

## Editorial Introduction When the Oppressed Rise: Education as a Tool for Decolonization

Marcella Winter  
*Teachers College, Columbia University*

“apart from inquiry, apart from the praxis, individuals cannot be truly human. Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other.”  
—Paulo Freire

Paulo Reglus Neves Freire was born in Recife, Brazil, on September 19, 1921. He was the son of a middle-class family that, for some time, faced financial uncertainties, experienced poverty and hunger. Despite those material hardships, Paulo Freire thrived as a student, becoming a bachelor's in law. His passion, however, was teaching. After getting his undergraduate degree, the young Freire decided to follow a different path and became a Portuguese primary school teacher. Soon, he also became interested in policy planning and started working within public institutions to develop new strategies to educate those historically marginalized in educational policies. He probably did not know that this change in his life would bring him at the same time more professional satisfaction and lead him through a dangerous road since his home country would face a nondemocratic future. As history shows us, nondemocratic leaders despise critical thinking, divergent ideas, and, consequently, teachers and education. When a coup d'état established a civil-military dictatorship in Brazil in 1964, Freire was about to spearhead one of the most ambitious national literacy programs for adults. The project would revolutionize learning and teaching since Freire had developed a method to teach illiterate adults how to read, write, and critically assess their social context in only forty days. When the dictators ousted president João Goulart, the new regime also started persecuting his allies and the intellectuals connected to his government and ideals. Freire was one of them. Shortly after Goulart left power, he was imprisoned for seventy days and exiled for his "subversive" activities. Freire and his family had to leave Brazil. Again, a detour would have unintended effects on his life. While exiled, Freire started a peregrination and had the chance to teach his innovative pedagogy in Latin America, the United States, and Europe and formulate educational policies in African nations. In a recent documentary about his life and work, one of his daughters ponders that her father would not have become "the" Paulo Freire if not for the dictatorship. The dictatorial regime wanted to impose a gag on Freire; however, inadvertently, they helped him spread his ideas and transformative pedagogy to the four corners of the world and become one of the most relevant educators of all time.

In the year that marks the 100th anniversary of the birth of Paulo Freire, this Special Issue of Current Issues in Comparative Education pays homage to his legacy. Freire is one of the most quoted scholars across all fields of knowledge; his work is translated into more than 40 languages. Freire's seminal book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, continues to shape policy and practice in education worldwide more than five decades after its publication. Based on the lessons learned through his life and work, this issue also recognizes the

efforts of many oppressed individuals and communities around the globe that are using education to overcome different forms of oppression and promote the decolonization of knowledge and educational practices. Accepting that all individuals are entitled to be treated with dignity, have the same opportunities, and be more fully human contradicts many current conservative and authoritