress* (1994) in which Freire says ' . . . to begin always anew, to make, to reconstruct, and to not spoil, to refuse to bureaucratize the mind, to understand and to live life as a process—live to become ...'. In her engaged pedagogy, we live so that we become, and we are always beginning. In the words of the famous book of conversations between Paulo Freire and Myles Horton (1990), 'we make the world by walking'. And so, I begin my brief reflection on why I think Paulo Freire's work is so relevant for higher education today, especially in terms of what I introduce here as a critical pedagogy of global connection, through global citizenship education (GCE). When the connections are broken – between people and each other, people and the planet, the present and the future, actions and consequences – we need education which helps us to bridge these connections.

I'm drawing a lot on my own encounters with Paulo Freire's work in Kimmage and here at Maynooth but also through research that I conducted with facilitators of development and global citizenship education a few years ago here in Ireland. In my line of work, no matter where I go, people talk about Paulo Freire, as a founding influence on development education (DE) and GCE (Bourn, 2015; McCloskey, 2016), as an inspiration for them in terms of his ideas and approaches, or just Freire as an ideal model for educators.

Early encounters with Paulo Freire's Work

Before I discuss a critical pedagogy of global connection through global citizenship education, I begin with a few words on where my encounter with Freire first began for me. Paulo Freire's (1970) ground-breaking book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, was one of very few books that I bought when I went to college first to study education, theology and history back in the 1980s. At the time, I found it very difficult to read. But Freire's ideas of praxis and conscientisation, and his efforts towards social change through democratising knowledge and grassroots literacy programmes based on critical social analysis and 'reading the world', left a deep impression on me and it helped to shape my approach as a young teacher. I was inspired by his subversion of the way education is usually presented and his congruent efforts to practice what he preached. It may also have been that his work complemented the ideas of liberation theology that I was being introduced to at the time, or that his concepts and methods provided the kind of framing, justification, language and tools that could help me to direct the education I was involved in towards critical engagement with and action for global justice, human rights and equality. Not only that education could be used as a tool for transformation but that its whole *raison d'être* was about a transformed world of equality, participation and justice. Such radical ideas resonated with the best of what I had experienced in my own schooling, but education for freedom as the overarching frame was something quite different, and for me, both extremely meaningful and energising.

Critical Pedagogy and Higher Education-From Kimmage DSC to Maynooth University

While that's all a long time ago now, I start with this musing because my first encounter with Paulo Freire's work was in higher education, the focus of my attention in this piece. Higher education is not usually the context one thinks of with regard to Freire, focused as he was on those who were most marginalised in society, and community-level learning processes. Yet, his work has had an enormous influence on those of us who work in higher education who try to break down barriers between these different education contexts. As such, I want to acknowledge the influence that Paulo Freire has had on our work at the Department of International Development here at Maynooth. Many of you participating here today will have come across Paulo Freire first through your engagement with us, whether here at Maynooth or at the Kimmage Development Studies Centre³. For others, it will have been through other

³ The Department of International Development at Maynooth was established following the transfer of programmes and staff from Kimmage Development Studies Centre, formalized in 2018.

departments here at Maynooth or in other colleges, such is his influence across higher education and the focus on critical pedagogy in some departments at Maynooth.

When we became established as a department at Maynooth University first in 2018, I was extremely impressed. In my discussions with people in other departments and based on my knowledge of the Department of Adult and Community Education where I had just completed my doctoral studies, I learned how person-centred the emphasis was; how prominent and significant the Green Campus initiative was to the life of the college; and about the emphasis on global citizenship and sustainable development in its Strategic Plan 2018 – 23. In the discussion of internationalisation there, it highlights that 'MU recognises the privileged position it occupies as a relatively well-resourced university in a wealthy democratic society, and its consequent obligations to ethical internationalisation, genuine partnership and sustainable development' (2018: 39). As a new department at Maynooth University, this gave us a sense of congruence and optimism around shared values.

In that context, and given our history at Kimmage Development Studies Centre, in our strategic plan for the Department, we explain that we see ourselves as 'facilitating critical learning for global change, in order to realise a just transformation in our world'. We talk about 'building a community of learning, [where] our programmes are inclusive, interactive and reflective. We apply critical pedagogy, adult learning and development education approaches in facilitating learners to critically reflect on experience, policy and practice in the light of relevant theories and analyses' (2019: 3). Our 'work at the Department is underpinned by a commitment to the values of inclusivity and diversity, equality and justice. We emphasise the importance of creating and supporting respectful relationships in all our interactions. We value a democratic approach to the construction of knowledge, and knowledge based on connectedness to the world and those around us. We value inclusive approaches to learning which support diversity, respect for all those involved, participatory processes, and critical reflexivity.' (ibid.)

Higher Education - Challenges and Opportunities

When I read back through these things, we wrote to tell the world about us as a new Department at Maynooth University back in 2018 and early 2019, I read them with a mix of satisfaction, humility, fear and urgency. I am happy to own those values and aspirations but humble in knowing that we don't (or maybe can't) always realise them. My urgency, and

sometimes fear, lies in concerns about how difficult (but necessary) it can be to challenge the status quo and create other ways, and to engage in the kinds of teaching and learning which contribute to meaningful, just and equal global transformation. In the face of the complex challenges facing our world, and those of higher education - with questions about access, inequality and systemic racism (Kempny & Michael, 2021); reduced government financing in favour of individual and corporate sponsorship (IUA, 2021); emphasis on innovation, skills and the economy (Gaynor, 2015; OECD, 2020); and longstanding challenges of neoliberal capture and individualisation of higher education across the world (Giroux, 2004, 2014; Lynch et. al., 2012); it is arguably more important than ever to try.

Alongside these challenges, like elsewhere, universities are all talking these days about sustainability and the sustainable development goals. Research grants are directed towards their realisation; we are undertaking surveys in terms of how we are contributing to them through our programmes and modules; and we are being ranked on different aspects of them. In 2020, Maynooth University was ranked as Ireland's leading university for Quality Education and 49th globally for SDG 4 according to the Times based on contribution to early years and lifelong learning, pedagogy research and commitment to inclusive education. The government is developing a new strategy on education for sustainable development to which the HEA has been contributing and the Irish government's (Irish Aid) development education strategy (2016: 31) has as one of its goals to 'support higher education institutions, NGOs and development education practitioners to increase the number and spread of third level students engaging in quality development education in both the formal and non-formal spheres of higher education'.

But how can such talk be translated from technical, tick-box approaches into the kinds of political and transformative, participatory and radical forms of learning needed to address current global development challenges? What insights might Freire or a critical pedagogy of global connection offer to ensure that this rhetoric is matched by reality? These are important questions which emerged in my research on discourses of GE (Dillon, 2017).

Towards a Critical Pedagogy of Global Connection- Research on Discourses of Global Education in Ireland

In 2016, I carried out research on discourses of GE among 30 state and civil society facilitators and key actors involved in state and civil society promotion and support of GE in

Ireland (Dillon, 2017). This in-depth, mixed-methods research involved participants in questionnaires, interviews and workshops. The primary focus of the research was on facilitator talk – language, assumptions and the meanings associated with different aspects of GE. Influenced by Vanessa Andreotti's work (2011), I analysed discourses facilitators drew upon by exploring their understandings of various aspects or dimensions of GE. These were - knowledge and understanding, skills, learning processes, attitudes and values, politics and action. On that basis, and while acknowledging overlaps, I identified different discourses of DE or GE – technical, liberal, North-South, 'critical' and 'post-critical' discourses.

In terms of discourses of GE highlighted, there was much talk among facilitators of criticality when it comes to GE, reflecting a 'critical' or 'post-critical' discourse. These see GE as playing an important role in questioning causes of global inequality and its effects, adopting critical political and reflexive questioning approaches, and advancing calls for decolonisation and political transformative action.

Most global educators involved in my research aspired to criticality or post-criticality. These can be understood as follows: Critical GE assumes that we cannot deal with or address what's going on in the world unless we critically understand it. It is transformative learning which draws on Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy 'grounded on a social and educational vision of justice and equality' (Kincheloe, 2008a: 6). In supporting understanding of the causes and effects of oppression and inequality, it emphasises learning as praxis, the intersection of knowledge, understanding, reflection and action, and experiential and participatory learning processes. Though hesitant to prescribe, facilitators drawing on a critical discourse saw that GE is not neutral and that it has a role to play in social transformation, in terms of facilitating analysis of how power works at local and global levels and in interrogating the power of those involved in GE.

A post-critical construction of the 'transformative' in GE, evident among a minority of facilitators, reflects on the importance but limitations of 'critical' GE, while embracing or emphasising post-structuralist, feminist and post-colonial influences (Kincheloe, 2008a). It tries to capture the tensions involved in regarding education as political while at the same time questioning its politics. Post-criticality also tries to hold in tension the transformative value placed on GE highlighted by 'critical' GE while highlighting the importance of critical deconstruction of this value, of the relationships it constructs and any questions of certainty or reductionism which might be promoted through it. For Sharon Todd it means 'disbanding

our idealising tendencies in education” (Todd, 2015; 54). In GE influenced by post-criticality or decoloniality (Andreotti, 2014), for example, there is a growing emphasis on processes which facilitate learners to acknowledge complexity and to face complex realities (Alhadeff-Jones, 2012). Here, processes which involve decolonizing knowledge (Andreotti, 2011), critical self-reflexivity (Alasuutari & Andreotti, 2015) and embracing the affective (Bryan, 2020) are emphasised.

Despite talk of criticality and post-criticality among participants in my research, a number of gaps between their talk of ideals and practice emerged. One was that GE does not sufficiently connect learners to what’s going on in the world at emotional as well as intellectual levels. At times, it seemed quite ‘safe’ in its focus on poverty rather than wealth or in its sanitised or absent treatment of controversial, equality or human rights issues, especially at home. These included issues such as class, racism and privilege, as well as silence on structural violence and on inequalities associated with neoliberalism and the global economic system (McCloskey, 2019). Thus, the connections between the personal and the political were often not as connected or as critical as they need to be (Dillon, 2019).

Another criticality gap relates to the paucity and types of links made between the local and the global (Dillon, 2018a). Lingering ethnocentric assumptions in GE (Bryan, 2011), for example, can lead to representations of the global South as ‘other’ without sufficiently embracing different perspectives, voices and experiences of the most marginalised or oppressed in society (Dillon, 2018b). This is, perhaps, buttressed by the fact that most global educators in Ireland are white, middle-class, academically qualified, elite.

A third criticality gap was the tendency for GE to promote fixed, idealised notions of the future – and the processes involved in getting there – rather than taking account of the ‘inevitability of uncertainty’ (Kincheloe, 2008b: 15) and ambiguity. One conference participant, for example, argued that there are too many moral absolutes in GE, ‘you know, the conversations are over before they start’ (Dillon, 2017: 168). Overall, the research highlighted the need to embrace critical and post-critical understandings of critical pedagogy, which I discuss below.

Critical Pedagogy – Critical and Post-Critical Perspectives

While Paulo Freire was an important early influence on GCE, and remains so, his work has been developed through discussions around critical pedagogy and GCE more broadly. Here,

I'm suggesting that a broader understanding of critical pedagogy, which embraces feminist, post-structuralist and decolonial influences helps to address some of the criticality gaps and issues evident in my research and advance an approach to GCE which is appropriate for our times.

When we talk of critical pedagogy, as many of us here today do, of course there are different questions over what it means and different emphases. How do you do critical education without being overly deterministic or limited by analysis? How to put forward normative values about the good life without being prescriptive or universalist? How to acknowledge the need for understanding and conscientisation without limiting them to the rational or supporting a disconnected sense of the person? How to be political while being open? These questions overlap with debates over guiding principles, transformation and processes involved, and important critiques of universalism in modernity, of the undervaluing of indigenous and alternative knowledges in critical pedagogy, and arguments for pluralism, diversity and ambiguity highlighted by post-structuralism. I take my broader understanding of critical pedagogy from Joe Kincheloe's work, which is influenced by Freire, but which embraces broader influences. There he highlights that critical pedagogy is grounded on 'a social and educational vision of justice and equality' (2008a: 6). As such, it is 'constructed on the belief that education is inherently political' (Kincheloe, 2008a: 8); it takes account of complexity, context and diversity; it is 'interested in the margins of society' (2008a: 23); is 'searching for new voices' (2008a: 24); and is 'dedicated to resisting the harmful effects of dominant power' (2008a: 34).

While there are so many areas of Freire's work that I could draw on, I'd like to briefly outline three dimensions of his work which influence the contours of a critical pedagogy of global connection which I see as relevant for higher education today, and in doing so, I argue for a more integrated emphasis on critical global citizenship education in higher education contexts. The dimensions I'd like to explore are:

1. A critical pedagogy based on education as political, with an emphasis on praxis – action, reflection and action - reading the world, understanding and facing it for lived alternatives based on different social goods, such as freedom, justice, equality, decoloniality and human rights.
2. The second dimension I'd like to highlight is the importance of connection and congruence in terms of applying the principles of critical literacy and subversion to the relationships, processes and practices of higher education.

3. Thirdly, I'm arguing here that a critical pedagogy of global connection emphasises radical hope – hope in action and creating change.

I will comment on what each of these might mean for more integrated critical global citizenship education in higher education contexts.

Education as Political, Understanding and Facing the World

Freire argued that education is political. Whatever we do, whether it's framed around learning for a better world or for more of the same, it is political. He argued that 'education as the practice of freedom--as opposed to education as the practice of domination--denies that people are abstract, isolated, independent and unattached to the world; it also denies that the world exists as reality apart from people' (1970: 81). Despite the anthropocentric and sexist constructions of his original (some of which I've changed here), Freire's comments on relationality chime with growing epistemological emphasis on it in transformative learning (Lange, 2018) and our experience of the world. Thus, alongside concerns about the integrated and unequal processes of globalisation; and the climate, ecological and pandemic reminders of the inevitable and fragile interconnectedness of our world; relevant higher education emphasises the importance of pedagogies which build understanding of these processes of interconnection, of human responsibilities in relation to them and action for just alternatives.

At the same time, research repeatedly highlights where education fails to realise its politically transformative or connecting potential and may attempt to explain this. Kincheloe (2008b) argues that the big stumbling block to education realising its transformative potential is 'crypto-positivism' – the dominance of positivistic thinking in education. For Kincheloe, critical pedagogy 'identifies the normalising voices that 'naturalise' dominant perspectives and invalidate the views of the 'other', the 'marginalised' (2008b: 16). This resonates with more recent decolonial critiques of epistemicide (Santos, 2014) and calls for the democratisation of knowledge in higher education (Hall and Tandon, 2017). For Giroux, the main challenge is neoliberalism and its accompanying lack of democracy. Giroux strives to steer away from any idealised sense 'that genuine democratic public space once existed in some ideal form' (ibid). He wants a critical pedagogy that 'takes a position against the scourge of neoliberalism but does not stand still, that points to the possibility of a politics of democratic struggle, without underwriting a politics with guarantees' (2004: 36). Giroux (2004) argues for a 'critical pedagogy capable of appropriating from a variety of radical

theories' (2004: 32) including feminism, postmodernism and neo-Marxism. For Kincheloe, 'educators need to avoid the modern/postmodern divide that suggests that we can do either culture or economics but that we cannot do both' (2004: 32). He goes on to point out that

critical theory's engagement with Enlightenment thought must be expanded through those postmodern discourses that problematise modernity's universal project of citizenship, its narrow understanding of domination, its obsession with order, and its refusal to expand both the meaning of the political and the sites in which political struggles and possibilities might occur (2004: 32).

For Kincheloe (2008b: 16), 'as we accept the inevitability of uncertainty and ambiguity in light of epistemological, ontological, and cosmological complexity, we can also begin to explore with the help of the critical bricolage vis-a-vis diversity an alternative view of the nature of the cosmos and our role in it' (2008b: 15). For him, this alternative is 'grounded on a critical theoretical commitment to social justice, anti-oppressive ways of being, and new forms of connectedness and radical love' (ibid).

Despite the appealing shared ideals of freedom, democracy, solidarity, cosmopolitanism (Nussbaum, 1994) or the sustainable development goals (SDGs), growing emphasis on diversity and decolonisation, inclusion and challenges to epistemicide caution us around assuming that there are easily universalizable 'right ways' to think or to forge equality and justice around the world. Contingency and context are points that Freire emphasises in arguing that struggle 'has historicity. It changes from one space-time to another' (1997: 41). Thus, constant critical engagement in what the politically just involves in different contexts is required and easy assumptions around teaching for the SDGs are denied. Criticism of the universal application of modernist values in education processes are therefore important (Todd, 2009; Swanson, 2010; Andreotti, 2014). Swanson, for example, refers to Biesta's (2006) work where he 'warns us of humanistic ideals adopted in education in ways that deflect the plurality of other options and provide a singularly socialising effect on individuals and groups such that they would lose the critical capacity to critique, question and contest in favour of a given common good into which they are enculturated' (2010: 147). For her, 'an open and critical values education would need to address this even as it advocates for a greater explicit focus on what values we participate in within the educational field' (ibid). Sharon Todd of the Department of Education here at Maynooth (2009) also raises questions about different forms of education which are based on universal values, and she suggests that they mask the complexities in global existence and experience. She questions 'how do we imagine an education that seeks not to cultivate humanity ... but instead seeks to face it – head-on, so to speak, without sentimentalism, idealism, or false hope' (2009: 9). In drawing

on Hannah Arendt's criticisms of the political use of education, Todd argues that 'education risks posing a danger to itself if it takes on the task of 'constructing' a new world for children, instead of embracing the very ambiguity that lies at the core of education; the task of teaching for a 'world that is or is becoming out of joint' (1956: 192)' (2009: 14). She agrees, with Arendt, that education should be concerned with the 'complexities of the human condition, in all its pluralities' (Todd, 2009: 16).

This brings me to my second two dimensions of a critical pedagogy of global connection. The first of these is an emphasis on congruence, critical literacy and subversion.

Congruence, Critical Literacy and Subversion

As I mentioned earlier, a key aspect of Paulo Freire's work that is highlighted across the literature of those who knew and worked with him is this sense of congruence between the ideals he advanced and his way of working and relating. As such, he approached and engaged with people in processes which supported and augmented his ideas, which he extensively shared and co-created with others. Thus, for him, congruence was not about 'going along with' or 'repeating' orthodoxies, it was about challenging or subverting them. This congruence and subversion are central to bell hooks' emphasis on engaged pedagogy which transgresses, and it presents a significant challenge to educators who talk great talk of criticality but may find it hard to match it with practice.

A focus on congruence and subversion is enabled through challenging banking education and supporting different processes of critically 'reading the word and the world' (Freire & Macedo, 1987), for example, through the type of critical literacy and self-reflexivity advanced by Vanessa Andreotti (2014) in recent years. In her emphasis on self-reflexivity, she emphasises processes of reflection which are not superficial or technical but deeply questioning of the values, assumptions, root narratives, aspirations, practices and relationships which are promoted through education, which aspires to be critical. As such, she advances the HEADS UP check list (Andreotti, 2012) as a way of encouraging critical educators to reflect on what it is we think we are doing, why and with what effect. It is designed to support conversations among those who may inadvertently be reproducing 'seven problematic historical patterns of thinking and relationships: hegemony, ethnocentrism, ahistoricism, depoliticization, salvationism, un-complication and paternalism' (2012). Critical literacy and reflexivity opens up opportunities to reflect on how, through

critical GCE, we often reproduce stereotypes and binaries, disconnected analyses of global development, how charity or neo-liberal tropes can easily become taken-for-granted as offering viable solutions to structural and complex challenges, and how responsibility for cause of global development challenges can be reduced to the local or national level and de-politicised. As one of the participants in my research highlighted, GCE needs to deal with 'the elephants in the room'. Treating global issues as outside, objective or easily solvable crises can put global educators into the position of being part of the problem rather than the solution.

Congruence in this way is important in terms of the processes of learning which engage us, all together, in questioning, understanding and relating through the subversion of traditional banking education processes, and of notions of expertise, and through expanding understandings of valuable knowledge. Universities cannot do that, as outlined by Hall and Tandon (2017), without embracing calls for equality, diversity and inclusion and decolonising development and global education (Sultana, 2019). Adefina et al. (2021), in their very valuable paper on higher education decolonisation, for example, introduce a range of perspectives on it, from a social justice one which challenge 'the cognitive dissonance of knowledge seeking and production which stifles delegitimised epistemologies' (2021: 2) alongside those, like Pashby and Andreotti (2016) and others who argue that decolonisation efforts can perpetuate coloniality and, therefore, need to be more critical and systematic.

Congruence also involves challenging the neoliberal influences on higher education financial structures, epistemologies and curriculum politics; and supporting more active and critical engagement with the SDGs. Chankseliani and McCowan (2021:3) argue that universities 'need to go beyond the dominant development orthodoxy and advance a more nuanced and holistic understanding of university education, research and engagement'. They recognise the global dynamics that act against the promotion of the public good in higher education, 'including privatisation of public sectors, growth of for-profit institutions and pressures of international rankings to prioritise elite research over local engagements' (2021: 7) Though staff are committed to sustainable development, they encounter what they call 'an increasingly compressed space in which to contribute to it' (ibid). Though the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this, they suggest that it also offers opportunities for 'higher education as a common good... reinforcing the humanistic vision of higher education that is collectively produced and shared and that contributes to just, equitable, and sustainable development... [building] on the values that we collectively share, such as social justice and

solidarity' (ibid). This is not, of course, without its challenges, especially if education around and in relation to the SDGs is to be congruent, critically self-reflexive and subversive at the same time.

Radical Hope

The third dimension of this critical pedagogy of global connection I want to address is the need for radical hope. Freire says that though he 'cannot ignore hopelessness as a concrete entity, nor turn a blind eye to the historical, economic, and social reasons that explain that hopelessness – I do not understand human existence, and the struggle needed to improve it, apart from hope and dream. Hope is an ontological need' (1997: 8). He goes on to argue that 'one of the tasks of the progressive educator... is to unveil opportunities for hope, no matter what the obstacles may be. After all, without hope there is little we can do. It will be heard to struggle on' (1997: 9). Freire's rooted, generative and determined focus on hope as constituted through action has been central to approaches to critical global education over many years. This is the kind of hope that is about reality carved out of deep critique of the imbrication of our lived lives with destructive and disconnected practices on the one hand and restorative potential and collective agency on the other. This is the kind of hope we see evident in young climate activists' scathing critique of life as currently lived yet determination to achieve alternative, more egalitarian, just and inclusive futures. A good example of this is Greta Thunberg and the Fridays for Future protest movements (see Dillon, 2021).

Radical hope supports the imagination and creation of alternatives in the face of contemporary higher education and global development challenges. Critiques of the idealisation around GCE, which emerged strongly in my own research, are important to bear in mind here as it is easy to talk the talk of transformation and hope while on the one hand becoming overwhelmed into inaction and on the other overly prescriptive and simplistic in terms of possible solutions. At the same time, it is also easy to advance a model of GCE in higher education as an add on without engaging in critical interrogation of what subverting current destructive practices and creating alternatives really involves.

In the context of their analysis of the influence of neoliberalism and the role of GCE in higher education, Pais and Costa sound a note of caution. They argue that 'GCE allows for the continuing commodification of higher education, but wrapped around a discourse of critical democracy and emancipation, so that the contradictions between community solidarity and individual competition, or between collective identity and individual identity are dismissed'

(2020: 10). Discussions of the relationship between neoliberalism and DE or GCE in international literature pose questions about any simplistic suggestions that one of GE's central roles is to simply challenge neoliberalism, as if it is an external phenomenon. Given how tied-up GCE is within the same system and structures that emphasise individualism, improved versions of capitalism, epistemological modernity and development co-operation, Pais and Costa remind us that GCE is

posited as the enterprise that will bring about a change towards more ethical, solidarity and democratic practices in education. Although recognising the constraints that the objective reality of schools and universities pose to the development of this programme, not much is said about the concrete circumstances that have to be met so that such an emancipatory programme can be successfully implemented. This is partly because critical approaches to GCE conceive individuals as the loci of change (2020: 11).

Thus, they call for an approach to critical global education which is based on 'a structural analysis and a possibility of a change beyond individual agency' (ibid).

Conclusion

These closing remarks about hope bring us back to Brendan Kennelly and Paulo Freire and their invocation to begin, 'to live life as a process'. There's nothing easy in this kind of education but it certainly has potential, especially when we put it and ourselves under the same level of scrutiny as the world around us. Directing more emphasis on the political, on congruence and on radical hope through a critical pedagogy of global connection can allow us, I believe, to advance the kind of relevant and critical global citizenship education needed in higher education today for a just and liveable future.

References

- Adefila, A., Vieira Teixeira, R., Morini, L., Teixeira Garcia, M.L., Zanotti G. Frizzera D., T.M., Spolander, G., & Babatunde, M.K. (2021). Higher education decolonisation: #Whose voices and their geographical locations?, *Globalisation, Societies and Education*. [online] <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14767724.2021.1887724>
- Alasuutari, H., & Andreotti, V. (2015). Framing and contesting the dominant global imaginary of north-south relations: Identifying and challenging socio-cultural hierarchies. *Policy and Practice: A Development Education Review*, 15, 64–92.
- Alhadeff-Jones, M. (2012). Transformative learning and the challenges of complexity. In E.W. Taylor, P. Cranton, & Associates (Eds.), *Handbook of transformative learning: Theory, research and practice* Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass.
- Andreotti, V. (2011) *Actionable Postcolonial Theory in Education*. New York and London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Andreotti, V. (2012). Editor's preface: HEADS UP. *Critical Literacy: Theories and Practices*, 6(1), 1–3.
- Biccum, A.R., (2015) The politics of education for globalisation: managed activism in a time of crisis, *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 60 (3), 311- 338.
- Biesta, G. (2017) Education, Measurement and the Professions: Reclaiming a space for democratic professionalism in education, *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 49 (4), 315 – 330.

- Bourn, D. (2012) Development Education: From the Margins to the Mainstream. *International Journal for Global and Development Education Research*, 1, February 2012.
- Bourn, D. (2015) From Development Education to Global Learning: Changing Agendas and Priorities. *Policy and Practice: A Development Education Review*, 20, Spring, 18 – 36.
- Bryan, A. (2011) Another Cog in the Anti-Politics Machine? The 'De-Clawing' of Development Education. *Policy and Practice: A Development Education Review*, Vol. 12, Spring, 1 – 14.
- Bryan, A. (2020). 'Affective pedagogies: Foregrounding emotion in climate change education,' *Policy and Practice. A Development Education Review*, 30, 8–30.
- Chankseliani, M. and McCowan, T. (2021) Higher education and the Sustainable Development Goals. *Higher Education*, 81:1–8.
- Dillon, E. (2017). How Critical is Talk? Discourses of Development Education among Facilitators in Ireland. Doctoral Thesis. Maynooth University. [online] Available at: <http://mural.maynoothuniversity.ie/9558/>
- Dillon, E.(2018a). 'How critical is the global? Discursive shifts in development education in Ireland'. *International Journal of Development Education and Global Learning*, 10 (2):163–176.
- Dillon, E. (2018b). 'Critical History Matters: Understanding Development Education in Ireland Today through the Lens of the Past', *Policy & Practice: A Development Education Review*, Vol. 27, Autumn, pp. 14-36.
- Dillon, E. (2019). 'Connecting the Personal and the Political: Feminist Perspectives on Development Education', *Policy and Practice: A Development Education Review*, Vol. 29, Autumn: 11 - 30.
- Dillon, E (2021) 'Daring to Hope: Some Reflections at the End of this Second COVID Year'. DID Blog. [online] Available at: <https://maynoothinternationaldevelopment.home.blog/2021/12/17/daring-to-hope-some-reflections-at-the-end-of-this-second-covid-year/>
- Freire, P. (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. London: Penguin.
- Freire, P. and Macedo, D. (1987) *Literacy - Reading the Word and the World*, South Hadley, MA: Bergin & Garvey.
- Freire, P. (1997) *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, New York: Continuum.
- Gaynor, N. (2015) Shopping to Save the World? Reclaiming Global Citizenship within Irish Universities. *Irish Journal of Sociology*, 24(1): 78 – 101.
- Giroux, H.A. (2004) Critical Pedagogy and the Postmodern/Modern Divide: Towards a Pedagogy of Democratization. *Teacher Education Quarterly*. Winter: 31 – 47.
- Giroux, H. (2014) *Neoliberalism's War on Higher Education*. Chicago: Haymarket Books.
- Gramsci, A. (1971) *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*. In: Hoare. Q., and Nowell-Smith, G., London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Hall, B.L. and Tandon, R. (2017) Decolonization of knowledge, epistemicide, participatory research and higher education. *Research for All*, 1 (1): 6–19. DOI 10.18546/RFA.01.1.02.
- hooks, b. (1994) *Teaching to Transgress*. New York: Routledge.
- Horton, M. and Freire, P. (1990) *We Make the World by Walking: Conversations on Education and Social Change*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Irish Aid (2016) *Irish Aid Development Education Strategy 2017 – 2023*. Dublin: Irish Aid.
- Kennelly, B. (2011) Begin. In: Brown, T. and Longley, M. (ed) *The Essential Brendan Kennelly Selected Poems*, Hexham UK: Bloodaxe Books.
- Kempny, M. and Michael, L. (2021) *Race Equality in the Higher Education Sector*. Dublin: HEA.
- Kincheloe, J.L. (2008) Critical Pedagogy and the Knowledge Wars of the Twenty-First Century, *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*, 1(1), Spring 2008.
- Kincheloe, J.L., and McLaren, P. (2005) Rethinking Critical Theory and Qualitative Research. In: Denzin, N.K., and Lincoln, Y.S. (eds) *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 3rd edition. London: Sage Publications.
- Kincheloe, J.L. (2008a) *Critical Pedagogy, Primer*, Second Edition. Oxford: Peter Lang.
- Kincheloe, J.L. (2008b) Critical Pedagogy and the Knowledge Wars of the Twenty-First Century, *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*, 1(1), Spring 2008.
- Lange, E. (2018) Transforming Transformative Education Through Ontologies of Relationality, *Journal of Transformative Education*, 16(4) 280-301
- Lynch, K., Grummell, B. and Devine, D. (2012) *New Managerialism in Education*. UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Maynooth University (2018) *Maynooth University Strategic Plan 2018 – 2022*. [online] Available at:
https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/sites/default/files/assets/document/Maynooth_University_Strategic_Plan_2018-22_0.pdf
- Maynooth University Department of International Development (2019) *Strategic Plan 2019 – 2023*. [online] Available at:
https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/sites/default/files/assets/document/Department%20of%20International%20Development%20Strategic%20Plan%202019_final_0.pdf
- McCloskey, S. (2014) *Development Education in Policy and Practice*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- McCloskey, S. (2016) Are We Changing the World? Development Education, Activism and Social Change. *Policy and Practice: A Development Education Review*, 22, Spring: 110 – 130.
- McCloskey, S (2019) 'The Sustainable Development Goals, Neoliberalism and NGOs: It's Time to Pursue a Transformative Path to Social Justice', *Policy and Practice: A Development Education Review*, Vol. 29, Autumn: 152 -159.
- Nussbaum, M.C. (1994) Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism, *The Boston Review*, [online]. Available at: [Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism, Martha Nussbaum \(oneworlduniversity.com\)](https://www.oneworlduniversity.com/patriotism-and-cosmopolitanism)
- OECD (2020) *Education Policy Outlook: Ireland*. [online] Available at:
<https://www.oecd.org/education/policy-outlook/country-profile-Ireland-2020.pdf>
- Pashby, K. and Andreotti, V. (2016) Ethical internationalisation in higher education: interfaces with international development and sustainability. *Environmental Education Research*, 22(6): 771 – 787.
- Pais, A. and Costa, M. (2020) An ideology critique of global citizenship education. *Critical Studies in Education*, 61 (1): 1-16.
- Santos, B.de S. (2014) *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide*. Boulder: Paradigm Publishers.
- Stein, S. and Andreotti, V.D.O. (2016). Decolonization and higher education. In M. Peters (Ed.) *Encyclopedia of educational philosophy and theory*. Singapore: Springer Science+Business Media.
- Sultana, F. (2019) Decolonizing Development Education and the Pursuit of Social Justice. *Human Geography*, 12, 3. 31 – 46.
- Swanson, D. (2010) Value in Shadows: A Critical Contribution to Values Education Our Times. In: Lovat, T., et al (eds) *International Research Handbook on Values Education and Student Wellbeing*, B.V.: Springer Science and Business Media.
- The Times (2020) *World University Rankings*. [online] Available at:
[World University Rankings 2020 | Times Higher Education \(THE\)](https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings)
- Todd, S. (2009) *Towards an Imperfect Education: Facing Humanity, Rethinking Cosmopolitanism*. London: Paradigm Publishers, Boulder.
- Todd, S. (2015). Creating transformative spaces in education: Facing humanity, facing violence. *Philosophical Inquiry in Education*, 23(1): 53–61
-

Freire and international development practice: Personal, Professional and Political Reflections by David Archer

Introduction

It is one hundred years since Freire's birth and 50 years since the publication of his seminal work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Next month I will be 60 and so this really feels like a good moment to reflect on the profound impact that Freire has had on my life and my work. I first came across his work after completing my degree in English and Philosophy in Manchester and as I trained to be a secondary school teacher in 1984. I was completely entranced by *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire 1972) and *Cultural Action for Freedom* (Freire, 1970) and wrote my thesis on the relevance of Freire to the British education system that was being cut, squeezed and dictated to under Thatcher – the worst form of controlling monologue, distrusting teachers and local education authorities, killing off the last vestiges of the comprehensive education dream and laying the foundations for privatisation.

Latin America

There was a lot to say – and having read Freire I was compelled to understand the significance of his work in other political contexts – so I went to revolutionary Nicaragua under the Sandinistas – a progressive force at that time and not to be compared to Ortega today! Freire had inspired the Nicaraguan Literacy Crusade in 1980 which won the UN International Literacy Prize. It was the first major act of the new revolutionary government and although I turned up five years later, but I could see the continuing impact of that programme and a government still grappling with how to truly deliver on a liberating form of education. I travelled across the country for 6 months working with the Ministry of Education, investigating, documenting, dialoguing with people at all levels.

From Nicaragua I spent most of the next five years travelling through Latin America investigating the literacy and popular education programmes inspired by Freire. His impact was everywhere - in literacy programmes run by guerrillas in El Salvador, and popular education by radical NGOs in Colombia. He inspired the adult education programmes working in opposition to Pinochet in urban Chile, and huge human rights education programmes in Ecuador. I worked with peasant unions in Honduras to see how they used Freire to resist the US occupation and banana plantation economy and I documented the bilingual intercultural education programmes in Bolivia that were modelled on Freire's work. But I also interviewed Ministers of Education and Ministry officials running shocking programmes in Guatemala that amounted to linguistic genocide – but which still claimed

adherence to Freire – and the extreme right-wing Minister of Colombia equally co-opted and abused Freire's ideas. Freire was everywhere but a large part of what I saw was pseudo-Freirean – programmes that took some design elements from Freire – mystifying concepts like codifications and generated words - but abandoned the politics. I published a co-authored book called *Literacy and Power: the Latin American Battleground* (Archer & Costello, 1990) and had a truly intimidating moment when I was asked to share my findings on Freire's impact at an event in Edinburgh where Freire himself participated.

ActionAid & Participatory Methods

Freire continued to be the driving force for my work when I joined ActionAid in 1990 working as an Education Adviser and so-called Latin American Desk Officer. This work involved supporting integrated rural development programmes which risked being patronising and deeply problematic. But I came across the work of Robert Chambers (Chambers, 1983, Chambers, 1993) at the Institute of Development Studies in Sussex who was convening people working on different participatory visualisation methods (see also International Institute for Environment and Development, n.d.). This would reverse the normal neo-colonial power dynamics of aid programmes – ensuring that outsiders did not more-determine what communities need but rather could support communities to do their own research and develop their own local development plans based on their intimate and extensive existing knowledge and experience – even where communities were largely not literate.

Although there was a remarkable diversity of practice (Brock & Petit, 2007), I was amazed that no-one seemed to be using these participatory methods in literacy programmes so I wrote a concept note about how this could be done and by 1993 managed to get funding to start up pilot projects in Uganda, Bangladesh and El Salvador (ODA, 1996). The idea was simple. There would be no pre-printed texts – every community would produce their own learning materials through developing maps, calendars, matrices, diagrams, rivers, trees that would be purely visual at first, analysing everything from local population to land use to land ownership, seasonal trends in health or gender workloads, matrices to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of different cross, diagrams to represent formal and informal power dynamics within the community and with the wider world. Everything was purely visual, systematising people's existing knowledge – and stimulating extensive dialogue – and as visualisations moved from three dimensions on the ground to two dimensions on paper with pictures, we then introduced the written word. The words to be written were chosen by

participants and each visualisation would generate a whole vocabulary which would then become relevant for taking action – such as collectively writing letters (with the facilitator as scribe working on large flipchart sheets) to local or national authorities. The process enabled communities to develop their own comprehensive surveys and local development plans - becoming propositional protagonists – active subjects in determining priorities rather than passive recipients of projects determined and brought from outside.

Emergence of the Reflect Approach

In Uganda we did this in the remote area of Bundibugyo, where three of the four local languages had never before been written down. In Bangladesh we piloted it in a cyclone prone conservative Islamic area with women's groups. And in El Salvador we piloted with an organisation run by former guerrillas who had laid down their arms following then peace accords two years earlier. In each context it evolved and adapted and as the pilots were ongoing, I had the chance to meet Freire for a long evening in London to share the work and he was as excited and inspired as I was – accepting that the approach could be named after him – the Reflect approach – which stood originally for Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques - which was always rather a mouthful. From that time, I corresponded with Freire regularly and continually until he died in 1997. We pulled together the *Reflect Mother Manual* (ActionAid, 1996) – a core resource – the concept being that there was no manual that could be directly used but that a mother manual could help people develop local manuals uniquely adapted to their context.

The approach spread very rapidly – reaching 500 different organisations in 70 countries within 3 years. It was used by a Dalit movement and a land rights movement in Nepal, by Hutus and Tutsis working together for reconciliation in Burundi following the genocide in neighbouring Rwanda, by indigenous rights activists in Peru, language activists in Canada, cultural activists in the Basque country, Sudanese women refugees and Bangladeshi sex workers. It was distinct in each case but driven by the constantly evolving range of participatory, visualisation methods and by the inspiration from Freire. When Freire died, his secretary phoned me to say that he had open on his desk the Portuguese translation of the Reflect Mother Manual. The approach went on win the UN International Literacy Prize in 2003 and Reflect practitioners in three continents have since won 5 UN prizes (UNESCO, 2006).

Freire's ideas were pivotal to the spread of this approach. Everywhere we went we found practitioners and activists who were inspired by Freire and wanted to find ways to translate his ideas into meaningful practice in different adult education settings.

I want to say a few words now about some of the key concepts that I think are fundamental to Freire's resonance both in Reflect practice and in education settings around the world today. Given the complexity of Freire's ideas I want to do what I can to simplify and popularise them!

Key Freirean Concepts

Firstly, illiteracy is just one manifestation of injustice – and as such it cannot be addressed in isolation. In the absence of a wider process of change, helping someone develop literacy skills will not be sufficient to transform their lives. Those who cannot read and write have found ways to survive in their daily lives without literacy so there needs to be a wider change if literacy is going to be of practical use. The literacy in itself and of itself is not inherently liberating.

Secondly, no education is neutral – all education is political. Education can serve to reinforce the injustices in wider society or can be used to liberate people and catalyse change. This is a fundamental choice in every classroom, in every education institution, in every education system. Do you conceive education as something to domesticate or to liberate – to serve the status quo or challenge the status quo?

Thirdly, the fundamental choice is between monologue and dialogue. A domesticating or banking education system depends on an all-knowing teacher who treats learners as passive recipients of knowledge to be deposited in them and regurgitated. A liberating model of education treats teachers and learners as active co-creators of knowledge.

As an aside here I find it fascinating that Freire talked about 'banking education' given that in the last thirty years the World Bank has emerged as dominant force in shaping education policy and practice in many countries – more influential than UNESCO – and marketing themselves as a 'knowledge bank'. All the worst tendencies of the Banking Model can be found in the World Bank approach – a patronising, all-knowing arrogance which in fact is far from neutral – interested only in economic returns not social or political or personal

development - a highly ideological actor undermining public education systems and promoting privatisation (Oxfam, 2019; Klees et al., 2012).

But returning to some key concepts...

Fourthly there is praxis – the ongoing cycle of reflection and action. Freire talks about the dangers of endless reflection being indulgent if it is not linked to action – and equally that action on its own becomes directionless without reflection. Reflection on the world is a critical starting point but it must lead to action to change the world and once action is taken, reflection is necessary to learn from the action and shape future action. Sustaining this cycle through a learning process is crucial

Lastly, we must address the key concept of conscientization - which I am determined should become a more widespread English word. This is the aim of the learning process – an awareness of the key contradictions in the present world combined with a drive and commitment to challenge those contradictions. It is not about passive awareness raising – but a process that energises and inspires action – whether individually or through organising and mobilising. In some ways it is an orientation to become connected to wider movements for change. As Freire himself said, through the 'pedagogy of the oppressed' people 'would perceive the reality of oppression, not as a closed world from which there is no exit but as a limiting situation that they can transform' (Freire, 1972: 49).

Power Dynamics

As the Reflect approach developed and spread, the most ubiquitous discussions involved power. To trigger change, you need to understand and analyse power in multiple forms – the visible power that States and authorities have but also the hidden power of other actors like corporations and the invisible power that comes from ideology, patriarchy, tradition, embedded beliefs – such as fatalism that Freire often talks about. Our focus in training facilitators – who were always people from the local community – was on helping them to be sensitive to the complex power dynamics within every group, whether based on gender, ethnicity, economic status, social status, institutional position, education level, or any other criteria. Too many development processes are premised on the fantasy of homogenous communities. So, facilitators were supported to create a democratic space, to work actively to enable everyone to have their voices heard, to break down the formal and informal power structures that keep people in a culture of silence. Participatory visualisation methods helped but this needed constant reinforcement (ActionAid, 2003).

We rapidly learned that the same coherence needed to apply in the training of trainers – we needed to actively work to create a democratic space and to take people through the same liberating process. You cannot lecture people about how to run a liberatory education process (though it does seem as if I am trying to do that just now!). The same logic applied to national networks of organisations working with the Reflect approach – workshops and meetings focused on critical reflections on our own power – as individuals and institutions – and in international gatherings the power of money, the power of language would all become a focus. The point here is that for a Freirean process, coherence is important at every stage. It is in fact captured in that rather trite adage that people will do what you do, not what you say they should do.

Reflect practice continues to this day around the world – though I have semi-detached myself in part because as the initial architect of the approach there is always a problematic power dynamic – a variation on the founder syndrome. The approach continues to evolve and there are significant spin offs with Participatory Vulnerability Analysis used in emergency contexts, specific adaptations for working with people living with or affected by HIV and AIDS or for training workshops on gender and rights, lots of people drawing on Reflect for economic literacy and budget analysis work. In the end the common threads remain – the commitment to conscientisation and the cycle of reflection and action. The website <https://www.reflectionaction.org/> gives a useful sense of the range of practitioners today

Conclusions

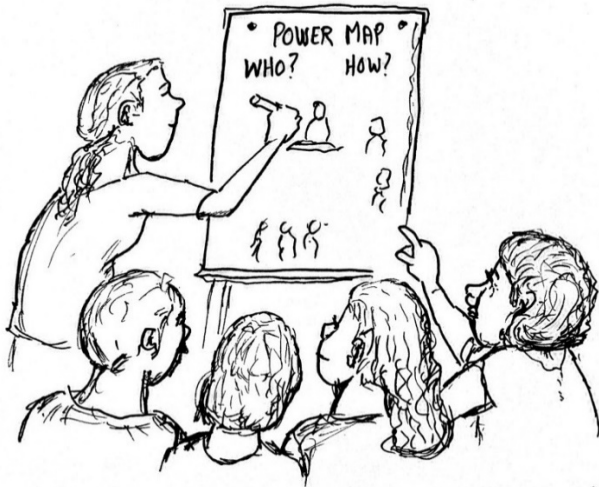
For me Freire remains a continual inspiration even as my work has evolved. I have spent many years working on supporting the emergence of national and international coalitions on the right to education – connecting NGOs, union, social movements into platforms to influence national international education policy (Global Campaign for Education, 2022). Freire's ideas both drive the overall direction of that work and the processes that I seek to facilitate with coalition. Most recently I have become obsessed with challenging austerity and fighting for the public sector in general, earlier this month publishing a report on The Public Versus Austerity (ActionAid, 2021), challenging the IMF and Ministries of Finance and calling for a reimagining of the public sector in the light of COVID and the climate crisis. Even when I am arguing with senior economists at the IMF, I find myself supported by Freire's ideas and methods.

Looking forward I see huge potential for a continual rebirth and regeneration of Freire. The Black Lives Matter movement and the call to decolonise education resonates so powerfully and is so desperately overdue. And the programme that most excites me today is one we have just started in Brazil having secured an unprecedented 10-year grant of \$20 million to support anti-racist education across the country⁴. We are working with the black movement, the indigenous movement and the education movement – coming together for the first time - and although the present political environment under Bolsonaro is far from conducive, we will build examples in progressive states with a view to going national when the right political moment appears. To be able to work on such an ambitious and transformative programme inspired by Freire in Freire's home country is a complete joy!

References

- ActionAid (1996) *The Reflect Mother Manual: a new approach to literacy*. ActionAid London, Archer & Cottingham
- ActionAid (2003) Communication and Power: practical resources materials on Reflect [online]. Available at: <https://www.participatorymethods.org/resource/communication-and-power-reflect-practical-resource-materials>
- ActionAid (2021) *The Public versus Austerity: why public sector wage bills constraints must end*. [online]. Available at: <https://actionaid.org/publications/2021/public-versus-austerity-why-public-sector-wage-bill-constraints-must-end>
- Archer, D. & Costello, P. (1990) *Literacy and Power: The Latin American Battleground*. Earthscan, London
- Archer, D. (2007) Seeds of Success are Seeds for Potential Failure: learning from the evolution of Reflect in Brock K., Petit, J. (2007) *Springs of Participation: Creating and evolving methods for participatory development*. Rugby: Practical Action Publishing [online], Available at: <https://practicalactionpublishing.com/book/2056/springs-of-participation>
- Chambers, R. (1983) *Rural Development: Putting the last first*. Taylor & Francis, London
- Chambers, R. (1993) *Challenging the Professions: frontiers for rural development*. London: Intermediate Technology Publications
- Freire, P. (1970) *Cultural Action for Freedom*. Penguin, London
- Freire, P. (1972) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Penguin, London
- International Institute for Environment and Development (n.d.) [online] Available at: <https://www.iied.org/participatory-learning-action-plan>
- Global Campaign for Education (2022) [online] Available at: <https://campaignforeducation.org/en/>
- Klees, Steven J., Samoff, Joel, Stromquist, Nelly P. (Eds.) (2012) *The World Bank and Education: Critiques and Alternatives*. Sense Publishers.
- ODA (1996) *Action Research report on Reflect: the experiences of three Reflect pilot projects*. Overseas Development Administration, London [online]. Available at: <https://www.participatorymethods.org/resource/action-research-report-reflect-regenerated-freirean-literacy-through-empowering-community>
- Malouf Bous, K., & Farr, J. (2019) False Promises: How delivering education through public-private partnerships risks fuelling inequality instead of achieving quality education for all [online]. Available at: <https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/false-promises> Oxfam International, April 2019
- UNESCO (2006) *Winning Stories*, France: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [online], Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000146430>

⁴ See this short video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=_3cTfwh8gll



'Conscientisation' by Peter Dorman



'Collective Action' by Peter Dorman

Three Readings of Freire: A Personal Journey of Praxis by Zoryana Pshyk

When thinking of Paulo Freire, what comes to mind immediately are philosophical concepts such as banking education, generative themes, praxis, emancipation and oppression. In Ukrainian, oppression has two equally strong synonyms – гноблення [hnoblennya] and гніт [gnit], - the words that are not used in everyday conversations. When I am hearing these words, to mind comes a prominent Ukrainian poet Taras Hryhorovych Shevchenko (1814 - 1861) (Britannica, 2021), born a serf, who used the above-mentioned words in his poems to describe his personal and people's experiences of serfdom. Understanding the concept of oppression in this historical milieu, I have never thought that what I experienced while being an asylum seeker in the Direct Provision System (DPS) could be named by the word that in my understanding was an historicism – an 'oppression'. At the outset of this paper, it would be important to explain to the reader, that I position myself in this exploration as both – as an ex-asylum seeker, and as a community educator working from the perspective of practical application of the Freirean pedagogy. This article will explore some of my reflections on the three readings of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1996), and the influence these readings had on my learning and my world view.

Reading One. The Revolution.

Imagine yourself as a citizen in Ireland, or in any other country for that matter. You can be powerful or powerless, and you can be acceptant or non-acceptant about the way society is constructed. When I arrived in Ireland as an asylum seeker, I was placed into the Direct Provision System (DPS).

Under the Direct Provision system, people are accommodated across the country in communal institutional centres or former hotel style settings. The vast majority of the centres are managed on a for-profit basis by private contractors. Direct Provision is intended to provide for the basic needs of people who are awaiting decisions on their applications for international protection... many applicants experience lengthy stays, which is associated with declining physical and mental health, self-esteem and skills. Today, there are more than 7,000 people living in Direct Provision centres across Ireland, 30% of whom are children. (Meaney & Nwanze, 2021: 34).

Dispersal resettlement is a very disempowering process because you don't have any control over where you will be placed to live and who will be your neighbour. What is even worse, once you have made a connection with the place you have been sent to, at any stage of the process you can be moved to another DP centre. It happens mostly as a way of responding to breaking house rules assigned by the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) or as a

coercive action against voicing your grievances about the conditions of living, and so forth (MASI, 2021).

I found myself in the DPS, completely disempowered, fully acceptant of the situation I was in and of the way the system was constructed. I was powerless because I didn't understand the way things work. I thought, that as an asylum seeker, I should be obedient in this system guided by the managers, and acceptant of everything that is given or done to me.

As time passes by, the experience of direct provision sits too deeply inside, – in your bones, under your skin, in your head, in your heart, deeply in your hurt soul... It presses you, squeezes you, oppresses you, bends you, belittles you and finally breaks you... (Pshyk, 2019: 7)

Five years into living in the DPS, as a volunteer in the community, I was eligible to attend Maynooth University's Adult and Community Education course, brought as an outreach by County Kildare Leader Partnership to the local community.

Next was Adult and Community Education course... During this course I have met three very important people, who have influenced my learning. First was the tutor of Philosophy, who had an amazing ability to explain complex theories in a very simple way. Considerate and attentive to every student, while explaining, he treated everyone with respect and dignity. We were all fascinated with his knowledge and facilitative approach. I will tell you, Mum, I wish to know as much as he does!

The second is not exactly a person, but rather a philosophy, which have been an eye opening and life changing in many ways. It has resonated with me very deeply and gave me a framework to understanding the world. Yeah, I know, it probably sounds very odd, but let me tell you about it. The philosopher's name is Paulo Freire, and he gave me the language to name my world, to explain how I feel. While living in direct provision, I could feel that something is wrong with me, but couldn't say what I have been experiencing, - I did not know the word "oppressed". I had been saying, that I am upset, frustrated, depressed... When I found the word "oppressed" in his book, everything came together. I suddenly started seeing the power structures over me and how direct provision have been squishing the last drops of life out of me, my husband, my little children, who deserved a better childhood, and out of thousands of other asylum seekers. This understanding gave me a missing puzzle of the knowledge I needed so much to make a meaning of my situation. But you know, not only of the situation of asylum seekers, but of all marginalised and oppressed by societal structures people: women in the world ruled by men; Roma and Travellers; gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and gender queer; migrants and immigrants; people with different – diverse abilities and many others. I was reading his writing with fascination and awe. It was my first reading of Freire's "Pedagogy of the Oppressed", and it changed my world. (Pshyk, 2019: 10).

These words I had written in the letters to my mother back in 2019 while carrying an autoethnographic research for my MA in Adult and Community Education, MU. As part of the course curriculum, we read *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1996). 'In Freire I found an ally who had a more precise understanding of my day-to-day struggles than anyone ever

did' (Pshyk, 2020: 50). Despite being written decades ago, in a completely different context, the philosophy had spoken to my experience, and gave me the word to name my reality – 'oppressed'.

Freire (1996) defines oppression as an act of exploitation by the oppressor and the failure of the oppressor to recognise others as human. Freire's theory that 'emerges from the context of poverty, illiteracy, and oppression' (Merriam & Caffarella, 2007: 140) prompted me to reflect critically on my personal and collective experiences of my comrades in the DPS, and our engagement in liberatory praxis. In April 2012, residents of the DP centre posted an open letter (Eyre Powell Campaign, 2012) to the Irish Government, and to all prominent news sources in Ireland to express their grievances about the inhuman way of living and the oppression we all experienced. It was, indeed, a revolution, that brought a lot of changes overnight. This action had shown me the power of people, as well as the power of the local community, that supported this action. Witnessing and even participating in the changes, as a person I remained powerless, however, I started questioning my position and the way society treats me as an asylum seeker. I was slowly growing towards being non-acceptant of my situation as well as non-acceptant of the way society is constructed.

Reading Two. Education as a Praxis of Freedom.

According to Freire (1996), the world is an unjust place, and society is constructed to keep the division of inequality between people. This is being reinforced through education. Education is a powerful tool of maintaining the social order that was established alongside capitalism. Through current neoliberal logic the market driven education became a tool of further oppression, and the growth of the gap in inequality is being maintained not only by the neoliberal policies (Fitzsimons, 2017) but also by the damaging discourses of 'othering'. To overcome the internalised colonisation the oppressed must decolonise themselves. It is a laborious task but can be done through a specific type of education which Freire envisions as an instrument for liberation. He recognises that 'the essence of education is the practice of freedom' (Freire, 2005: 103). This education is widely known as popular education, which Hope and Timmel (2014: 16) define as 'a community effort to acquire existing knowledge and build the new knowledge to reshape society, so that all will have the opportunity to a full life'.

The notion of democracy in education which facilitates dissent with dominant ideas and dominant beliefs, creates the possibility to reshape the civic society through participation of

the people in the political discourses. As opposed to liberatory education, Freire's analysis highlights the existence in society of the 'banking approach' which, through its 'narrative character' and the 'act of depositing' the knowledge, turns people into 'containers', makes them 'alienated like a slave' (Freire, 1996: 53) and promotes self-deprecation. Freire emphasises that banking education is not accidental and is being used to maintain the system of oppression by minimizing creative power of the people. This serves the interest of the oppressor, who 'care neither to have the world revealed for the people, nor to see it transformed' (Freire, 1996: 73). Humanization, as the consequence of liberatory education, is politically subversive because it empowers oppressed people to question their own reality and their position in society.

The third person was a facilitator who was invited to the course to facilitate an Intercultural workshop. She works with organisation 'Partners Training for Transformation' (TFT) whose work is largely influenced by the philosophy of Paulo Freire. The workshop was very timely for me. I was going through identity struggle without even realising it. When in the group we started talking about our identities, I understood, how disconnected I was with my old self. How I was missing my culture but was putting on a mask of a brave and strong face and kept going ... And the oppressive environment of direct provision was not helping... I didn't have an opportunity to think about my inner self...to question what makes me so anxious... The workshop had created that opportunity. It was the first time, when I actually had an opportunity to talk about my culture, to share my experience of it, but also to learn from others about their cultures; to name my world and to reflect deeply on my own situation... I was not ready to do anything about it yet... But I wanted to learn more, so I had never stopped there! (Pshyk, 2019: 11).

The learning that I took away from that first workshop was so inspiring, that I wanted to learn more. What was profound about the learning that nobody specified for me what the learning outcomes were, - I had an opportunity to explore the learning for myself and to take an ownership of it through the process that was facilitated. Through participatory activities, the facilitator carried out a process of building a learning community, which supported development of trust among the participants. This created a safe space for everyone to contribute, and to suspend our judgements and assumptions about each other in order to open oneself to learning.

As opposed to 'banking education' where the teacher is in a superior position, and the one who holds the knowledge and imparts it to students, during the intercultural workshop we were all equal – the facilitator and the participants 'both are simultaneously teachers and students' (Freire, 2000: 72), meaning that we were both co-creators of new shared knowledge. The facilitator, having the knowledge of theoretical concepts, creates a process

that facilitates learning, and at the same time learns from the participants, from their rich life experiences, and the perspectives they share on the subject matter.

Inspired by the process of learning from Partners TFT, I kept going back to that empowering experience:

I went on to attend a 'Creative Facilitation' course with 'Partners'. The course gave me a toolbox of methods how to facilitate groups in Freirean approach, but I was only a beginner and did not see all possible ways of using it. Then sometime later I was invited to participate in 'Women Exercising Leadership Within and Across Communities' - a course which empowers women and helps them to find and embrace their own power and leadership skills. Do you know, what was my biggest learning from this course, Mum? I had realised, that we, unknowingly, are all leaders... but sometimes our leadership is up, and we are able to use it, and sometimes it's somewhere deeply down, and it waits for us to grow stronger... (Pshyk, 2019: 11).

My second reading of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* happened a few years later, when I was studying towards the HDip in Further Education at Maynooth. Enriched with practical experience of facilitating with Partners TFT, this reading helped me to unveil the deeper meaning of dialogue and praxis, and the meaning of education for changing society. While planning, a facilitator elicits the needs of participants, explores their generative themes (Hope & Timmel, 2014: 16), and creates a process that is creative, evocative, dialogical, and responsive to the participants' learning needs. Deeper explorations which contribute to critical questioning may be unearthed with the help of problem-posing 'codes' (photographs, images, songs, games, drama, movement) (Hope & Timmel, 2014: 19), which in turn generate a critical dialogue on familiar experiences and link them with theoretical concepts and frameworks.

In problem-posing education, men [women] develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation (Freire, 2005: 12).

The dialogue creates an opportunity to elicit a diversity of perspectives, promotes deeper listening and reflection through questioning, and opens the paradigm of points of view which in turn create a rich and abundant learning. 'Dialogue as indispensable to the act of cognition which unveils reality' (Freire, 2005: 64) is sought through the process of praxis - a cycle of theoretical inputs, with action as an implementation of the learning into practice, and critical reflection on its consequences.

The dialogical learning through questioning of subjective experiences in their social context creates a space for resistance and leads to political action against the 'culture of silence'. Only through engaging with the praxis do humans reach their critical consciousness or

'conscientization' (Freire, 1996: 101) and become the praxis themselves. Only through 'conscientization' can the human 'become an active agent in constructing a different, more just reality' (Merriam & Caffarella, 2007: 141).

Therefore, for me, Freirean education became a vehicle of moving on from powerlessness to recognising my life experience and knowledge gained from a variety of courses and seeing my practice as a source of power that evokes in me agency for myself and others living similar narratives within the intersectionality of oppression. This revelation helped me to grow more resistant and non-acceptant to the way the society is constructed.

Reading Three. The Context.

'Radical means going to the roots' (Hope & Timmel, 2003:16) of the human suffering to gain the understanding of conditioning of the human life through the system of oppression which influences the division of race, class and culture and sets the context and predisposition to further reproduction of inequality. Contrarily, the spaces of Adult Education such as Community Education, Development Education and Popular Education, which adhere to the democratic choices of the participants and being facilitated in collaboration with the learners in the learning circles (Freire, 1996) are creating an opportunity for critical reflection and liberatory praxis. Engagement in critical discourses transcends into places of resistance, solidarity, struggle, and hope. Only intentional engagement in critical discourses allows for the creation of shared knowledge and transformative learning. It involves sharing of personal experiences, perspectives, and points of view on the matter, and a critical reflection on the stories elicited during the process. The newly created shared knowledge will lead to solidarity of people exercising liberatory praxis – which will bring about social change. The critical reflection on personal experiences and the intentional process of making a meaning of those experiences creates an opportunity to interrogate and resist the contexts that create the discourses of power and oppression.

A few years later, while doing research for my Master's in Adult and Community Education in Maynooth, I read *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* for the third time. This time, I connected in the deepest way with the context of 'total reality' (Freire, 1996: 104), and how we are shaped, even 'moulded' (Freire, 1996: 133) by the culture of oppression into the obedient and silent beings. According to Freire (1996), without an understanding and an ability to critically analyse how these contexts interact and are shaping one another, and in turn are shaping society, we cannot truly reveal or name our world.

Freire highlights the 'culture of silence' and strategies that are enacted in order for the oppression of the people to be maintained: 'manipulation, sloganizing, depositing, regimentation, and prescription cannot be components of revolutionary praxis, precisely because they are the components of the praxis of domination' (Freire, 1996: 57). Historically, the culture of Irish society was one of silencing its own people. Irish Travellers (O'Loughlin, 2017; Collins, 2013) have been silenced for years and with recent efforts of the Government are currently being integrated back into the societal canvas through discourses of inclusion. Thousands of Irish (and non-Irish) women who were confined, abused, and silenced in the Laundries⁵ (Crawley, 2018) have fought their way back into the narrative through demand of the restorative justice.

During the time in the Direct Provision, I had to deal with multiple contexts of oppression: the political, economic and cultural contexts of Irish society shaped by contexts of capitalism and neoliberalism; the contexts of the DPS with its own specific complexity; the family context and the context of being a woman in Ireland. All these contexts interacted with one another and shaped one another. The third reading of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1996) gave me an understanding of the intersectionality of these contexts, which, in turn, helped me to recognise how these contexts dehumanize and shape humans into accepting their situation, while creating self-deprecating beings and guilt-tripping them into believing that the onus is on individuals and their life choices. Freire (2000: 154) asserts that the oppressed internalise their narrative through the determining force of the culture of the oppressor which 'hinders the affirmation of men as beings of decision.'

Dehumanization tends to structure the thoughts of the oppressed and make them conditioned to oppression which colonises the whole person – the mind, the soul, and the body. hooks (1984) talks about the wholeness of the person, but the aim of the oppression is to fracture this wholeness. I imagine oppression as a disease which over time spreads over the person, enters every part of the human body, colonises the whole person and ultimately takes away the will to resist. However, resisting the above contexts in solidarity with other women – inside and outside of the DPS – helped me to voice my indignation and start on the path towards freedom. Only through authentic comradeship will the solidarity

⁵ The Magdalen Laundries run by several Roman Catholic religious orders were set up to house 'fallen women' – those who became pregnant outside of marriage. These ran from the 19th century until finally closed in 1996.

become an 'act of love' (hooks 1984: 30), and only in the plenitude of this act of love will there be a true solidarity – in 'its existentiality, in its praxis' (Freire, 1996: 32). hooks (2021) guides us:

The moment we choose to love we begin to move against domination, against oppression. The moment we choose to love we begin to move towards freedom, to act in ways that liberate ourselves and others. That action is the testimony of love as the practice of freedom. (2021: n.p.)

What Freire Teaches Me

Critiques of Freire's critical pedagogy identify its naivety and limitations (Ohliger, 1995), calling Freire's work a combination of old-style socialism and liberal reformism (Gibson, 2006) and relying too heavily on Hegel's Phenomenology (Taylor, 1993) as well as not giving a 'sufficient attention to difference, to the conflicting needs of oppressed groups, or to the specificity of people's lives and experiences' (Jackson, 1968: 13). Nevertheless, the relevancy of Freire's philosophy and the analysis of oppression for today's society and in relation to the DPS in particular cannot be underestimated despite 'not acknowledging the specific gendered realities of expression and exploitation' of women as well as not 'addressing gender, race and sexuality' (Mayo, 1999: 113). However, for me reading *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and advancing my English language skills; becoming familiar with various pedagogies; developing my political literacy; engaging in liberatory education with and in the local community; learning to read 'the word and the world' — all of these have been deeply humanizing. As an oppressed woman and as an educator who strives to change the world, I found myself in the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

Conclusions

While I am not predicting what words from Freire will speak to me on my fourth reading of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, it is clear to me that reading the philosophy only, cannot change the world. Action and reflection are the way of changing our personal and collective narratives. Reflecting on my personal experience of 'witnessing' and 'experiencing' a *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* as an asylum seeker and growing in strength through this pedagogy, I always go back to the roots of the community, thinking: 'How can I stand in solidarity with women and others marginalised and disempowered?' As an adult educator practicing Freire's philosophy, I am reflecting on my work and asking myself: 'How can I work creatively and what I can do to help people to change their reality?'

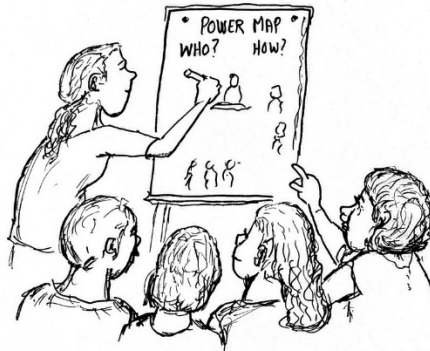
Finally, as a woman who reflected on the experience of oppression and found her voice to share it, I can never go back to being powerless and acceptant of the way the society is being constructed. As an educator and an ex-asylum seeker, I have committed to the praxis of solidarity and love. Freire, along with bell hooks, lights the way in offering a deeper understanding of the subjective and collective change required, as well as providing the tools to enable us to change our reality. Away at the margins and looking for the opportunities for new openings — even if only through the cracked passages that allow the light of hope in — there is a place to grow resistance and resilience, in solidarity and love to humanity.

References

- Collins, M. (2013). Anti-Traveller racism 'pervasive and deep-rooted'. *Irish Network Against Racism* [online]: <http://enarireland.org/anti-traveller-racism-pervasive-and-deep-rooted/> (accessed 20 November 2021).
- Crawley, P. (2018). No Country for Women: dire consequences of silenced voices. *The Irish Times* (review of TV documentary) [online]: <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/tv-radio-web/no-country-for-women-dire-consequences-of-silenced-voices-1.3537362> (accessed 10 March 2022)
- Encyclopaedia Britannica. (2021). *Taras Hryhorovych Shevchenko* | Ukrainian poet. [online]: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Taras-Hryhorovych-Shevchenko> (accessed 4 October 2021).
- Eyre Powell Campaign (2012). Eyrepowellcampaign. [online]: <https://eyrepowellcampaign.wordpress.com/2012/04> (accessed 21 December 2021)
- Fitzsimons, C (2017). *Community education and neoliberalism: philosophies, practices and policies in Ireland*. Maynooth: Palgrave.
- Freire, P. (1996). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. London: Penguin Books.
- Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum.
- Freire, P. (2005). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. 30th Anniversary edition. New York: Continuum.
- Gibson, R. (2006). *Paulo Freire and Revolutionary Pedagogy for Social Justice*. San Diego State University.
- hooks, b. (1984). *Feminist Theory from Margin to Centre*. Boston, MA: South End Press.
- hooks, b. (2021). Love as Practice of Freedom. [online]. Ucsj.org.: <https://uucsj.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/bell-hooks-Love-as-the-Practice-of-Freedom.pdf> (accessed 15 September 2021).
- Hope, A., & Timmel, S. (2003). *Training for transformation: A handbook for community workers: Volume 1* (Rev. ed.). London: Intermediate Technology.
- Hope, A., Timmel, S. (2014). *Training for Transformation. A Handbook for Community Workers*. London: ITDG Publishing.
- Jackson, P.W. (1968). *Life in Classrooms*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Meaney, S. & Nwanze, L. (2021). A Community Needs Analysis with Refugees and People Seeking Asylum Exploring Access and Barriers to Higher Education in Ireland. [online]: <https://collegeconnect.ie/community-needs-analysis-with-refugees/> (accessed 10 March 2021).
- Merriam, S., & Caffarella, R. S. (2007). *Toward comprehensive theories of adult learning. In Learning in adulthood: A comprehensive guide*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- MASI. (2021) Bright's Story - MASI. (YouTube video) [online]: <https://www.masi.ie/2021/05/28/brights-story/> (accessed 4 September 2021).
- MASI. (2020) Inside Ireland's System of Direct Provision: Christmas Supper is Served Cold - MASI. [online]: <https://www.masi.ie/?s=inside+Ireland%27s+system+of+direct+provision> (accessed 10 March 2022)
- Mayo, P. (1999). *Gramsci, Freire, and adult education: possibilities for transformative action*. New York: Zed Books.

- Ohliger, J. (1995). Critical Views of Paulo Freire's Work. Seminar Paper - Iowa Community College Summer 1995 [online]: <http://www.bmartin.cc/dissent/documents/Facundo/Ohliger1.html#IX> (accessed 10 March 2010)
- O'Loughlin, M. (2017). Is it time for an apology to the Traveller community? *The Irish Times*, Opinion, March 3, 2017. (online): <https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/is-it-time-for-an-apology-to-the-traveller-community-1.2995506> (accessed 10 March 2022)
- Partners Training for Transformation. (2021). *Partners Training for Transformation*. [online]: <http://trainingfortransformation.ie/> (accessed 17 November 2021).
- Pshyk, Z. (2019). Letter 6. Education Path. Unpublished autoethnographic research work for MA in Adult and Community Education, Maynooth University. (15 June 2019).
- Pshyk, Z. (2020). A Story from the Margin. *The Adult Learner, The Irish Journal of Adult and Community Education*: 50 - 72.
- Taylor, P. (1993). *The Texts of Paulo Freire*. Philadelphia: Open University Press.
-

Conversations on Freire: Afternoon workshop



All images courtesy of Peter Dorman

Conversations on Freire: introduction to the afternoon sessions by Mags Liddy

Context of the conference

It is hard to write about Paulo Freire without mentioning his life story; growing up during the Depression and its impact on his family; turbulent and violent governmental change in Brazil; his years of exile abroad. All these events led to his work in and about education; it influenced his work in literacy education and cultural circles, as well as the development of his philosophy of education leading to and inspiring a highly influential school of educational criticism.

To summarise his life and work is difficult, but to me Paulo Freire is probably best known for three key influences: on literacy and community education; the development of critical pedagogy; and his influence on global citizenship education or development education. As I work in global citizenship education, I see his influence there in how we teach about the world and how we understand our own reading of the world.

His concept of banking education, where the teacher contains the knowledge and benignly deposits this supply of facts to the students through memorisation and rote learning was (and still is) hugely influential in critiquing mainstream forms of education. This depositing of knowledge from teacher to student sets 'knowledge' as abstract and unrelated to the world. It also establishes the oppressive nature of social relationships by dehumanising the student, demonstrating social hierarchies, and socialising them into acceptance and obedience. This critique draws from a school of educational criticism known as critical pedagogy and aims to revitalise education in order to transform both people and our society. Its foundations lie in examining the historical practices and organisations that maintain exclusion and inequalities. It challenges the increasing marketisation of education as skills for the workplace, rejects the concept of education as a commodity, or degrees as privilege. It argues for education centred on hope, social justice, and radical possible alternatives to the world we have now.

Paulo Freire advocated for authentic education and conscientisation as the process of how we know the world and become humanised and aware. Education can become authentic, where students' knowledge and experience are valued and where their learning is purposeful and relevant. Through dialogue and exchange, teacher-student relationships are

transformed. And as these relationships mirror wider society, the process of education can become a process of transformation of the world through emancipation from oppressive social relationships.

Establishing dialogue, exchange and openness in the learning relationships are central to Freire's approach to literacy education. Working together in small culture circles, students could learn both to read the word and read the world. Freire instituted a national programme of literacy work and community education in Brazil where rural farm workers were taught to read and write in just 45 days. The numbers participating in his programmes grew to over 2 million people by the early 1960s, but the military coup led to the cancellation of this work and his imprisonment followed by exile. To Freire, true authentic education had the potential for emancipation and social liberation which is threatening to authorities.

And this is the value and relevance of Freire for today – his approach centres on challenging and changing education in order to bring about wider social and political change. Education becomes an important pathway for social change, along with political organisations or social movements. It brings the focus onto all of us, as teachers and as students, to liberate ourselves from social, cultural or economic structures that limit our capacities and agency. For me working in education, this is a powerful, inspiring and challenging message.

Conversational workshops

As I said earlier, I identify three key influences from Paulo Freire: in literacy and community education work; the development of critical pedagogy; and his influence on global citizenship education or development education. With these key moments as influences, we designed the afternoon sessions to address these key influences and apply them to settings relevant to our work in the Department of International Development.

Community education and activism is a clear thematic group, with its work aiming to empower people to participate fully in society. We endeavoured to connect local community work in Ireland with international agencies working in similar and challenging social circumstances. Through community work and activism, communities are working to transform lives and engage in cultural action for freedom. The principles of community work — participation, empowerment and collective decision making — echo many of Paulo Freire's thoughts.

These principles can also be seen in international development work. It often centres on praxis, where programmes and organisation work to transform lives and livelihoods in a reflective and conscious manner. Its remit centres on transformation of the world, where basic needs are met, exclusions are overcome, and opportunities are available to more. However, there is no singular path to development; it is a contested and debated concept often discussed without the participation of the most affected. Participation is central to development work whether it is community, national or international level. Communities themselves must identify problems and decide how to redress their concerns for themselves.

Higher education is not a context that is easily associated with Freire but is the context of our work in Maynooth University. Freire's theory is central to the philosophy of education as well as influential through the school of critical pedagogy. Viewing education as conscientisation where students mature into knowing and reading the world is echoed in graduates' attributes. Overall Freire reminds those working in education to question 'What is the purpose of education'. This question posed by bell hooks – are we teaching to transgress? Is higher education a process of depositing knowledge, or opening minds up?

Workshop design

In the design of the workshops, we wanted to provide an opportunity for sharing and dialogue, while recognising that the limited time afforded to the workshops may not provide the necessary openness for true dialogue. Participants were asked to choose one workshop when registering. The short inputs from workshop leaders were intended to provoke discussions, followed by facilitated discussions in an open and participatory manner.

This format is followed here in the conference report. Each workshop forms a set of short papers; beginning with a context and summary written by the facilitator, followed by the inputs from the invited workshop leaders. They can be read as individual contributions, but their strength lies in the collective exchange of ideas, and many conclude with questions and provocations for the workshop discussions. The discussions and debates share similarities; examining the significance and relevance of Paulo Freire in today's world; how his theories and concepts are translated into contexts beyond literacy education; and reviewing the expansion of these ideas to meet the demands of our current societies and communicates.

The papers embody praxis, where is not only the action undertaken but through reflection on our actions and agency that we can intervene in our world with the hope for social transformation through empowerment to work together and for each other to address inequalities in solidarity with all who face oppression, rejection and exclusion.

References

- Freire, P. (2005) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum Books
hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to Transgress*. London: Routledge
Jones, I. (2012). *Paulo Freire's philosophy of education: Origins, developments, impacts and legacies*. London: Continuum Books
McLaren, P. (2005) *Critical Pedagogy and Class Struggle in the Age of Neoliberal Globalization: Notes from History's Underside*, *The International Journal of Inclusive Democracy*, 2 (1)
-



'Listening with BeBe: (big ears/big eyes)' by Peter Dorman

Workshop 1- The Influence of Freire in Higher Education

Participating speakers:

Fergal Finnegan

Dept. of Adult and Community Education, Maynooth University

Fergal Finnegan is a lecturer at the Department of Adult and Community Education, Maynooth University and is a co-director of the Doctorate in Higher and Adult Education and the PhD in Adult and Community Education programmes. Before becoming an academic he was a community adult educator and literacy worker and these experiences have strongly shaped him and led him to Freire.

David Kaulem

Arrupe Jesuit University, Harare, Zimbabwe

David Kaulem is currently Dean of the School of Education and Leadership, and Director of the Centre for Ethics at the Arrupe Jesuit University in Harare, Zimbabwe. David also lectures in Social, Economic and Environmental Studies and Ethics, and is a Researcher in Development, Social Justice, Human Rights and Christian Social Ethics. He has also facilitated Training for Transformation programmes in collaboration with the Grail Centre in South Africa for many years.

Facilitator: Mags Liddy

Mags Liddy is a Senior Tutor with the Department of International Development, and now Teaching Fellow at the School of Education, UCD, teaching global citizenship education and research methods. Her research focuses on global citizenship education and education in the developing world.

Freire and Higher Education by Mags Liddy

The influence of Paulo Freire within higher education may not be as visible as say in critical pedagogy or in the origins of development education. His influential theorising may be more readily connected to activism, community and adult education, and literacy work. However, as we can see in the two papers accompanying this workshop summary, his influence is clear on our two contributors: Fergal Finnegan, working in Maynooth University, Ireland, and David Kaulem from Arrupe Jesuit University, Harare, Zimbabwe.

Both presentations shared commonalities; they identify Freire's influence on them as educators and their professional context and the programmes they teach. Each described programmes where a Freirean influence was seen; David detailed the programmes and projects inspired by Freire such as DELTA and Training for Transformation, while Fergal outlined some of the challenges that applying Freire to higher education. These challenges included the university project as neoliberal, meeting market demands with a focus on profitability and outputs. David also connected with these challenges; he further described the need for a contextualisation and Africanisation of knowledge.

Within the workshop, participants also connected with Freire's work and identified his influence on them, with many citing examples of Freirean inspired work in their universities and colleges. Many agreed that Paulo Freire's theorising on education was relevant to them, but his work is not mainstreamed within formal education. However, this position could be viewed as a positive and as a space of openness.

It was clear from the discussions that Freire was viewed as necessary and relevant to higher education today but that difficulties existed. Some found their students often struggled to apply Freirean approaches; they themselves struggled during the transfer to online learning during the COVID pandemic as this lessened the opportunity for dialogue. Others reported they had difficulty seeing what or how they could use what they gained from Freire due to the depth, complexity and interconnectedness of issues. One participant described where students show a lack of engagement with disadvantage, and continue to work with familiar middle-class communities, and the difficulties in challenging the 'white saviour syndrome'.

Some struggled with the implications of a Freirean understanding in higher education. One participant spoke of the challenges from a Freirean way of working such as the length of

time to build a strong community of trust, openness and participation, while another highlighted organisational challenges of using Freirean approaches when working in formal education and schools. The digital pivot to online education made the Freirean approach difficult to implement as the potential for true dialogue are lessened.

The University today appears orientated strongly towards the market and the employability of graduates. While graduates require skills for work and their future, the vision of education as transformative seems diminished. Calls for education as liberating or centred on social justice, or addressing current crisis such as the climate are not strongly heard. With this in mind, some further questions inspired by Freire's work needs consideration. The following section focuses on questions that arose for me during the workshop discussions and that I believe are of relevance to higher education today.

Transformative or transmissive education

Centring on the classic Freirean question on the role of education as transforming or maintaining the status quo, a famous and often mis-assigned quote from the Introduction to the Penguin edition of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* by Richard Shaull: 'There's no such thing as neutral education. Education either functions as an instrument to bring about conformity or freedom' (2005: 34).

This is a foremost question for Universities, for module and programme coordinators, for lecturers and tutors; is my work maintaining conformity, or am I contributing to potential transformation or freedom? Is my teaching a transfer of information? Do I challenge myself to teach liberating education and through acts of cognition (to paraphrase Freire)? Am I open to conscientization, for myself as well as for my students?

Higher education role in knowledge production and dissemination

As a facilitator of learning, I am only contributing to learners' analysis and thinking; it is not my role to provide answers and solutions. Each learner must figure out their context and their answers.

No pedagogy which is truly liberating can remain distant from the oppressed by treating them as unfortunates and by presenting for their emulation models from among the oppressors. The oppressed must be their own example in the struggle for their redemption (Freire, 1970: 54)

David Kaulem spoke of the need for African-centred knowledge and to decentralise Western explanations of the world. Decentralising dominant perspectives is relevant for other contexts too — many socially excluded groups do not feel represented in education. This reflects the process of socially distancing knowledge as abstract and distant from the reality of our world by studying the 'problem'.

There is a welcome and noticeable increase in both the use of words such as racism, sexism, capitalism as well as critiquing and challenging these concepts. We are not fearful of using these words, identifying them as causative of exclusion, injustice, and unhappiness. The calling out and naming of exclusions and injustices adds to our understanding of the world we live in, and enhances our willingness and potential to challenge the status quo of the world we live in. Which leads onto my next question: knowing is for what purpose?

The purpose of knowing

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire describes our human capacity to distance ourselves from the world, to objectify it. This is enhanced objectification, disconnection and avoidance is in many ways the neoliberal ideal, emphasising disconnected knowledge, skills and training suitable for participation and advancement in our globalised economies but not for challenging its norms.

As indicated in responses at the conference, today's learners, workers and teachers are asking for more — what is the point of learning this? For what (or whose) purpose? Is this relevant to the crisis of my society? Freire spoke of the need to become critically conscious through education and learning to know, but this requires knowledge to be relevant and purposeful to the learner's context and situation. Class, gender, and race/ethnicity all can play a role in excluding some perspectives.

Furthermore, knowledge needs to address the crisis of today's world, not in the technocratic sense of problem-solving but engaged learning. Today we are all struggling; while COVID and climate change receive plenty of attention but there are many pre-existing social struggles unresolved. The urgency for change is strong and the demand for 'a new normal' was often voiced throughout 2021. The global and local response to the pandemic demonstrated how swiftly changes to social, health and welfare policies can be implemented for the benefit of all.

Addressing social change makes knowledge and learning relevant to our circumstances and context. And for higher education the question is clear: Is what I am learning or teaching aiding people to transform their situation and to change the world?

References

Freire, P. (2005) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum Books

Freire, P. (1976) *Education: the Practice of Freedom*. London: Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative

The Prospects of Paulo Freire's Methods in Higher Education in Africa by David Kaulem

Introduction

It is difficult to find one-to-one and clearly defined influences of Paulo Freire in higher education in Africa. Yet his impact is enormous in the same way that Africa moulded some of his major views on education and liberation. In Africa, Freire's quest for freedom, search for social and political agency and the cultivation of dialogue resonated with and found its way into higher education through many different routes – Christian networks, student movements, community groups and labour organizations in southern, eastern and western Africa.

In many ways, to ask for Freire's influence in higher education is to assume divisions that Freire himself interrogated and worked hard to close, both in his theory and practice. Higher education, conceptualized as having its own elite goals separate from the struggles of the marginalized and impoverished, and from the cultivation of students, workers and local community members as critical citizens was an anathema for him. He linked education to social action and for him social action was central to education growth of individuals and communities. Freire learnt much from his own experiences as a university professor, as head of government departments and from other leaders like Frantz Fanon, Amilcar Cabral, Julius Nyerere, Augustino Neto. He appreciated from African leaders the need for 'organic' or 'public' intellectuals connected to the struggles for freedom. For Freire, higher education is part of the wider struggles of the 'wretched of the earth' and the 'pedagogy of the oppressed' to deal with public challenges and the search for the common good. Indeed, even as Freire worked in formal institutions such as government departments and the university, his interest was in popular and adult education and the cultivation of literacy for dialogue and liberation.

In Africa, Freire's major influence in higher education was in the training and cultivation of organic intellectuals connected to grassroots movements and civil society organizations including church groups and political movements. The rigid structures and neo-colonial orientation of post-colonial African universities never fully facilitated the flourishing of Paulo Freire's liberatory methods of education. Very soon into political independence, the questioning spirit of Freirean pedagogy became a threat to the post-colonial African leaders who now wanted docile citizens who would vote them into perpetual positions of power.

The Freirean questioning spirit is restricted but not dead in Africa. Individual academics and sometimes groups of academics still push to the growth of critical consciousness. Today, Freire's dialogue with African liberation manifests itself in the struggles for endogenous knowledges (Hountondji, 1997), decolonization of the African mind and African education (Thiong'o, 1986), de-coloniality (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013) Rhodes Must Fall movement and the search for space for Ubuntu and 'heritage-based' education. These efforts are having to struggle against the local African status quo and the global environment created by neo-liberal economic and political forces since the late 1970s. It is not surprising that in many places, Freire's radical ethical approaches are sanitised, standardized, and deodorized.

Paulo Freire and Aspects of African Liberation

There is no doubt that the liberation tradition that influenced Paulo Freire and that he, in turn, helped to deepen and widen, have an impact on educational policies, programmes and practices in education in African countries. And yet African education and higher education in particular, is under tremendous pressure from the demands of a post-independence African leadership not keen to lose power and the neo-liberal, market-centred global economics and culture. As Fanon predicted, African middle classes, including former liberation stalwarts, have been re-captured by global capitalism. Generally, higher education in Africa is under pressure to supply 'market ready' products and to participate in corporate driven 'innovation and industrialization' (World Bank, 2020) The result of this has been the development of 'corporate-based ideology that embraces standardizing the curriculum, supporting top-down management, and reducing ... colleges to job-training sites.' (Giroux, 2010).

A lot has been said about Frantz Fanon's influence on Freire. Freire himself says that he re-wrote *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* after reading *The Wretched of the Earth*. (Horton & Freire, 1990: 36). Freire, working in the liberation theology tradition, and as part of Catholic Action and later the World Council of Churches, greatly inspired and was inspired by liberation struggles in Africa and had direct interest and contact with the struggles in African countries that were previously colonized by the Portuguese – Mozambique, Guinea Bissau, São Tomé e Príncipe, Angola and Cape Verde. He was also in touch with struggles in Gabon, Kenya, Botswana and Senegal. (Soriano, 2021) Freire's contact with liberation struggles in Southern Africa came through his engagements with the movements based in the 'frontline

states' of Zambia and Tanzania that included the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), the Mozambique Liberation Front (Frelimo), and the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC). He stimulated adult literacy programmes in Guinea-Bissau, Tanzania, and Angola. He contributed to the shaping of pockets of African countries' post-colonial educational policies and practices. While Freire learnt a lot from the anti-colonial struggles of Africa, he helped African liberation movements to reflect and plan for and develop post-colonial education theories and practices. But his influence went beyond education as such to shaping ideas about liberation, dialogue, participation, political agency and development in general.

Freire was inspired by Amílcar Cabral's mobilization of education for liberation, hence his mantra of 'education is not neutral' and his recognition that education is political. He contributed to how the liberation struggles in Africa and in Zimbabwe was conceptualized by some academics (Mungazi, 1985a). This influenced the Zimbabwe African National Union's (ZANU) organization of education for Zimbabwean refugees in Mozambique, which in turn had an impact on the ministries of education and higher education in post independent Zimbabwe. Freire's influence on the Black Consciousness Movement was centred on encouraging the marginalized to 'read their own realities and make their own history'. Africans in southern Africa found this approach inspiring and hence the development of a Black conscious movement fed by other international movements about Black Power (Wikipedia, n.d.a), African Renaissance (Wikipedia, n.d.b), Pan Africanist Movement (Adetula et al., 2020), and African and Black Theology.

In Africa, Freire's theory and practice in education found its place in what is popularly known as the Development Education Programme (DEP), but each African country adopted and named the programme differently. In eastern Africa it was known as Development Education and Leadership Teams in Action (DELTA) and was focused on participatory community transformation initiatives. In West Africa it took the form of Development Education and Leadership Service (DELES) in countries that include Gambia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ghana and Nigeria. Training for Transformation is the name popularized, especially in church circles by Anne Hope and Sally Timmel in Southern Africa countries of Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, South Africa, Botswana and Namibia. The countries using this methodology came together in 1990 to form a network known as the African Development Education Network (ADEN) whose headquarters was in Harare, Zimbabwe.

Black Consciousness Movement

Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Freire, 1972) first arrived in South Africa in the early 1970s via the University Christian Movement (UCM), which began to run Freire-inspired literacy projects. The UCM worked closely with the South African Students' Organisation (SASO), which was founded in 1968 by Steve Biko (Wikipedia, n.d.c) along with other figures like Barney Pityana (Wikipedia, n.d.d) and Aubrey Mokoape (Wikipedia, undated-e). Biko helped to popularize Freirean conscientization approaches through the writings that were later published as a book entitled, *I write what I like* (Biko, 1978). SASO was the first of a series of organisations that, together, made up the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) which had deep and wide influence over political and civil society leadership in the whole Southern Africa. There is no significant political movement in the whole of the Southern African region which can claim that it was not influenced by Black Consciousness Movement. Many political leaders in Southern Africa who studied in South Africa were strengthened in their black consciousness and pan-Africanism. This is evidenced in the general popularity, in the region, of Robert Mugabe's Africanist rhetoric (SAIIA, 2004) against global economic domination and cultural imperialism.

Anne Hope, a member of the Grail Women's Movement (see [link](#))⁶ also introduced Freire's participatory methods to SASO. The South African Committee for Higher Education (SACHED), formed in 1959 in opposition to the apartheid segregation at universities, provided educational support to trade unions and community-based movements in the 1980s. In support, Anne Hope and Sally Timmel wrote a four-volume handbook for community workers entitled, *Training for Transformation* (Hope & Timmel, 1984). This handbook has been influential in popularizing the Freirean methods to many church and civic groups, many of which have never made the connection to Paulo Freire. During my stint as a development grant manager in southern Africa, I met many organizations and practitioners using the Freirean methods and yet they had never heard of Paulo Freire or seen the *Training for Transformation* workbook.

Zimbabwean Liberation and Teaching in the Rural Areas

Freire's influence reached Zimbabwe through church and civic groups and liberation organizations. Freire's methods were incorporated into the education policies development

⁶ The Grail Women's Movement <http://thegrail.org/>

by the Zimbabwe African National Union - Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) for Zimbabwean refugees and liberation combatants in Mozambique. See for example, the news report on refugee education (Mahamba, 2014). After independence the Minister of Higher Education, Dzingai Mutumbuka and his deputy, Fay Chung who were both in Mozambique were instrumental in introducing progressive participatory approaches in Zimbabwean post-colonial higher education (Mungazi, 1985b). Chung herself became the Minister of Education and introduced universal primary education. Apart from dismantling the bottleneck of discriminatory elitist, colonial education and opening-up higher education to the majority black people, Mutumbuka and Chung promoted a number of adult education and popular education type of programmes in communities. They encouraged communities, especially ex-combatants of the liberation struggle, to join literacy programmes and to form co-operatives. Most of them collapsed after a few years for lack of planning, support, and community development programmes like the Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources, known as CAMPFIRE. This programme facilitated community participation in the management of and benefiting from local wildlife resources. As a university student, I became a literacy teacher at a township school offering evening studies for adults.⁷ Religious and civil society organizations supported and complemented the government in this endeavour. Unfortunately, the literacy programmes were standard and not necessarily transformational. (Pape, 1998). The *Training for Transformation* handbook for community workers was published by the Catholic Mambo Press in Zimbabwe in 1984. Silveira House, a Jesuit social and community development Centre continued to offer programmes using Freirean methods.

University of Zimbabwe, at the that time the only university in the country, working with the Ministry of Education and Culture, introduced the Teaching in the Rural Areas (TIRA) Programme for university students to contribute to literacy and education during their vacation periods. The programme sensitized university students with national development issues and gave them an opportunity to contribute. My participation in TIRA and the general transformation in the university, opened a way for my engagement with Freirean methods. I read literature in English, studied Shona, Philosophy and History. I was exposed to Walter Rodney, African Philosophy and participatory approaches to development. During our early

⁷ At national independence in 1980, many schools were encouraged by the Mugabe government to offer evening adult literacy programmes. Trained teachers and university students facilitated the classes in these programmes. I facilitated at Kambuzuma High School in Harare. While the programme used traditional methods, my association with the Department of Communication Skills at the University of Zimbabwe help me to gravitate towards participatory Paulo Freire approaches as the spirit of liberation was still in the air.

years of independence, academics from South Africa and other independent African countries especially Kenya came to the University of Zimbabwe fleeing persecution from post-colonial African leaders. In their public lectures, people like Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Kimani Gicau, Ngugi wa Mirii, Shadreck Guto and others helped us to appreciate the post-colonial and neo-colonial condition.

Freire Comes to Arrupe Jesuit University

I encountered the work of Paulo Freire at the University of Zimbabwe and through my collaboration with Silveira House and the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace which in turn connected me to Anne Hope and Sally Timmel who were now based at the Grail Centre in Cape Town, South Africa. My official induction into the Training for Transformation Network happened in January 2006 at the Popularising Knowledge Consultation: Learning Event Designs at The Grail Centre in Cape Town. Since then, I have been invited, almost every year, to participate in facilitating and developing facilitation materials in the certificate and diploma programmes. In preparation of their retirement Anne and Sally began to push for the decentralization of the TFT programmes, encouraging graduate of the programme and members of the TFT network to initiate programmes in their respective countries and institutions. TFT has transformed itself into a global non-profit organization called Training for Transformation in Practice (TFT in Practice). Members who have done the diploma are asking for the programme to be offered at the degree level. Collaboration with the Kimmage Development Studies Centre, Ireland, worked for about 15 years but came to an end when that institute transferred its operations to Maynooth University. When I joined Arrupe Jesuit University (AJU), I facilitated for the TFT Programme to be offered at the degree level. AJU is now offering it as the BA Honours in Transformational Leadership and I have been appointed as the Dean in the School of Education and Leadership which runs this programme. The School is working to sign a memorandum of understanding with TFT in Practice and other organisations that can collaborate with AJU on cultivating a new breed of leaders responding to the challenges of the times in these times of COVID -19, climate change, massive legal and illicit migrations of peoples, wealth, weapons and dangerous drugs.

Connecting the Jesuits and the Grail Movement

The BA Honours in Transformational Leadership is re-connecting the Jesuits and the Grail movement. The Grail Movement was started in 1921 as the Women of Nazareth by Fr

Jacques van Ginneken, a Dutch Jesuit. For TFT, a product of the Grail Movement's search for social justice, to come to Arrupe Jesuit University is like coming back home. AJU is part of the International Association of Jesuit Universities (IAJU). The IAJU is a global network of Jesuit Universities aimed at developing academic programmes that contribute to the work of the Jesuits in the world. Writing on the role of the Jesuit University, Fr General Arturo Sosa said the following which resonates well with the aims of Training for Transformation,

When the university is conceived as project of social transformation, it moves towards the margins of human history, where it finds those who are discarded by the dominant structures and powers. It is a university that opens its doors and windows to the margins of society. Alongside them comes a new breath of life that makes the efforts of social transformation a source of life and fulfilment. (Sosa, 2018: np.)

Since the inauguration of the IAJU, programmes on cultivating global citizenship, encouraging peace and reconciliation, supporting migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, caring for the environment and giving hope to young people are being developed. This is in line with the Jesuit Universal Apostolic Preferences (The Jesuits, 2019).

The Challenges of Global Neo-liberal Hegemony

Since the ascendance of neo-liberal economic policies in the late 1970s, the prospects for greater freedom in universities and progressive, participatory approaches to education have been under immense pressure from the market-oriented demands of local and global capitalism. Universities are more and more being turned into training grounds for global capitalism. In Africa, the nation-state is clearly displaying its 'perforated sovereignty' (de Rivero, 2010) as its middle-class leaders, many of them former liberation stalwarts, openly collaborate with global capitalism at the expense of the welfare of the majority who constantly suffer from the results of corporate land grabbing, resource exploitation and environmental degradation. The university itself is becoming and being demanded to become a corporation and not a public space for the cultivation of global democratic values, practices and citizenship. Academics are being turned into vulnerable contract workers constantly being asked to be accountable to narrowly defined economic and business goals. Students, now seen as competitive business clients, have been moulded to demand market relevant skills rather than being prepared to become local and global citizens with moral responsibility and compassion.

Conclusion

The university is under siege in Africa and the world over. The prospects for Freirean participatory approaches in university curricula are not hopeless but challenging. Sally Timmel warned that universities may not be capable of hosting the TFT Programme as she and Anne envisaged it. The timetables are like industrial conveyer belts. The administration is top-down. The curriculum content is instrumentalized. I am, however, encouraged by the fact that when Freire himself embarked on his journey, things were not easy. Anne and Sally themselves experienced serious push-back in Kenya. And yet here we are – TFT is still alive. Anne and Sally should be proud of the tremendous work they have done to popularize Freire in Africa in ways that Freire himself could never have been able to achieve. While Anne has passed on to greater glory, and Sally has retired in the USA, the TFT agenda 'to build a new level of leadership in the development education field that is grounded in good theory and practice' (TFT in Practice, 2009) is still alive. TFT in Practice has great potential to grow under the guidance of Ntombi Talent Nyathi, the protégé of Anne and Sally. Graduates of the diploma from the Grail Centre have started to trickle into the degree programme at AJU. Many of them are actively practicing their calling in their respective organizations which some of them were instrumental in forming. As we celebrate the centenary of the birth of Paulo Freire, we are reminded that the struggle is not over and that we need Freire now more than ever. As we move forward, there are a number of reflection questions that we will need to confront. Here, below, are some of them:

1. How can African Universities create and defend spaces for cultivating critical consciousness?
2. What strategies could help the development of a new breed of transformational leaders who can contribute to the struggles against consumerism and market driven cultures?
3. How can universities give hope to the young people of Africa?
4. Higher education institutions in Africa are being turned into corporate entities. Is there any hope for education, critical consciousness and democracy?
5. How can global solidarity for social justice be widened and deepened through higher education?

References

Adetula, V, Bereketeab, R, Laakso, L, & Levin, J. (2020) The legacy of Pan-Africanism in African integration today *The Nordic African Institute* [online]. <http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1512065/FULLTEXT01.pdf> (accessed 1 April 2022)

- Biko, S. (1978) *I write what I like*, Heinemann, Johannesburg, South Africa.
- de Rivero, O. (2010) *The Myth of Development: Non-Viable Economies and the Crisis of Civilization*, second edition, Zed Books Ltd. New York.
- Freire, P. (1972) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* Harmondsworth: Penguin
- Giroux, Henry A. (2010) 'Higher Education in Search of Democracy?', in Giroux, Henry A., *Politics After Hope: Obama and the Crisis of Youth, Race, and Democracy*, London, Paradigm Publishers.
- Hope, A and Timmel, S. (1984) *Training for Transformation* (vols 1-3) Mambo Press: Zimbabwe
- Horton M. and Freire, P, (1990:36) *We Make the Road by Walking: Conversations on Education and Social Change*, edited by Brenda Bell, John Gaventa, and John Peters, Temple University Press, Philadelphia.
- Hountondji, P. (1997) *Endogenous Knowledge: Research Trails*, CODERIA, Dakar, Senegal.
- Mahamba, I. (2014) 'How to teach our children to be heirs of Zimbabwe' *The Patriot Newspaper* Sept 25, 2014 [online] https://www.thepatriot.co.zw/old_posts/how-to-teach-our-children-to-be-heirs-of-zimbabwe-18/ (accessed 1 April, 2022)
- Mungazi, D. A., (1985a) 'Cultures in Collision: Education and Dialogical Encounters in Zimbabwe', paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Comparative and International Education Society, (29th Stanford, CA, April 16-20, 1985)
- Mungazi, D. A. (1985b) 'Educational Innovation in Zimbabwe: Possibilities and Problems', *The Journal of Negro Education*, Spring, 1985, Vol. 54, No. 2 (Spring, 1985), pp. 196-212, Journal of Negro Education Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2294933> (accessed 1 April 2022)
- Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S.J. (2013) *Coloniality of Power in Postcolonial Africa Myths of Decolonization*, Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa, DAKAR
- Pape, J. (1998) 'Changing Education for Majority Rule in Zimbabwe and South Africa', *Comparative Education Review*, Aug., 1998, 42, (3) (Aug., 1998): 253 – 266, The University of Chicago Press on behalf of the Comparative and International Education Society, Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1189161> (accessed 1 April 2022)
- SAIIA (South African Institute of International Affairs) (2004) In Mugabe We Trust [online] <https://saiia.org.za/research/in-mugabe-we-trust/> (accessed 1 April 2022)
- Soriano, R. (2021) 'The MST and Paulo Freire's legacy in Africa: An internationalist perspective on the work of Paulo Freire, who spreads a Liberating Education across all continents', *Notícias*, 7 May 2021 [online] <https://mst.org.br/2021/05/07/the-mst-and-paulo-freires-legacy-in-africa-mst/> (accessed 1 April, 2022)
- Sosa, A. (2018) 'The university as a source of a reconciled life', World Meeting of Universities entrusted to the Society of Jesus, Loyola, 10 July, 2018. <https://www.jesuits.global/uap/introduction/> (accessed 1 April 2022)
- The Jesuits, (2019) Universal Apostolic Preferences [online] <https://www.jesuits.global/uap/introduction/> (accessed 1 April 2022)
- Thiong'o, N., (1986) *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in Africa politics*, Nairobi, Heinemann Kenya
- Training for Transformation in Practice (2009) 'Training for Transformation Courses 2002 – 2008: Report on the Participatory Impact Assessment July 2009' [online] https://tftinpractice.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/TFT_Training_2002-2008-1.pdf (accessed 1 April 2022)
- Wikipedia (n.d.a) Black Power Movement [online] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Power_movement (accessed 1 April 2022)
- Wikipedia (n.d.b) African Renaissance [online] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_Renaissance#:~:text=The%20African%20Renaissance%20is%20a,more%20just%20and%20equitable%20order (accessed 1 April 2022)
- Wikipedia (n.d.c) Steve Biko [online] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Steve_Biko (accessed 1 April 2022)
- Wikipedia (n.d.d) Barney Pityana [online] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barney_Pityana (accessed 1 April 2022)
- Wikipedia (n.d.e) Aubrey Mokoape [online] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aubrey_Mokoape (accessed 1 April 2022)

World Bank (2020) *Report on Zimbabwe's Higher and Tertiary Education Policy on Education*
<https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/471171602649642686/revitalizing-zimbabwe-s-tertiary-education-sector-to-support-a-robust-economic-recovery> (accessed 1 April 2022)



'Naming Our World' by Peter Dorman

Paulo Freire within and beyond the university walls by Fergal Finnegan

Locating the source of Freire's ideas

While Freire has undoubtedly inspired many educators and researchers in higher education it is important to note that his ideas were not generated within the university but from ongoing dialogues between communities, egalitarian social movements, and the academy. The way Freire chose to position himself was, and is, very unusual in universities and made him a scholar of a very specific sort. Biographically his formative experiences as an adult educator and researcher in the 1950s and during the long years of exile in the 1960 and 70s following the military coup in Brazil were also spent largely outside of the university (Brandao, 2019; Gadotti: 1994) When Freire finally returned to Brazil in 1980, he initially did not return to his academic post because the state required that he attest to his 'lack of dangerousness' before he could do (Schugurensky, 2011). Even when he did return to academia, he combined this with work with popular education and the left-wing political party, Workers Party, becoming the Municipal Educational Secretary of Sao Paulo for several years (Freire, 1993).

The point is that Freire's primary commitment was not to the university or even a discipline but to democratic, libertarian and egalitarian values. His concerns were worldly and practical and his life was marked by a determination to make a difference rooted in radical, socialist humanist politics and liberation theology (see esp. Freire, 1998, 1978; Freire et al., 1987; Shor, 1987, Horton et al., 1990; Shor & Freire, 1987). This 'distance' is crucial to grasping what is particular and valuable about his perspective on higher education.

A Freirean perspective on higher education

Alongside his commitment to political emancipation and praxis there are six other key ideas that are crucial in how Freire views higher education. First, is Freire's insistence on the need to analyse education and society as a totality. Drawing on Hegelian Marxism and post-colonial theory Freire broke new theoretical ground by describing society in terms of complex and conflictual socio-historical learning processes linked to power and politics. He paid relatively little heed to sectoral definitions or institutional details and describes education as a set of formal interventions which shape, and often limit, distort or even destroy, our capacity to learn.

Second, his mode of analysis and critique of existing forms of education is underpinned by a set of interlinked claims about ontology influenced by both Erich Fromm and existentialism: that the desire to be free is a fundamental aspect of human life, we are intersubjective and social beings, and that we are always 'unfinished' and incomplete and that on a basic level we are curious.

Third, these ontological claims about freedom, sociality, incompleteness and curiosity means that we need to see knowledge as something that is created and recreated in a dynamic way through time and in context. Freire also offers a highly democratic conception of knowledge which values experiential knowledge and various ways of knowing. Emancipatory knowledge, he argues, emerges through critical reflection which can dialectically link situated experience and knowledge to general social needs through an accurate 'reading of the world'.

Fourth, combining class analysis with Dewey's conception of democratic education, dialogue across and between communities of the oppressed is both the precondition and one of main purposes of critical education. What is envisaged is a type of educational practice in formal and non-formal settings which embeds critical reflection in social processes, encourages democratic participation, undermines hierarchies, combats reification and creates new forms of shared knowledge.

Thus, and this is the fifth point, within Freire's theory of education, the university is treated as just one important node in a much wider network of learning spaces. It challenges in a very direct way and combative manner scholastic vanities and illusions about the superiority of 'higher' education. It also demands that we scrutinise higher education institutes and ask if they are creating opportunities for critical reflection and democratic dialogue on social needs, desires and interests from the standpoint of the least powerful in society.

The most substantive statement of his views on this topic is contained in the book *Paulo Freire on Higher education* (Escobar et al., 1994) based on a two-day discussion at the national university of Mexico (UNAM). In it he is very explicit about the structural limits of higher education as a space for transformative education asking:

Is it possible that university education could propose a new education? I think not, because this would be the equivalent to asking the dominating class if it is planning a type of education

that would rebel against its domination. Naturally it would have to say no, because up to now there has never been a dominating class that committed suicide. (Escobar et al., 1994: 58)

Consequently, which brings us to the sixth and final point, Freire says it is up to university educators who have been 'reeducated' by political experiences outside of the university to 'swim against the tide' (Escobar et al, 1994: 52) and that this requires strategic alliance building amongst radical university educators.

The limitations, use and challenges of a Freirean approach to higher education today

My own view is that Freire cannot be used as a 'complete' theory in grappling with contemporary higher education. The meaning and role of the university has changed radically over the past generation through its massification and its growing importance in social policy in the so called 'knowledge economy' (Fleming et al., 2017; Roggero, 2011). Dealing with this theoretically and empirically means going beyond Freire and much of the Freirean tradition which remains relatively weak in its engagement with political economy or with empirical research on the institutional realities of experience of staff and students in higher education. I am also convinced that we need a more fully differentiated theory of transformative education which remains committed to large scale social transformation but also speaks to the complex and varied ways learning is used to build reflexive agency in less dramatic yet existentially important ways (Finnegan, 2019).

Nevertheless, I think Freire remains important in a situation where there is a noticeable paucity of bold and imaginative thinking about the role of the university (Barnett, 2013). Freire's theory of knowledge and freedom can also be fruitfully brought to bear on empirical higher education research and there are innumerable ways this has been approached. Personally, I have found Freire useful in thinking through the limitations of access (Fleming et al., 2017) and why meaningful community engagement is so fraught and difficult for universities (Finnegan & Cervinkova, 2021) as well as how the demands, dynamics and temporalities of academic research often foreclose critical dialogue 'beyond the walls' (Finnegan, 2021).

Freire's ideas on curriculum and pedagogy also continue to be generative. I have in mind the work of Shor (1992) as well as the pedagogical proposals of bell hooks (1994). In Irish HE there are certainly modules and courses using Freirean pedagogy. However, it should be said that much of this operates 'under the radar' and relies on the efforts of individuals or

very small groups within departments. I have encountered very few initiatives where the course is wholly Freirean or where there has been a network or collective responsible for it. This has happened – for example the Masters in Equality, Community Education and Activism at Maynooth University but this is very rare. I am convinced this is not because there is a lack of interest but because we remain isolated and unorganized. On an anniversary such as this I think the most appropriate thing to consider is how to best develop networks of educators to 'swim against the tide' in the contemporary university.

References

- Barnett, R. (2013) *Imagining the University*. Abingdon; Oxon: Routledge.
- Brandão, C. R. (2019) Paulo Freire: Education, Culture, and the University: A Historical Memory from More Than Fifty Years Ago. In Torres (ed) Torres, C. (2019) (ed.) *The Wiley Handbook of Paulo Freire*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley & Sons. 51-66
- Escobar, M., Fernández, A, Niebla, G.G. & Freire, P. (1994), *Paulo Freire on Higher Education: A Dialogue at the National University of Mexico*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press
- Finnegan, F (2019) 'Freedom Is a Very Fine Thing': Individual and Collective Forms of Emancipation in Transformative Learning' In: Fleming, T., Kokkos, A. & Finnegan, F. (eds). *European Perspectives on Transformation theory*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Finnegan, F., (2021) 'Some reflections on the meaning, limits and challenges of critical biographical research' In: A Bainbridge, L. West & L.. Formenti (eds). *An Ecology of Life: Discourses, Dialogue and Diversity in Biographical Research*. Rotterdam: Brill/Sense.
- Finnegan, F. & Cervinkova, H. (2020). Community Engagement and Widening Access. Unpublished Report. Maynooth University
- Fleming T., Loxley A, & Finnegan F. (2017) *Access and participation in Irish Higher Education*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Freire, P. (1972). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Freire, P. (1978). *Pedagogy in Process: The Letters to Guinea Bissau*. New York: Seabury.
- Freire, P. (1998). *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy, and Civic Courage*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Freire, P. (1993), *Pedagogy of the City*. New York: Continuum.
- Freire, P. (1994), *Pedagogy of Hope*. New York: Continuum.
- Freire, P. & Faundez, A. (1989). *Learning to Question*. New York: Continuum.
- Gadotti, M. (1994). *Reading Paulo Freire. His Life and Work*. New York: SUNY Press.
- hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York ; London: Routledge.
- Horton, M., Freire, P., Bell, B., Gaventa, J. & Peters, J. M. (1990). *We Make the Road by Walking: Conversations on Education and Social Change*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press
- Roggero, G. (2011) *The Production of Living Knowledge*. Philadelphia: Temple university Press.
- Schugurensky, D. (2011). *Paulo Freire*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Shor, I. (1992). *Empowering Education: Critical Teaching for Social Change*. Chicago. University of Chicago
- Shor, I. & Freire, P. & (1987). *A Pedagogy for Liberation: Dialogues on Transforming Education*. South Hadley, Mass. Basingstoke: Bergin; Macmillan.
- Torres, C. A. (2019) (ed.) *The Wiley Handbook of Paulo Freire*. Hoboken; NJ: Wiley & Sons
-

Workshop 2 - The influence of Freire in Community Activism/Advocacy: Experiences on using the Freirean approach in a community development setting

Participating Speakers:

Amel Yacef

Originally from Algeria, Amel has been working in the youth and community development sector in Ireland for over 20 years; she has managed and coordinated projects with a focus on social justice, community development and human rights. She has been engaging on a voluntary capacity with various organisations and campaigns fighting for a more just, equal and caring society. Amel presently works in the National Youth Council of Ireland.

Peter Dorman

Community Action Network (CAN)

Peter Dorman is from Dublin and has worked in youth and community work for 30 years. In 1986 he participated in a Training for Transformation programme which set the direction for his life and work from then on. He was involved in helping develop Partners TFT which runs Freire inspired programmes in Ireland and the UK. Peter facilitated many of these programmes and was on the staff of Partners for a number of years.

Facilitator: **Patrick Marren**

MU DID

Patrick has been lecturing and facilitating for 30+ years on a range of international development issues, primarily on political-economy of development. In terms of Freire, he had the opportunity to work on with the Training for Transformation Institute in South Africa for three on their programmes, and meet with Sally Timmell, one of the co-authors of 'Training for Transformation'.

What relevance has Freire to our world today in the community? by Patrick Marren

Overview of the presentations

The workshop began with Amel Yacef's presentation. She addressed two issues – the contemporary relevance of the Freirean approach, and the impact of identity and power in community facilitation processes. For her, the Freirean approach to community development work is relevant given that it provides a solid structure and framework for promoting community empowerment. In her experience in using Freire with communities, Amel has found that his original writings are complex and difficult for communities to access. They need filtering, she suggested using bell hooks as an accessible interpretation. In addition, Amel spoke of the need to recognise that Freire's approach to community development changed over time, he acknowledged the need for change, and this later work should be promoted. Amel referenced the issues of identity, power and perceptions of power at a practical facilitation level. She comes from a minority group and works with groups viewed as oppressed; however, from another perspective the people she works with are representative of the majority. These issues may impact the facilitation of group processes. Working in the community education sector as a woman of colour and Muslim, with an oppressed community who are not your own is challenging. Amel's overall conclusion was that the Freirean approach remains relevant to community development in the 21st century, but needs to be revamped.

Peter Dorman highlighted a community case study on housing rights to illustrate how a Freirean approach can engage communities in change processes that facilitate broader voice. Peter spoke of the strengths of a Freirean approach in allowing the development of generative themes, encouraging the community to name their world, the role of conscientization and power mapping. He spoke of the need to hold duty bearers to account and promote dialogue and alliances, including with power holders who wish to engage.

In his experience, entering a community and engaging with them is challenging and pivotal. There is a need for outside organisations to listen, allow communities the space to develop their concerns and priorities, and build trust between the parties. He spoke of the need to work collectively with allies and facilitate dialogue with the power holders to gain traction. However, these stages were also challenging and there was the additional concern of co-optation. Political systems want to co-opt, drag everyone into the tent.

Peter concluded that when applying a Freirean approach with communities, time was an important element – it allowed the creation of dialogue, relationship building, and trust. Given its strengths, the Freirean approach remains a fruitful community development approach in the 21st century.

Question and Answer Session

The workshop focused on the practicalities of outside facilitated community development covering the issues of representation, participation, accountability and trust. The main points are summarised below.

Representation and Power Dynamics

Participants asked who speaks for the community? Do those groups who work with or for the community, capture the full range of voice within the community or only the community elite? This issue arises for all outside groups/external actors. There were several responses to this:

- Notions of elite vs the engaged - There will always be an 'elite' voice, most people are busy with their lives and given the time cost of participating, they delegate when it comes to becoming involved in many areas of their lives including local politics, for better or worse. External actors must ensure that those active on behalf of the community are representative of the community and their issues and aspirations.
- External actors need to recognise that many community models/structures look like government. They exhibit a hierarchy with an elite leadership. Therefore, accountability processes must be designed to ensure they are responsive to the community – regular community meetings and other channels for voice and participation to strengthen accountability.

Peter Dorman spoke of the CAN engagement with the Dolphins Barn community. He described this as a deep relationship built up over the years. Dialogue is central, solidarity takes work. Inevitably community engagement will result in a small 'elite' representing the wider group. The challenge is put processes in place to ensure accountability.

Amel spoke of the need for trust as a crucial issue and establishing engagement rules – whose terms and whose values? Need to show up for all the community issues, not just your priorities.

Participation and Engagement

Discussion broadened into promoting thick democracy in civic spaces/local participation at the local level. Promotion and engagement are difficult, actors need to consult and plan on ways of facilitation and capture the opinions of hidden people/most marginal members. Identify when to engage and what suits the community members rather than the facilitating organisation.

Community Leadership

Questions here included how to ensure the other voices are heard, external actors need to look out for potential community leaders aside from current leaders. What can be done to assist their participation? On the role of Outside Organisations – are they facilitating their needs or community needs?

Some criticism was expressed about the role played by outsiders in using communities to achieve their ends – as places for academic research, or as vehicles to sell their services to the government/local authorities. Others responded that change makers are often invited in, and the central issue is how they and the community work together to articulate community needs and aspirations. Another response argued that outsiders can play a role in creating a space for dialogue between the duty bearers and the community, they can also encourage the community to feel confident to speak to power.

The oppressed educator: Perception of power and its impact on the learning experience by Amel Yacef

'I am gonna put this bottle here, and these 4 chairs here, and I'm gonna ask you to create a scene where the most powerful thing is the bottle" my colleague, a youth worker said to our group of young people. I sat there and watched while the young people were positioning the bottle and the chairs and talking about power. I thought it was one of the most powerful activities I witnessed as a young youth worker and wanted more of that. It turns out it was the work of a certain Augusto Boal; so, I started reading up and googling and bookmarking anything I found that talked about the *Theatre of the Oppressed* (2019). I got the sense it was deriving from the work of some other person, another Brazilian but didn't think more of it.

As a young feminist anti-racist anti-capitalist activist, I found it very difficult to find the right words, the right ways of structuring sentences that could express how I felt; that could express my anger, my sadness, my fear; until elders shared their wisdom; gave me books to read and introduced me to bell hooks.

Here I am, reading her books, her articles, listening to her interviews and realising that one of the biggest influences on her work was some Brazilian educator, his name starts with an 'F' and I think he is the same guy Boal talks about... It is maybe time for me to get acquainted with this Paulo Freire. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972) is where I started and got a bit overwhelmed by the writing, and I must confess that I used other sources that did the digesting of Freire's work for me. He gave me some of the words I needed to express that anger and frustration; he gave me a framework and validated my instincts; it wasn't all in my head after all; and like in bell hooks' words, he gave me theory that I didn't even realise I needed. bell hooks (1994) in *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*, records

I came to theory because I was hurting—the pain within me was so intense that I could not go on living. I came to theory desperate, wanting to comprehend—to grasp what was happening around and within me. Most importantly, I wanted to make the hurt go away. I saw in theory then a location for healing. (1994: 59)

Later on, when my journey took me from youth and community work to community education I did engage with Paulo in another way; by that I mean I looked for answers and maybe more theory that could explain the spaces I was finding myself in; spaces that needed an awful lot of negotiation.

Power and perception of power in my learning space is where my questioning resides; on this one I am 'all hooks'; I do not believe the teacher is a learner and the learner is a teacher when systems of oppression manifest in either the teacher or the learner. Here are two specific dynamics I find myself in that illustrate this very point.

Firstly, when I am in a position of facilitating learning to peers; fellow educators or professionals in the voluntary sector I have had the repeated experience of being the only woman of colour in the space. That has greatly influenced the content and pedagogy used to facilitate the learning. I spend unusual time in setting up the learning space to ensure my own safety; my experience, expectations and assumptions are that there will be a moment in the space when intentional or unintentional racism and Islamophobia will surface; there are days when I have the energy for it and others when I am so exhausted that I will bypass content just to ensure I am not going to have to absorb microaggressions.

Secondly, the power I may have as the person holding the space and responsible for the learning of the group is for me a perceived power; the level of anxiety I feel before entering such spaces is high and draining; It notably increases if there is another person of colour in the space; I suddenly feel a responsibility to shield them too from what may come up in the learning space; I will say out loud what I hope will be markers of safety in order to signal 'I have your back'... While all of this can only be the fruit of my imagination it is still impacting the learning and the experience of the learners.

In all these years only one group ever said in their closing feedback round how they appreciated that it may have been hard for a woman of colour to occupy that space and they hoped they made it as easy as possible for me. I was tempted to brush it off but then I felt it in my body and got emotional and then realised how much of a thing it actually was.

That leaves me with questions about opening the educational space for educators from marginalised backgrounds and discriminated identities. What are the pedagogical implications? Where does the duty of care rest? How do we name the power dynamic in the learning space?

Presently in the Irish educational landscape we are too few; apart from the obvious structural and institutional hurdles, there is an unreadiness to cater for us; an absence of opportunities to show up as educators in our own terms and by that, I mean facilitating exploration of what

a non-white centric, non-cis heterosexual centric, non-abled bodied centric, non-middle class centric pedagogy looks like when developed and facilitated by those directly affected by oppression. When I think about those possible opportunities to radically rethink the adult and community education sector I also think of the complexity and nuance to be found when an educator facing forms of oppression facilitates the learning of a group of people facing other types of oppression.

A few years ago, I facilitated a learning space for a group of women returning to education after very difficult and sometimes traumatising experiences with the education system; they identified as working-class women who had their fair share of hardship, exclusion and injustice. I assumed that they may be nervous about a 'foreigner' teaching them; that I would have to demonstrate and prove that we had a lot more in common than they thought and that my approach in that learning space was one of 'solidarity of the oppressed'. We worked our way through it; I introduced methodologies of preparing the space but this time not to keep myself safe but to invite courage and a will to connect.

After 12 weeks; we were able to talk about the perceptions and assumptions we had of each other; the fact that I have learnt English means an accent and a vocabulary that could be understood as 'posh'; my unfamiliar ways could be seen as middle-class; when in actual fact I was raised by working class parents in a socialist country that understands class very differently.

I was going to mark their assignments and could fail them; I had the content of the lessons; in their eyes I was the one holding the most power in the space. They were all white, and in their community, their turf... For me they were holding a significant amount of power. Incidentally we did a full day on power and that opened the space for us to figure out how we negotiate the space from a position of vulnerability in this society. Here again I could not help thinking about the impact this dynamic had on the content of the learning and their learning experience. Did I put an emphasis on solidarity of struggles as a principle of community education, or as my way to make the learning space more comfortable and less threatening for both me and the learners?

Sadly, Paulo this time didn't have many answers for me; I hoped that the places he occupies and influences in Ireland would be where I could bring these questions, but I do not think they are quite ready yet.

My perception is that the understanding of the racial dimension to name just one, is still very much understood in a Development and Global education sense, which makes it very difficult for me to find a port of entry...Or at least not one where I can show up without my armour.

I often wonder what it is that prevents people in positions of power and influence, in the voluntary and community sector as well as the adult and community education sector, to disrupt the status quo? I often wonder about the dissonance that must exist in educators who hold Freire's teachings dear and yet can't seem to connect such teachings with those most affected as active and deliberate actors of those teachings.

I do not accept that I am an oppressed individual but rather that systems are oppressing me; I do feel it, that oppression is real, but I am powerful in my resistance to it. However, I am perceived as an oppressed educator and I long for the time when I will be seen as an individual who resists oppression by being an educator.

I will end by a quote; I love ending with quotes...this one is from the man himself:

The challenge is that we are all the inheritors of previous systems of oppression that have shaped our current perceptions of reality. It is quite difficult to be fully aware of the current moment and our existing 'limited-situations' without intentionally noticing and reflecting in order to act in the world for our own liberation. (Freire, in National Equity Project, 2021: n.p.)

References

- Boal, A. (2019) *Theatre of the Oppressed*. London: Pluto
Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. London: Penguin.
hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to Transgress*. New York: Routledge.
National Equity Project (2021) How We Heal: From the Inside-Out [blog]. [online] Available at: <https://medium.com/national-equity-project/how-we-heal-from-the-inside-out-ac1e48eda308>
National Equity Project, Jan 26, 2021.
-

Freire in action in today's radical community development by Peter Dorman

I came into the world of Freire through the Training for Transformation programme organised by what has become Partners in 1986. This experience brought me into the world of community development – and the core idea of change being driven by people who are most affected by inequalities. The process involves them naming their own world collectively, understanding that world but articulating an alternative, making allies who do not necessarily experience inequalities but who want change, and engaging the system that creates those inequalities in direct action and in dialogue.

I experienced this almost viscerally in the simulation exercise, STAR POWER where three groups - stars, circles and squares - participate in a rigged game where squares always win, and stars always lose. The game ends inevitably in the system being pulled down as the stars resist and join up with some of the circles to refuse to play anymore and construct their own game instead.

This crude representation of class struggle was followed by an input on the Dynamic Model, a presentation on the thinking of Gramsci and Marx on how authentic change can happen. The marginalised class must refuse to continue to play their passive role, connect with some middle-class allies and rock the system by reframing the political economic and cultural mores in light of their alternative vision. For Freire, the educator / community worker is a facilitator of this process. Lofty revolutionary stuff!

For years after, and still today, I worked in Partners to facilitate learning based on these ideas in communities across Ireland and elsewhere. It was in CAN (Community Action Network) though that I found the opportunity to actually test what I have come to call a radical community development process in real life – practicing what I teach!

In CAN, I have found myself working in social housing communities across the southwest inner city of Dublin for twenty years. Communities like Dolphin House, Fatima Mansions, St Michael's Estate, Oliver Bond, Cherry Orchard and others were generally working class, close knitted places where most if not all people paid rent to the council for their housing. In a myriad of issues facing these communities, three were glaring generative themes in the conversations among people:

- The housing is poor. The housing stock, particularly in the flats, is often cold, damp, poorly maintained with regular sewage invasion.
- Doesn't feel safe. There is persistent anti-social and criminal behaviour in the area, often associated with drug trade.
- Income is low. Many people don't have well-paid jobs if they have a job at all.

So here are three of our responses, which to lesser or greater degrees, can be seen as Freirean.

After years of begging the local authority to do something about the mouldy damp living conditions that saw scores of babies and children on inhalers and threatened the lives of anyone with immunity deficits, there was to be a widespread regeneration programme. But it was halted in the recession as the developers realised that the income to be made from the public private partnership model would not be enough to make it worth their while.

CAN heard about the Participation and Practice of Rights organisation in Belfast which used a human rights-based approach to challenge on these issues. We met with residents and community workers in Dolphin House estate whose stories of poor housing we had been hearing for years, and proposed we take this approach.

Residents came together to learn about human rights – to see written in black and white in various UN and other treaties that adequate habitable housing was a human right and the Irish State, (not the Council, but the State in the person of the responsible minister) was in violation of a legal duty.

Seeing themselves as rights-holders through this conscientization, not poor unfortunates, residents went door to door with neighbours, documenting experiences and taking photos as evidence of a human rights violation. They then mapped the power system around housing and, reflecting on their own experience of campaigning to date, realised that they had only ever targeted the local Dublin City Corporation official. Once this problem was posed to them, they began to get excited about the prospect of challenging the minister.

They then connected with allies, human rights experts, experts in architecture and housing standards, health experts who understand what mould spores or sewage content meant for their health and the media to construct an engagement with the state. Through the media,

and inputs into the United Nations and elsewhere, the minister was finally engaged on a showdown with Miriam O'Callaghan on Primetime⁸, and a Regeneration followed. This later expanded to residents taking a collective complaint on conditions in social housing to the Council of Europe - which they won - with implications for every social housing tenant in Ireland and in the 40 plus states that make up the Council of Europe.

On community safety, residents in a number of communities whispered nervously, but with strong feeling, about living alongside persistent drug dealing and all the anti-social behaviour that accompanies it. At the heart of their language in describing this, was a sense of not being listened to and of being abandoned. Authorities often pointed to low levels of reporting and the number of arrests, drug searches, and threatened evictions in their response to the issue. But these actions did not alter the named world of residents. Residents were further silenced by the real threat of reprisal if they raised their voice.

CAN worked with others to develop a simple tool, a community crime impact assessment, which allowed residents to record discretely their experience, triangulated with the knowledge of those who worked in those neighbourhoods and with any other data available. Thus, they named the world through their eyes. The assessments are then put up to the authorities who will be challenged to deny if this is a reality. This led to a formal acceptance that this is a reality for people that should be addressed. There follows a dialogue between all those with power to change the quality of life for people, including the community, and a planning process to implement.

The assessment is then repeated and is seen as a judgement on whether any measures are actually making a difference to the quality of life for people. The assessment is more like a listening survey than a piece of research. The measures taken are to some extent about law enforcement, but also about intervening in the lives of those committing offences and building community strength to resist the encroachment of drug trading on their community.

On income, the southwest inner city sees large public infrastructure spending in the area, notably the regenerations of flats complexes and the children's hospital. A generative theme was the sense that local communities were not benefiting from these projects, which most labour coming from outside the areas.

⁸ A current affairs programme on RTÉ – National Television Station in Ireland.

In response, CAN researched the potential for using social clauses in procurement, a method of ensuring that procurement of construction includes targeted training and recruitment in the procurement tenders. Those targeted are groups most distant from the labour market. We then were able to bring practical proposals to the Local Authority and the Hospital authorities on how they could use their procurement opportunities to meet needs in the community. These were accepted and significant numbers of unemployed, underemployed and young people at risk benefited from this. Some of these included the young people drawn into the drug trade economy locally.

These examples reflect the Freirean approach I first learned about in that programme in 1986. These include:

- Listening for generative themes and building on the motivation that is linked to emotions like anger, hopelessness and despair.
- Facilitating people to name their own world as they experience it and give that reality status with authorities
- Facilitating conscientization, or what CAN calls inside-out social analysis, where people develop a deep understanding of what is shaping their reality. The use of problem posing methods, where the themes that people raise in their everyday talk are reflected back in a way that facilitates reflection and insight.
- Challenging the system – finding the tools to force authorities to the table, such as law, human rights or media.
- Dialogue – Freire speaks often about dialogue but doesn't seem to go into what is meant by that. Our examples include ingrained dialogue processes, where those living with the inequalities talk with each other about their shared experiences – but also dialogue with allies who wish to assist while never really knowing the realities as a personal experience and, crucially, to dialogue with authorities which is the only way to recreate a new reality.

This dialogue work involves facilitating people to speak safely in their authentic voice, to listen without pre-judgement and to co-create new possibilities.

Workshop 3: The influence of Freire for global development practice

Participating Speakers:

Dorothy Toomann

DEN-L

Dorothy Kwannah Toomann is a Gender Consultant and the Country Coordinator of the International Association for Community Development in Liberia. In 2020, she contested in Liberia's Special Senatorial Elections as an Independent Candidate in Bong County. Prior to that, she worked with the Development Education Network-Liberia (DEN-L) for about two decades including serving as executive director. DEN-L is a national grassroots organization influenced by the approaches of Paulo Freire and involved in capacity building – training, organizational development, community development, peacebuilding, advocacy and theater awareness in Liberia.

Michael Solis

Trócaire

Michael Solis is Trócaire's Global Director for Partnership and Localisation. He has 15 years of experience in development, human rights and humanitarian action across Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Based in Nairobi, he recently established and leads Trócaire's Global Hub on Partnership and Localisation, which builds on Trócaire's 50 years of experience as a partnership agency and drives the organisation's strategic shift toward localisation.

Facilitated by

Niamh Rooney

MU DID

Niamh is a lecturer on the Department of International Development, BA and MA programmes. Her areas of experience and interest include the planning, organisation, and management of development programmes and organisations, with a particular focus on participatory, human rights, and results-based approaches. Niamh is an advocate for sustainable development and emphasises the importance of sustainability through her work. Niamh also acts as academic coordinator of the Departments' Research, Engagement and Capacity Hub (REACH).

Freire's influence in global development practice by Niamh Rooney

In our workshop we reflected on Freire's influence in global development practice. We heard from Dorothy Toomann who shared the Liberian Experience of Freire's principles in practice and Michael Solis who shared Freire's influence on Trócaire's programming in Sierra Leone.

Dorothy shared the historic and current context in Liberia, one of poverty, marginalisation and oppression with power and resources in the hands of the elite. At community level however, Freire's influence has been evident for almost 20 years, due to the influence of Freire on Liberians through a Training for Transformation event. As a result, the DELTA (Development Education and Leadership Teams in Action) approach was implemented, which Dorothy sees as Freirean principles in action. While through DELTA and other participatory processes, the Freirean approach has gained momentum in informal education, formal education is still predominantly the opposite, where the banking model which limits opportunity for critical thinking and situated pedagogy persists. In Liberia, education remains an opportunity rather than a right for the majority. Even for those with opportunity, the formal education system is weak and doesn't support national employable skills and knowledge – unemployment is high even among graduates. Poverty, unemployment and unsustainable use of natural resources are key challenges in Liberia and globally, and Dorothy wondered if the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) present an opportunity for finding intersections where the approach of Freire can be applied in efforts to find solutions to shared challenges.

Michael shared experience of Freire's influence in Sierra Leone, a complex environment with gendered multi-dimensional poverty, which influences the focus on women and girls in Trócaire's programming. Unemployment and illiteracy is high especially among women and youth, and sexual and gender based violence is very high. Trócaire adopt an integrated programming approach to address the multidimensional needs of women. Illiteracy is a key issue which hinders active participation in social, economic and political spheres and so a functional adult literacy support was implemented parallel to other initiatives. Michael reflected on how empowering it is for those women to be able to write their own name, a reversal of the indignity of a thumbprint and the ink stain that remained for all to see. The evidence of literacy as a political act is clear, where dominated groups are able to advocate and generate political change by organising, mobilising and working together. Farmers groups are very effective networks, advocating for inclusion in political and agricultural

development processes and literacy feeds into this with programmes designed around the lived experience of participants, a programme that speaks to them, their priorities and needs, a reflection of how a situated pedagogy is critical for liberatory learning.

Opening workshop question:

Both speakers posed a similar question asking: how we can influence those who oppress, or the dominating class, to value and adopt Freirean principles in a way that will influence change in a positive way for those who are marginalised and oppressed?

Dorothy specifically included the formal education sector in this question in connection with her argument for a situated pedagogy which reflects the local context, key needs and skills of relevance and use to the local population. It reminded me of Freire in conversation with Ira Shor (1987) *A pedagogy for liberation: dialogues on transforming education*, where they discuss the global limits of education, on the basis that it is not in the interest of the elite to disrupt the status quo, and so limits the political transformation of society, but through education we can understand power in society, and empower people to advocate for social change. Why would a government in a context such as Liberia (or elsewhere) where the elite hold the power, resources and wealth support a radical and critical education model which risks disrupting their power and control?

We discussed this a little and reflected on the fact that it had been raised by Ger (conference participant) after the main session in the morning. Ger had argued that the 'oppressed' have the capacity to think critically, to act critically but that there is often an assumption or attitude that if you belong to a poor, marginalised or otherwise stereotyped group, you lack skills, knowledge and capacity. She asked how do you convince those in power to engage in true dialogue and act politically in ways that reflect Freirean ideals? David Archer – in his earlier paper — had noted that there is not enough work done with 'oppressors' and that we need to get them to understand that they are part of the problem.

Dorothy shared that DEN-L adopted Freirean principles in reconciliation processes in post-conflict Liberia, which were very successful. They attempted to introduce it to government hoping to replicate in government-led approaches, but the government refused and were not interested in engaging in this type of approach. DEN-L have made many attempts to get

buy-in from those in positions of power to adopt or even appraise Freirean principles in practice but to no avail.

Questions from workshop speakers (in addition to main question above):

Dorothy – how can Freirean principles be formalised in education? What are the connections between resilience and social change? The question of resilience and social change was briefly discussed but we were disrupted by the failing internet connection. In brief, we wondered if education contributes to greater skills and awareness, which contribute to resilience. Resilience in turn creating the conditions for social change.

Some questions from the workshop participants:

How can the experience of the oppressed be transformed with a Freirean approach?

Michael noted that lack of education and inability to read and write are disabling factors which affect women and girls disproportionately and impact on all other spheres. Trócaire used situated and functional adult literacy based on the Reflect approach. He spoke about the empowerment of women and the pride they exhibited when able to write their name rather than sign with a thumb print (the norm previously). He wondered how those women felt, having previously been stigmatised by the ink remaining on their fingers which identified them both as programme participants and illiterate. He reflected on how this new confidence motivated some to participate in arenas where they wouldn't have previously, such as farmers' networks or community committees, or for those with newfound numeracy skills, in micro-finance initiatives. This is evidence of the value and justification for situated pedagogy, the link between language and power, on one hand learning the language of the oppressor enables one to engage in the world of the oppressor and shifts power to the oppressed on even a small level, and on the other, situating learning in the context of the oppressed makes it relevant to their context, enables them to name their world, and empowers.

Further questions included:

- How does the Freirean approach empower people, instigate sustainable social change in communities, what is your experience?
- Have you seen the effects of Freirean approaches being implemented and replicated in communities and wider society?
- How do you ensure sustainability, and have you seen evidence of the ripple effect?

Localisation is key, community trainers help with sustainability and the ripple effect, supports locals to continue to mobilise and advocate after programmes end. Ensuring funding for functional adult literacy continues is a bigger challenge as there are often more pressing priorities. However, given that education which humanises and empowers can impact on those 'pressing priority' areas in a positive, transformational and sustainable way, it could be argued that functional adult literacy is a priority. However, Michael also noted that it is important to pair literacy programmes with other programmes (health, education, finances, political participation etc.)

Teenage pregnancy example from Michael (detailed in his paper)

How do you deal with the challenges of Freirean approach/education in development practice? Oppressed – even the labelling as 'oppressed' puts you in the margins. Finding space for education and challenging the status quo when struggling with basic life survival issues is a challenge, life survivor issues versus education for change, the dominant way of doing things versus change, challenging also due to lack of resources and supports. Education which humanises and empowers is critical and can make the struggle worth the effort.

How do you balance getting funding with adopting a Freirean approach, often funders don't want to fund something that is co-created with the community, that doesn't have defined outputs and outcomes? Dorothy noted that for DEN-L, sometimes they just have to say 'no thanks', refuse the funding rather than be bought or manipulated into towing the dominant line. With others they need to instigate dialogue to find common ground and reach a compromise.

I recollected a line from bell hooks in *Teaching to transgress* (1994) where she talks about a quote from Adrienne Rich, ' . . . this is the oppressors language yet I need it to talk to you' (1994: 168), suggesting that maybe repackaging their ideas and proposal in language that it is more in line with the funders language and views, without straying from the original concept, might be a strategy to try. However, the preferred option would be to persist and find a funder who was willing to acknowledge and value the co-creation of knowledge with communities.

A question on the board not discussed – pairing Freirean approach with human rights-based approach, what do people think of that as a model? Opposites or workable?

What is the role played by dialogue in community development and how do they interact? (For further reflection!)

Closing comment:

Imagine if Freire had infiltrated the sphere of the elite in government, become the Minister for Education, just imagine...!

References

hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to Transgress*. New York: Routledge.

Shor, I. & Freire, P. (1987). *A pedagogy for liberation: dialogues on transforming education*, South Hadley, Mass, Bergin & Garvey Publishers,



'Dialogue' by Peter Dorman

Conversations on Freire's Influence on Global Development Practice: The Liberian Experience by Dorothy K. Toomann

Introduction

The Department of International Development, Maynooth University, Ireland organized a reflection on Freire's influence on development and educational practices. In Liberia, the approach has been used for nearly two decades. This reflection highlights the Liberian experience.

Background

Liberia was a colony of a USA-based NGO known as the American Colonization Society (ACS). The ACS settled free slaves in Liberia and their decedents, less than 6% of the population also known as the Congos, controlled Liberia for more than one and the half centuries. (Wikipedia, n.d.)

Liberia's natural resources (gold, diamond, iron ore, fertile soil, etc.) and its economy have historically been controlled by foreigners with about 94% of the population including women being denied the benefits of the resources and excluded from governance processes with high rate of corruption amongst the elite. The elite directed basic social services to themselves thus resulting in 14 years brutal civil war. (Sustainable Development Institute, 2011). More than 250,000 died and the country was left with damaged infrastructure, and 'brain drained' with an increased crime rate especially among young people. The civil war ended through national effort including support from women's groups and those of the international community led by the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) in 2004. (Kraaij, 2015)

The country to some level has recovered from its civil war with promises from Presidents Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf and George Weah respectively to improve the wellbeing of the local people after three successful General and Presidential Elections and three mid-term Senatorial elections which created opportunities for Senators to be elected to the House of Legislature. However, corruption, misplaced national priorities and weak national strategies to enhance local investment and benefit coupled with the outbreaks of the Ebola Virus Disease in 2014 and the COVID-19 in 2020 have further challenged the country's already weak systems. Nonetheless, with support from international and national partners including

the Development Education Network-Liberia (DEN-L), there are signs of hopes for a better Liberia.

Freire's Approach in Liberia

This reflection is drawn from the contributions of several colleagues exposed to the approach of Paulo Freire in Liberia. It is understood that three Liberians initially were exposed to Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972) and later the book by Myles Horton and Paulo Freire *We make the road by walking* (1990), in an interregional training program in Kenya in the 1970s conducted by Ann Hope, Sally Timmel and their Team. But Freire's approach began to take root in the early 1990s when Sr. Miriam O'Brien who was exposed to the approach, took an assignment from the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) with the Catholic Church in Liberia. Working with a Team of Liberians, they formed the Development Education Network-Liberia (DEN-L) a national non-governmental organization, to contribute to a vision of 'Liberia at peace with itself and its neighbours' through human resource capacity building. They used the Development Education and Leadership Teams in Action (DELTA) tool. The DELTA tool is organized in the *Training for Transformation handbooks* (Hope and Timmel, 2003) developed by Ann Hope and Sally Timmel and based on the principles of Paulo Freire. In my view, the DELTA training put into a practical process some of the Freirean approaches. It focuses on building of grassroots movements for social awareness and action for transforming dominant education and development principles and practice. It values the experience and contribution of each one and seeks solidarity with the poor, marginalized, socially under-privileged and those who have minimum or no access to education or other opportunities. The DELTA training was conducted alongside humanitarian programmes supported by JRS during the civil war.

Before the end of the civil war, Sr. Miriam and her Team constructed a training centre in rural Liberia for hosting the DELTA training and shared with other organizations who use the facilities for their own trainings. After the civil war, the DELTA training was organized for local community people, community development workers – civil society organizations including unions, students, women, some local government leaders. International NGOs who opted to introduce their staff to participatory principles also supported DELTA training for their staff. In the mid-2000s, efforts were made to bring DELTA graduates together to share experience and discuss key national issues. As a result of these engagements, many people were exposed to Paulo Freire's approach to development and education; the number of civil

society organizations exposed to the approach also increased and today they are found all around the country (Toomann, 2014). Some newly established organizations began using the approach in development and training programs. To date, DEN-L is working on improving its training programme to advanced levels.

However, much development and education in Liberia remains predominantly an antithesis of Freire's approach – a more conventional, western dominated or 'banking approach' is being used thus limiting opportunity for critical thinking and training based on relevance. Most development projects in Liberia are not based on local needs; this is evident by the increasing number of abandoned development projects across the country. It can be said that education remains only an opportunity not a right for people in Liberia. In terms of opportunity, the system provides weak space for national employable skills and knowledge – as such, the rate of unemployment even among those who are educated is high. On the contrary, the number of young people with vocational and other skills from neighboring countries – Guinea, Serra Leone, Ghana and others taking employment in the country is sharply increasing. Liberia's natural resources continue to serve the interest of foreigners. Robust exploitations of resources are taking place around the country (Lusty et al., n.d.) but these are accompanied by weak monitoring strategies, plans to ensure concession companies meet their social obligations, and weak incorporation of plans for future generations. In addition, strategy like value addition (Alden Wily, 2007) to increase employment opportunities and maximize the benefit of the natural wealth to improve the lives of the ordinary people, basic infrastructure, health care and education, remains a dream thus undermining the chances of the ordinary Liberians to escape poverty.

Poverty, unemployment, unsustainable use of natural resources is also experienced by other countries thus influencing global discussions and strategies such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with concerned to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace. It is hoped that this global agenda and perhaps others will identify intersections with the approach of Freire which values dialogue among stakeholders as equals and critical thinking for action as active participants in finding solutions; this could further strengthen the Liberian experience of Freire's approach.

Conclusion

In Liberia, Freire's approach to development and education is not evident in the formal sector. However, his concept has become internalized by those who have been exposed to it and many are applying the approach in different parts of the country. As such, it is not clear when the approach will affect policy and action. However, with increase in local consciousness, it is a good opportunity to channel these into some form of formal or informal mechanisms for more influence to development and education in country. In addition, as the concepts such as the SDGs and others, though global are designed to global and local challenges, ensuring intersection with Freire's approach in Liberia could further ground the Liberian experience.

However, reflecting on the work of Paulo Freire also prompts these questions: How can Freire's approach be adopted by the formal education and development systems in Liberia and perhaps other counties if the approach continues to be limited to non-policy/decision makers? What is the connection between resilience and social change or transformation? How can Freire's approach find place in the dominant class whose priorities are based on maximizing profit and fraudulent developments initiatives which direct resources to themselves?

References

- Alden Wily, L. (2007) 'So who owns the forest' Sustainable Development Institute, Liberia [online] https://sdiliberia.org/sites/default/files/documents/So%20Who%20Owns%20the%20Forest_full%20report.pdf (accessed 1 April 2022)
- Freire, P. (1972) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Harmondsworth: Penguin
- Hope, A and Timmel, S. (2003 rev. ed) *Training for Transformation* (vols 1-3) London: Intermediate Technology.
- Horton, M. and Freire, P. (1990) *We Make the World by Walking: Conversations on Education and Social Change*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Kraaij, F. (2015) *Liberia: From the Love of Liberty to Paradise Lost* [online]. Available at: <https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/bitstream/handle/1887/33835/ASC-075287668-3686-01.pdf?sequence=2> (accessed 1 April 2022)
- Lusty, P, & Gunn, G, with Linley, K & Rayner, D. (undated) The potential for gold in Liberia [online] https://www2.bgs.ac.uk/lgs/downloads/Liberia_gold_brochure_lowres.pdf (accessed 1 April 2022)
- Sustainable Development Institute (2011) 'Making the Forest Sector Transparent' *Annual Transparency Report 2010 Country Specific Report: Liberia* <https://sdiliberia.org/sites/default/files/documents/Transparency%20Report%202010.pdf> (accessed 1 April 2022)
- Toomann, D, (2014) Personal Journal (unpublished)
- Wikipedia (undated) Liberia [online] <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberia> (accessed 1 April 2022)
-

Freire's influence on Trócaire's programming in Sierra Leone by Michael Solis

Paulo Freire's contributions to adult education were far reaching and are a clear influence for Trócaire's development work. Given my experience contributing to Trócaire's programmes in Sierra Leone from 2015 to 2021, I can offer a reflection on Freire's legacy in this context.

Sierra Leone is a least developed country that continues to face considerable challenges in terms of human development. It ranks within the bottom ten countries on major indices, including 182 out of 189 on the Human Development Index (UNDP, 2020a), 101 out of 107 on the Global Hunger Index (2021), and 155 out of 162 on the Gender Inequality Index (UNDP, 2019). Poverty remains widespread with 57.9 percent of the population being multi-dimensional poor, while an additional 19.6 percent are classified as vulnerable to multidimensional poverty (UNDP, 2020b). Unemployment and illiteracy levels remain high, particularly among women and youth.

Trócaire's programmes in Sierra Leone focus primarily on women, given the complex forms of marginalisation they experience. Sierra Leone's social and cultural norms are embedded in a deeply patriarchal culture, shaping and influencing family and community life, school life, work opportunities, and political institutions. Within this context, gender inequalities are constantly reproduced and reinforced, contributing to women and girls' vulnerability to multiple forms of violence, including domestic violence, cultural or communal violence, sexual violence, and structural violence.

Teenage girls are a particularly vulnerable population in Sierra Leone for a variety of reasons. In relation to teenage pregnancy, 21 percent of women aged 15 to 19 have started childbearing (Min. of Health, 2019). In December 2019, following a court case promoted by several civil society organisations, ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) Court ruled that a government-approved ban on pregnant girls attending school and sitting state exams was discriminatory and breached international human rights law. Despite the government's lifting the ban in March 2020, pregnant teenage girls continue to grapple with stigma and other challenges, including interference with schooling and family relationships. They face an increased risk of early forced marriage, HIV, domestic violence, and teenage

pregnancy, contributing to the country's high maternal mortality rate – 1,360 mothers dying in every 100,000 live births (ibid.).

Trócaire's integrated programme approach in Sierra Leone is designed to respond to several of women's multidimensional needs. This involves supporting them to produce enough food for themselves and their families, to strengthen their income generation, and to have increased voice and influence in their homes, communities, and decision-making spaces and structures. Trócaire's local partners⁹ work with communities to address sexual and gender-based violence and other harmful practices that discriminate against and marginalize women, and they have supported women to run for election in a political climate dominated by men. A common reason male leaders use to explain why more women are not in leadership positions is their lack of education. However, they often do not acknowledge that social norms and practices have contributed to women's inequitable access to this invaluable resource.

In many of the areas where Trócaire and our local partners work, most adult women are illiterate. For activities that required proof of their participation through attendance sheets, most were unable to write their own names. One solution that many development agencies adopted for high levels of illiteracy was having participants 'sign' attendance sheets with inked thumb prints. After trainings or activities, women would return to their homes sporting blue or black stains on their fingers that could take several days to disappear. I always wondered how they felt about those thumb prints – marks that easily identified them as those who could not read. The stains defined them not by what they gained from the activities, but by what they lacked as humans.

Across numerous communities, adult women acknowledged that while they felt it was too late for them to return to school, they still wished to learn to read and write. Though adult literacy was a new area for Trócaire in Sierra Leone, we accepted the challenge to respond to women's expressed needs. Fortunately, several of our partners were already engaging in efforts to promote adult literacy, albeit in an ad hoc manner. As a result, Trócaire worked with them and adult literacy experts to develop a harmonized adult literacy manual guided by Freire's beliefs.

⁹ For a list of Trócaire's local partners in Sierra Leone, see: <https://www.trocaire.org/countries/sierra-leone/#partnerships>

Because many teachers in rural Sierra Leone educate with a 'banking' or rote education approach, we opted to co-create a manual that responds to women's contexts and lived realities. The sessions were structured around word building, using real names, tangible objects, and figures that learners could easily identify with from their world. The functional reading, writing, and numeracy skills gained related to areas that were of direct interest to the learners, such as agriculture, livestock, fishing, village savings and loans, health, hygiene, gender, and rights. Literacy skills in these areas would help them to function more effectively in their culture, community, and work life.

Many of the women were also members of Farmer-Based Organisations (FBO), which Trócaire's partners helped establish. Through their involvement in these structures, women have networked with other FBOs across districts to advocate for women's meaningful inclusion and participation in agricultural and development processes, ensuring their voices are heard and needs are addressed.

The women who participated in Trócaire's adult literacy programmes were among the most dynamic I met during my time in Sierra Leone. They would stand up proudly and declare before their family and neighbours how they could now read and write key words and phrases that are relevant to their lives. They would share the knowledge they acquired, as well as their desire to learn more. Additionally, they would voluntarily sign their names in legible form for all to see. Their days of thumbprinting were over.

Freire's influence on Trócaire and our partners' adult literacy approach is evident, particularly with respect to the idea that literacy is a political act for the marginalized and oppressed, and that dominated groups can develop political determination by organizing and mobilizing to achieve their own objectives. What I would like to ask Freire, were he still alive, is how to best work with oppressors to support transformational changes in the lives of the oppressed? In practice, we have seen the need for a radical transformation of power dynamics, particularly in gendered relationships where women are viewed as objects or property and whose role, in a traditional marriage, is to obey their husbands at all costs. Women who defy this social norm face serious risks of violence, stigmatisation, and discrimination.

Supporting women to empower themselves requires working with their environment, namely families, communities, and social institutions. For women to succeed, the spaces that have

the potential to be either oppressive or enabling must also undergo their own transformations. How to best guide these spaces to become truly enabling is an ongoing challenge but fundamental if the power behind women's words and thoughts is to bear the greatest fruits.

References

- Global Hunger Index (2021) 'Sierra Leone' [online]
<https://www.globalhungerindex.org/sierra-leone.html> Concern Worldwide / Welthungerhilfe
(accessed 11 April 2022)
- Ministry of Health & Sanitation (2019) *Demographic and Health Survey 2019*, Government of Sierra Leone.
- UNDP (2019) Gender Inequality Index 2019 [online]
<http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-inequality-index-gii> (accessed 11 April 2022)
- UNDP (2020a) *Human Development Report* [online]
<http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr2020.pdf> (accessed 11 April 2022)
- UNDP (2020b) The Next Frontier: Human Development and the Anthropocene, Briefing note for countries on the 2020 Human Development Report: Sierra Leone [online]
http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/SLE.pdf (accessed 11 April 2022)
-

Afterword: Some Thoughts on Freire's Continuing Relevance by Paddy Reilly

Introduction

I first encountered the ideas of Paulo Freire sometime around 1981 — which indicates how long ago my recollections go back — and like many people, it was through my first reading of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (1972 edition). To be honest, my initial reading left me with a mixed reaction. The text is challenging, quite dense, and I needed to do a lot of re-reading of sections to grasp certain points. Nevertheless — even then, I realised that I was reading a unique set of ideas and principles. Later I began to read various critiques of Freire — and readily agreed with feminist theorists who criticized the sexist language of the text — even allowing for the chronology of the publication and translation issues. Despite the various criticisms, having read Freire again and again, and especially his later publications, I remain convinced that the principles he advocated are as relevant today as they were in the late 1960s. Indeed, some of words may be seen as prophetic. This paper attempts to clarify and confirm this position. It argues that Freire's core principles about education — it's not neutral, it should be transformative, dialogical, relevant, questioning, and ensure reflection and action — shouldn't be regarded as 'diktats' which must be followed in every activity and context. Rather, as several groups and individuals have attested — including in the conference¹⁰ to which this paper is associated — Freirean ideas may be effectively employed by merging them with other approaches to learning, to working for change within the contexts of the work. This paper explores some of these core principles alongside other related concepts, and on how they have manifested themselves — as seen from my vantage point working in the education sector for the past four decades and connecting with development practitioners both locally and globally.

Looking Back . . .

Before I began this reflection on Freire's influence on our activities, I wondered how I could guard against an inaccurate recollection of events, not least given the passage of time? There is a danger that if we sincerely believe that this is what took place, we can inadvertently, but falsely claim it as true. To keep my recollections honest, I take inspiration

¹⁰ 'Looking back and looking forward: Conversations on Freire's Influence on Global Development Practice' Maynooth University, 28 October 2021.

from Rutger Bregman's book *Humankind*, in which he cited Bertrand Russell's remarks in a BBC interview in 1959: 'Never let yourself be diverted either by what you wish to believe or by what you think would have beneficial social effects if it were believed but look only and solely at what are the facts.' (Bregman, 2020: 253-254). Armed with this cautionary advice, the intention is to resist seeing the 'ghost of Freire' in every aspect of our historical experience.

Not long after my first encounter with Paulo Freire's ideas — which occurred as part of a course I was attending at the time — I found myself working for the Kimmage Development Studies Centre, based in Dublin. Seeing both sides of the work of that institute — both as a student and later as a staff member — gave me a clearer appreciation of how the organisation and delivery of the full-time programme was orientated around certain key theorists. As I have written elsewhere, (Reilly, 2019), 'These were heavily influenced by constructivist theories of learning - the philosophical foundation for learner-centred education — including those of John Dewey, Carl Rogers and Paulo Freire, among others.' Moreover, the process of delivering the programmes often had more in common with definitions of Development Education than Development Studies. For example, such as that offered by Trócaire (n.d.) 'Development Education is an active and creative educational process to increase awareness and understanding of the world we live in. It challenges perceptions and stereotypes by encouraging optimism, participation and action for a just world.'

The action and participation elements of this definition chimed with the process-oriented, practically focused classes run by Kimmage and later in Maynooth¹¹, in which clearly, the influence of Freire was evident.

From the outset, a key principle — dialogue — was a feature of all classroom activity. All students were encouraged to articulate their thoughts and opinions. This was a revelation for me as a young student, finding myself among much older, experienced, better qualified, mature learners, initially far more confident and articulate than I was. It was soon made clear to me that my views mattered also, that my experience of the world was worthy of consideration.

¹¹ The Department of International Development at Maynooth was established following the transfer of programmes and staff from Kimmage Development Studies Centre, formalized in 2018.

Freire (1972) speaks of reading the world and reading the word. In his literacy teaching he did not consider it enough to simply teach people how to read and write words. After reading the word the learning group would then discuss what they had read, questioning it, and engaging in a dialogue with others to test it against their own experience of life.

The word is more than just an instrument that makes dialogue possible...within the word we find two dimensions reflection and action, in such radical interaction that if one is sacrificed - even in part - the other immediately suffers. There is no true word that is not at the same time praxis. Thus to speak a true word is to transform the world...to exist humanly is to name the world, to change it... Dialogue is an encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world...this dialogue cannot be reduced to the act of one person's 'depositing' ideas in another...it must not be a situation where some men name on behalf of others. (Freire, 1972: 60- 61).

Freire saw dialogue as a way in which people develop a critical consciousness because it allows them to question many aspects of the social, political, and economic reality of the world in which they live. Just talking is not enough, however; discussion must lead to action to transform the world. This reflection and action cycle, which would constantly recur, is what he called praxis.

The critical consciousness which Freire advocates, prompts reflection on another key principle — Critical Thinking — also a core aspect of the curriculum within Kimmage, and today within the Department of International Development in Maynooth. Since my first introduction to Freire, his ideas on transformative learning led me to the works of Jack Mezirow, Stephen Brookfield, bell hooks, Patricia Cranton, and many others. Critical thinking: the absurdly simple device of asking a question — of asking why? — led me to realise what a problematic aspect this can be for many people — particularly oppressed people at the centre of Freire's writings. I note his consideration of opposition to the idea of his pedagogy, stated by Niebuhr (1960) 'it would render them insolent to their superiors and in a few years the legislature would find it necessary to direct the strong arm of power against them.' (cited in Freire, 1972: 102). Regarding the date of this statement, who can say that these sentiments are not expressed in similar terms even today, even if not so overtly, by certain leaders?

In reading bell hooks (1994), *Teaching to Transgress*, I learned from someone whose ideas resonated with the pedagogy being employed at Kimmage previously and now at Maynooth. A pedagogy which typically validates the experiences of the learners (regardless of age), enables them to share their ideas and insights, and encourages them to critically engage with theories being introduced in the classroom. It provides learners with the space to

consider other ways of learning within which they can also play an educative role. For example, I recall the evident surprise or even astonishment from some students when we explored different traditions of learning — liberal, technological, progressive, humanist, and radical, (see Merriam, 1995; Saddington, 1992) — and the realization that a core purpose of education was not universally agreed. Even so, I should reiterate, the pedagogy adopted was not fully Freirean – as indicated in another paper (Reilly, 2019:9) ‘. . . it had a Freirean foundation, [but] was certainly not ‘Freire fundamentalist’. This was exemplified in recent years, with the introduction of other learning approaches such as Appreciative Inquiry (Elliot, 1999) which enabled learners to find a complementary, if not alternative, approach to asking questions rather than only using Freire’s problem-posing method.

bell hooks impressed me not simply because of her association with Freire — but more so because she felt this kindred spirit with him despite her strong criticism of his early use of sexist / phallogocentric language (1994: 49). The following passage illustrates this affinity,

When I first began college, Freire’s thought gave me the support I needed to challenge the “banking system” of education, that approach to learning that is rooted in the notion that all students need to do is consume information fed to them by a professor and be able to memorize and store it. Early on, it was Freire’s insistence that education could be the practice of freedom that encouraged me to create strategies for what he called “conscientization” in the classroom. Translating that term to critical awareness and engagement, I entered the classrooms with the conviction that it was crucial for me and every other student to be an active participant, not a passive consumer. (hooks, 1994: 14)

In her reflection on her challenges to have an engaged and participatory classroom, she draws some interesting observations about opposition from some quarters, stating that ‘Education as the practice of freedom was continually undermined by professors who were actively hostile to the notion of student participation.’ (1994: 14) her comments on certain pedagogical attitudes and traditions resonate with me,

It was difficult to maintain fidelity to the idea of the intellectual as someone who sought to be whole—well-grounded in a context where there was little emphasis on spiritual well-being, on care of the soul. Indeed, the objectification of the teacher within bourgeois educational structures seemed to denigrate notions of wholeness and uphold the idea of a mind/body split, one that promotes and supports compartmentalization. [1994: 16]

This perspective touches upon the third significant principle of Freire this paper chooses to highlight —the importance of humanity. The idea of embracing not just the cognitive aspect of education and learning, but also the affective — the emotional aspects — (linked to the spirituality to which hooks refers), and the social learning that takes place in our lives is central. For example, in the current practice of adult learning modules within the university, we explore the ideas of Knud Illeris (2004), on *Three Dimensions of Learning* within which

Illeris draws upon traditions of learning such as those from Piaget, Vygotsky, and from Marxist and Freudian perspectives, to contend that all learning comprises three different dimensions. (2004: 18-19). The three dimensions are Cognition, Emotion, and Social aspects of learning. 'All learning has a content of skill or meaning' the author reminds us, and this content is mainly a cognitive process. Traditional learning psychology has tended to concentrate on this aspect. All learning is also an emotional process – transmitted by feelings, emotions, attitudes, and motivations— which both mobilise and may be developed through learning. (ibid.) Lastly, learning is also a social process, taking place in the interactions between the individual and her/his surroundings. Later in his work Illeris (2004: 117f) makes connections with Social Constructionism, and Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is highlighted for the impact it had on the comprehension of social learning, with 'his convincing references to South American agricultural workers' societal conditions' (Illeris, 2004: 123).

Educators that insist, such as R. W. K. Paterson, (1979) that 'It cannot be part of the purpose of education either to vindicate the status quo or to advocate social change, whether gentle or piecemeal or radical and sweeping' clearly have a different perspective than Freire; happily, this view is not in accordance with any of the programmes with which I have been associated.

Nevertheless, this is a genuine, pragmatic, and I dare say, perhaps publicly popular view about education, and is an indication if needed, that the approach advocated by Freire and others, does not have 'the field to itself'. This has led to some critical reflection within those who operate within the progressive, humanist, or radical traditions of education on whether their work is indeed truly socially transformative. As part of a master's degree some years ago, (Reilly, 1993) I examined the question about whether transformation may be achieved, first and foremost, by the quality and approach of the education provided for people? My conclusions? Sadly, no. And this was in line with Freire's views. In a book co-authored with Ira Shor (1987), entitled *A Pedagogy of Liberation: Dialogues on Transforming Education*, it was asserted, 'there is no such thing as personal self-empowerment,'

even when you individually feel yourself most free, if this feeling is not a social feeling, if you are not able to use your recent freedom to help others to be free by transforming the totality of society, then you are exercising only an individualist attitude toward empowerment or freedom [1987: 109]

They continue, however, to emphasize its importance,

While individual empowerment or the empowerment of some students, the feeling of being changed, is not enough concerning the transformation of the whole society, it is absolutely necessary for the process of social transformation. Is this clear? The critical development of these students is absolutely fundamental for social transformation but is not enough by itself. (1987: 110)

I concur with the views of Thomas Heaney and Aimee Horton, (1990)

While many emancipatory education efforts encourage critical reflection and transformative learning, little attention is given to the political apparatus into which the newly released energy of 'transformed' learners must flow. This latter task is, after all, not the responsibility of a professionalised and specialised adult educator. The problem still remains that, even in a Freirean model of education, people can change their theories without having improved their capacity to change their situation. (1990:85)

Freire and Shor are aware of this predicament, when they say 'Liberating education can change our understanding of reality. But this is not the same thing as changing reality itself ... Only political action in society can make social transformation, not critical study in the classroom.' (Freire & Shor, 1987: 175)

Heaney and Horton identify the central issue as being the relationship between education and the transformation of society, recognising the undisputed 'potential for adult education to play a critical role in the development of a counterhegemonic perspective' (1990: 86) at key moments of political crisis. They suggest that the absence of critical reflection in many community action groups in the past left them with limited vision and only short-term gains. Such 'victories' that did occur, 'were destined to reinstitute the oppression they initially overcame, because people drawn to these organizations were never developed. They understood the immediate objective of their struggle, but not the principles upon which it was based.' (1990: 86). Therefore, 'developing vision, exploring the range of the possible and strengthening the capacity and range for change are tasks for which adult educators should be well suited' say the authors, but it must be realised that 'such vision is not rooted in education but in the social world'. Moreover,

Education interprets and transmits but does not cause the conditions, the concrete tasks and limits, that shape social and historical change. Education is a road with successive destinations. It cannot of itself build a new society but can only accompany and strengthen each newly identified act of social reconstruction. (1990: 86-87)

It is difficult to argue with the proposition, that 'While education is critical to social transformation, it is not decisive' (Heaney and Horton, 1990: 87) It seems paramount that one understands the roles of each actor.

Conscientization — the dynamic and dialectical interplay between critical reflection and transformative action — is not produced by educators. It is the result of reflective engagement in history — of what Freire calls the 'praxis' of liberation. Educators can reveal oppressive

conditions and the mechanisms, often hidden from consciousness, by which human freedoms are diminished. But, ultimately, conscientization can only occur when learners experience and reflect upon the boundaries between their own ability to act and the moral demands of their freedom. (1990: 88)

This is congruent with Freire's and Shor's views — that education is not the lever for the transformation of society and that (we as educators) should be conscious of the limits of education. (Reilly, 1993: 122) This does not mean we should retreat into despair and cynicism but realise that 'it is possible to accomplish something important in the institutional space of a school or college in order to help the transformation of society' (Freire & Shor, 1987: 129-130)

The conclusions are therefore that education by itself, cannot remake society. However,

It can evolve curiosity. It can develop the commitment of the teacher and some students to the goal of transformation. But, the movements outside are where more people who dream of social change are gathering. A political movement could be described as a place of organized ideas and action where people gather consciously to reconstruct themselves and society. A liberating classroom in a traditional school or college is a place of mixed intentions organized by a dialogic teacher with students who rarely come there thinking to change themselves or their society. Knowing this difference helps avoid euphoria and despair in practicing within the limits of the classroom. (Freire & Shor, 1987: 133)

Hence, I agree with Tom Inglis:

Individual transformative learning is a necessary but not a sufficient base for emancipatory education. To achieve emancipatory education it is also necessary to embrace the discourse and practice of the oppressed without necessarily becoming a political activist, there is a clear role for the educator in facilitating a progression from individual transformative learning to emancipatory education. (1992: 15)

This is an assessment of how I have observed some of the experiences and challenges of our work, as we look back at Freire's influence. What we do is necessary, but not sufficient. As reflected upon in an earlier work (Reilly, 2019), we perhaps have succeeded in achieving what Rosalind Eyben calls the 'management of contradictions' echoing her reflexive practice, as described in her book, *International Aid and the Making of a Better World* (Eyben, 2014: 160-1). For Eyben, these contradictions included her discomfort in working for international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) whom, it seemed, often sought funding from donors who were intent on preserving the status quo.

So, we engage in critical reflection, and encourage learners to practice the same. We continually attempt to facilitate dialogue, both as a stimulus and as an articulation of our critical thinking. We endeavour to maintain a sense of humility and honesty, in keeping with bell hooks' argument about an 'intellectual questing for a union of mind, body and spirit'

(1994: 16) and what this says about the importance of humanity as a core aspect of Freire's thinking.

When I first encountered Paulo Freire, I was eager to see if his style of teaching would embody the pedagogical practices he described so eloquently in his work. During the short time I studied with him, I was deeply moved by his presence, by the way in which his manner of teaching exemplified his pedagogical theory. . . My experience with him restored my faith in liberatory education. I had never wanted to surrender the conviction that one could teach without reinforcing existing systems of domination. I needed to know that professors did not have to be dictators in the classroom. (hooks, 1994:18)

In view of the capacities and limits of education explored in this section, it seems useful for us to be cognizant of Freire's view on certain characteristics required for critical adult educators, in such terms as 'competence, courage, risk taking, humility, and political clarity.' Of great importance to Freire is learning how not to work alone, how to get to know the others, those who are working outside in the 'other (social) world'. (Freire, 1986, cited in Brookfield, 1987: 81-82). For this reason, our teaching in Kimmage / Maynooth, has always sought to build and maintain mutually supportive links with relevant partners in civil society and the development sector.

Looking Forward . . .

This section discusses the continuing relevance of Freirean ideas and approaches. In doing so, I continue to use the three main principles — critical thinking, dialogue, and humanity — as lenses through which to explore the relevance of Freirean thinking. One immediate example of the continuing relevance is through the development of different models of Freire's original thesis on liberatory education. For example: the Training for Transformation practitioners, spearheaded by Ann Hope's and Sally Timmel's work in Kenya in the 1970s and 80s. (Hope & Timmel, 2003). While the original programme is no longer operating, new Training for Transformation programmes are being run in no less than 63 countries. An Irish-based version of Training for Transformation was begun in the 1980s, when a group based in Dublin decided to provide the training for others who were interested in learning about this adaptation of Freire's educational philosophy. Partners Training for Transformation registered as an NGO and is still operating today (see Sheehy, 2001; Partners (Training for Transformation), 2021).

Another major hybridization of Freirean literacy and community development training can be seen in the development and growth of Reflect, by the NGO ActionAid, initiated and developed by David Archer, one of our keynote speakers at the conference. In the 1980s

Archer, inspired by Paulo Freire, researched literacy programmes across Latin America and in the 1990s developed the Reflect approach — a fusion between Freirean ideas and approaches taken from such methodologies as Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). This programme (Reflection Action, n.d.) has now spread to over 100 countries. In mentioning PRA, it is also important to record the observations of Robert Chambers, a key initiator of many participatory approaches in development practice, in writing about the origins of participatory practices in a 1994 article in *World Development*, he describes how

.... the term “activist participatory research” is used to refer to a family of approaches and methods which use dialogue and participatory research to enhance people’s awareness and confidence, and to empower their action. Activist participatory research in this sense owes much to the work and inspiration of Paulo Freire, to his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968), and to the practice and experience of conscientization in Latin America. The Freirean theme, that poor and exploited people can and should be enabled to conduct their own analysis of their own reality has been widely influential, even though it has remained a minority view among development professionals as a whole. (1994: 954).

This view about a minority view may now be seen to be outdated, as a wider uptake of a huge range of participatory methods is evident today across the sector, (see Institute of Development Studies, n.d.) produced by the Institute for Development Studies (IDS). Perhaps while these various initiatives could be said to be working at the margins — they remain signs of hope and relevance in the 21st century.

Where else is dialogue happening today? Does this principle – part of Freire’s process of conscientization to address oppression — remain valid today? In thinking about various social concerns that have been occupying us in this country, and elsewhere, I can immediately think of a few, migration and refugee issues, (see conference paper also by Zoryana Pshyk), housing and homelessness crises, historical institutional abuse, climate change activism/apathy, responses to the pandemic / vaccine hesitancy/ denialism, etc. Any one of these deserves attention in another paper, but here I briefly explore just one as an example — historical institutional abuse in Ireland. Prefacing this, I mention of another concept popularized by Freire, the ‘culture of silence’. Richard Shaul, in the Foreword to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, explains

His early sharing of the life of the poor also led him to the discovery of what he describes as the ‘culture of silence’ of the dispossessed. He came to realise that their ignorance and lethargy were the direct product of the whole situation of economic, social, and political domination — and of paternalism — of which they were victims. Rather than being encouraged and equipped to know and respond to the concrete realities of their world, they were kept ‘submerged’ in a situation in which such critical awareness and response were practically impossible. And it all became clear to him that the whole educational system was one of the major instruments for the maintenance of this culture of silence. (1972: 10)

Powerful examples of a culture of silence are apparent in a book by Derek Scally (2021), *The Best Catholics in the World*. From his vantage point as an Irish journalist living in Germany, Scally observes some contrasting ways in which responses — private and public — in the face of atrocity were experienced within these two countries. In this book, a culture of silence within Ireland — not just at the time of various clerical abuse scandals, but years afterwards — is described by Patrick Bolger (a photographer and himself a clerical abuse survivor):

. . . As an adult looking back (Patrick) views [Fr.] Tom Naughton not as an 'other', but as an ill man who clerical stature made him feel 'bulletproof'. He understood intrinsically 'the power of the collar and the power of silence and the bended knee of the community'. Even if the people knew, the priest was confident they would 'doff their hat, that no one would challenge him.' (Scally, 2021: 189)

Scally critically reflects on some of the key issues, around 'guilt' and 'shame' and how different people have tried to get beyond a culture of silence.

I was a teenager when the last laundry¹² closed and, like many others, carry no sense of guilt for what happened then. But living in Germany has been an education in concepts such as moral responsibility. Even if today's Germans have no guilt for Nazi crimes, decades of post-war self-examination have created a consensus that everyone in their society should feel a responsibility — with no expiry date — to inform themselves about what made the unthinkable possible. Keeping that knowledge alive is their responsibility to the memory of the millions of victims. (2021: 119-120)

Among Scally's conclusions to the various responses is the view that 'Modern German thinkers like Theodor Adorno and Jürgen Habermas have built on [the ideas of] Walter Benjamin [German philosopher], insisting that owning our past and how we embrace it is a prerequisite for meaningful engagement with past wrongs, and that *critical reflection on a nation's past is the normative basis for a healthy democracy*'. (2021: 287, emphasis added).

Then he pinpoints the need for dialogue:

. . . some survivors, artists and campaigners are seeking out gaps in our emotional defences, finding gentle ways to slip past pat explanations of our past to encourage two kinds of dialogue: with oneself and with others. In many ways they are nudging us towards the work recommended by Israeli psychologist Dan Bar-On, who pioneered new methods for approaching old conflicts, from the Holocaust to the Arab-Israeli conflict. (2021: 298)

A key part of Scally's thesis then, is that many institutions and actors were culpable in the abuse of many women, children, and men — primarily the Church and the State — but highlights the fact that many, too many, ordinary citizens in Ireland can be seen to have

¹² The Magdalen Laundries run by several Roman Catholic religious orders were set up to house 'fallen women' — those who became pregnant outside of marriage. These ran from the 19th century until finally closed in 1996.

acquiesced in this terrible practice. They did so in the absence of critical questioning, and hence lack of reflection, and arguably, without due dialogue and praxis, may yet forget about the reparations for victims that remain to be pursued. The arguments proposed by Scally resonate with me in seeing the enduring relevance of Freire's principles — for dialogue, for critical reflection, for praxis -- once again illuminated.

Hope for Humanity?

Freire remains a figure of hope. I note my colleague Eilish Dillon, who opened the conference, chose also to conclude with her view on the importance of the radical hope offered by Freire. One of his last published works before his death, was *Pedagogy of Hope* — subtitled *Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

One of the tasks of the progressive educator, through a serious, correct political analysis, is to unveil opportunities for hope, no matter what the obstacles may be. After all, without hope there is little we can do. . . .

Pedagogy of Hope is that kind of book. It is written in rage and love, without which there is no hope. It is meant as a defense of tolerance — not to be confused with connivance — and radicalness. It is meant as a criticism of sectarianism. It attempts to explain and defend progressive postmodernity and it will reject conservative, neoliberal postmodernity. (1998: 9-10)

Another of his final texts, *Pedagogy of the Heart*, (2003) — published posthumously — rigorously explores the notion of hope and hopefulness, 'Hope is an ontological requirement for human beings. However, to the extent that men and women have become beings who relate to the world and to others, their historical nature is conditioned to the possibility of becoming concrete, or not.' (2003: 44) and again,

it is imperative that we maintain hope even when the harshness of reality may suggest the opposite. On this level, the struggle for hope means the denunciation, in no uncertain terms, of all abuses, schemes and omissions. As we denounce them, we awaken in others and ourselves the need, and also the taste, for hope. (2003: 106)

This paper set out to explore the question of the continuing relevance of Freire in our work today. There is no doubt, Freire's ideas and arguments continue to challenge and inspire us. While acknowledging the possible pitfalls of imagining the 'ghost of Freire' in much of our work, it is clear in terms of the pedagogy and basic human kindness he espoused, Freirean principles continue to infiltrate and characterize our practice. Arguably, his ideas are needed now more than ever in public discourse. So, I readily agree with the sentiments of Moacir Gadotti and Carlos Alberto Torres, when they offered this tribute, following the death of their friend and colleague: 'Years ago one of us said that in the confusion of today's world,

educators can be with Freire or against Freire, but not without Freire.' (Gadotti & Torres, n.d.).

References

- Bregman, R. (2020) *Humankind* London: Bloomsbury
- Brookfield, S.D, (1987) *Developing critical thinkers* Milton Keynes: OUP
- Chambers, R. (1994) The Origins and Practice of Participatory Rural Appraisal in *World Development*, 22(7): 953-969
- Elliott, C (1999) *Locating the Energy for Change: An Introduction to Appreciative Inquiry*, Winnipeg: International Institute for Sustainable Development
- Eyben, R (2014) *International Aid and the Making of a Better World: Reflexive Practice*, London/NY: Routledge.
- Freire, P (2003) *Pedagogy of the Heart* New York: Continuum.
- Freire, P. (1998) *Pedagogy of Hope* New York: Continuum
- Freire, P, (1986) 'Keynote Address' Presented at Workshop on Worker Education, City College of New York Center for Worker Education, New York, Feb.8, 1986 (cited in Brookfield, S. D. 1987: 81-82)
- Freire, P. (1972) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* Harmondsworth: Penguin
- Freire, P and Shor, I (1987) *A Pedagogy of Liberation: Dialogues on Transforming Education* London: Macmillan
- Gadotti, M, and Torres, C.A, (no date) Paulo Freire: A Homage [online] <http://chora.virtualave.net/freire.html> (accessed 26 October 2021)
- Hope, A and Timmel, S. (2003 rev. ed) *Training for Transformation* (vols 1-3) London: Intermediate Technology.
- Hooks, b. (1994) *Teaching to Transgress: education as the practice of freedom*, London: Routledge
- Heaney, T.W. & Horton, A.I. (1990) Reflective Engagement for Social Change in Mezirow, J. and Associates, in *Fostering Critical Reflection in Adulthood* San Francisco & Oxford: Jossey-Bass
- Illeris, K. (2004) *The three dimensions of learning*, Reprint English (ed.), Malabar, Fla: Krieger Pub.
- Inglis, T. (1992) 'Learning about Power, Empowerment and Emancipation' unpublished seminar paper, University College Dublin, April 1992.
- Institute of Development Studies (no date). [online], Available at: www.participatorymethods.org
- Merriam, S. B. (ed.) (1995) *Selected Writings on Philosophy and Adult Education* (2nd edition), Florida: Kreiger.
- Niebuhr, R. (1960) *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, London: Scribner.
- Paterson, R. W. K, (1979) *Values, education and the adult* London: Routledge
- Partners (Training for Transformation) (2021) [online], Available at: Partners Training for Transformation
- Reilly, P. (2019) Kimmage Development Studies Centre (1974 – 2018): Reflections on 'the Kimmage Experience' in *Policy and Practice: A Development Education Review*, Vol. 28, Spring: 89-107.
- Reflection Action (no date) [online], Available at: <https://www.reflectionaction.org/>
- Reilly, P. (1993) Reading the World and Reading the Word: Exploring the Political Role of Adult Education (unpublished MA thesis) for an MA in Human Development, Centre for Adult and Community Education, Maynooth University.
- Saddington, J A (1992) 'Learner Experience: A Rich Resource for Learning' in J Mulligan & C Griffin (eds) (1992) *Empowerment through Experiential Learning*, London: Kogan Page.
- Scally, D. (2021) *The Best Catholics in the World* Dublin: Sandycove/Penguin
- Sheehy, M. (2001) *Partners Companion to Training for Transformation* Dublin: Partners Training for Transformation.
- Trócaire (no date) [online] <https://www.trocaire.org/getinvolved/education/development-education> (accessed 25 October 2021).
-



'Praxis' by Peter Dorman

List of all contributors

David Archer

is Head of Tax Justice and Public Services with ActionAid. In the 1980s he researched programmes inspired by Paulo Freire across Latin America and in the 1990s developed the Reflect approach www.Reflection.Action.org that has now spread to over 100 countries.

Eilish Dillon

is the Head of Department at the Department of International Development and has been involved in critical global education in Ireland in different capacities for many years. She is currently completing research on ethical communications among non-governmental development organisations (NGDOs) in Ireland.

Peter Dorman

is from Dublin and has worked in youth and community work for 30 years. In 1986 he participated in a Training for Transformation programme which set the direction for his life and work from then on. He was involved in helping develop Partners TFT which runs Freire inspired programmes in Ireland and the UK. Peter facilitated many of these programmes and was on the staff of Partners for a number of years. In 2001 Peter joined the staff of Community Action Network and brought his Freirean approach to work with alienated communities mostly in Dublin but also across Ireland and in Asia. His focus has been in housing rights in local authority estates regeneration community safety community benefit in procurement and popular education.

Fergal Finnegan

is a lecturer at the Department of Adult and Community Education, Maynooth University and is a co-director of the Doctorate in Higher and Adult Education and the PhD in Adult and Community Education Programmes. Before becoming an academic he was a community adult educator and literacy worker and these experiences have strongly shaped him and led him to Freire. His main research focus is on transformative education for equality, and he is especially interested in how research can be used to strengthen democratic participation in educational institutions. He is one of editors The European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults and the Journal of Transformative Education.

David Kaulem

is currently Dean of the School of Education and Leadership, and Director of the Centre for Ethics at the Arrupe Jesuit University in Harare, Zimbabwe. David also lectures in Social, Economic and Environmental Studies and Ethics, and is a Researcher in Development, Social Justice, Human Rights and Christian Social Ethics. He has facilitated Training for Transformation programmes in collaboration with the Grail Centre in South Africa, for many years.

Mags Liddy

is a Senior Tutor with the Department of International Development, and now Teaching Fellow at the School of Education, UCD, teaching global citizenship education and research methods. Her research focuses on global citizenship education and education in the developing world, examining how learners understand the developing world, and where they engage (or not) with global development challenges in their everyday lives.

Patrick Marren

is currently coordinator of the undergraduate programme at the Department of International Development, MU. Patrick has been lecturing and facilitating for 30+ years on a range of international development issues, primarily on political economy of development. In terms of Freire, he has worked with the Training for Transformation Institute in South Africa for several of their programmes, in which he had occasion to meet with Sally Timmell, one of the co-authors of *Training for Transformation*.

Zoryana Pshyk

is an ex-asylum seeker and a community educator. She is a Chair for the Kildare Integration Network (KIN), and a member of the Newbridge Asylum Seekers Support Group (NASSG). Zoryana is an active participant in local community development with an emphasis on Social Inclusion, and a board member of the County Kildare Leader Partnership (CKLP) representing Community. Zoryana is also a facilitator with Partners Training for Transformation and an associate lecturer with the Department of Adult and Community Education, Maynooth University.

Paddy Reilly

is a lecturer in the Department of International Development, responsible for various courses including Participatory Adult Learning for Development for MA students, and several undergraduate courses. Previously, as Director of the Kimmage Development Studies Centre, he was responsible for establishing long-running partnerships with overseas training institutes including MS Training Centre for Development Cooperation in Tanzania, and the Training for Transformation Institute, at The Grail Centre, Kleinmond, South Africa.

Niamh Rooney

is a lecturer on the Department of International Development, BA and MA programmes. Her areas of experience and interest include the planning, organisation, and management of development programmes and organisations, with a particular focus on participatory, human rights, and results-based approaches. Niamh is an advocate for sustainable development and emphasises the importance of sustainability through her work. Niamh also acts as academic coordinator of the Departments' Research, Engagement and Capacity Hub (REACH) and facilitates continuous community education and professional development learning events in Ireland and overseas with a focus on participatory planning and results based management, and learning from monitoring and evaluation.

Michael Solis

is Trócaire's Global Director for Partnership and Localisation. He has 15 years of experience in development, human rights and humanitarian action across Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Based in Nairobi, he recently established and leads Trócaire's Global Hub on Partnership and Localisation, which builds on Trócaire's 50 years of experience as a partnership agency and drives the organisation's strategic shift toward localisation. Previously, Michael served as Country Director of Trócaire in Sierra Leone and Programme Manager during and after the West African Ebola crisis. He holds a BA in Public and International Affairs from Princeton University, an LL.M in International Human Rights Law from the National University of Ireland Galway and an MSc in Development and Gender Studies from Central American University in Managua, Nicaragua.

Dorothy Kwennah Toomann

is a Gender Consultant and the Country Coordinator of the International Association for Community Development in Liberia. In 2020, she contested in Liberia's Special Senatorial Elections as an Independent Candidate in Bong County. Prior to that, she worked with the Development Education Network-Liberia (DEN-L) for about two decades including serving as executive director. DEN-L is a national grassroots organization influenced by the approaches of Paulo Freire and involved in capacity building – training, organizational development, community development, peacebuilding, advocacy and theater awareness in Liberia.

Amel Yacef

originally from Algeria, Amel has been working in the youth and community development sector in Ireland for over 20 years; she has managed and coordinated projects with a focus on social justice, community development and human rights. She has been engaging on a voluntary capacity with various organisations and campaigns fighting for a more just, equal, and caring society. Amel presently works in the National Youth Council of Ireland; she describes her practice as transformative and compassionate justice. She has extensive experience in organising and mobilising young people at the grassroots; facilitating processes that enable those voices to sit in their power, and impact political discourse.

All correspondence regarding this publication and other details of the conference should be addressed to: internationaldevelopment@mu.ie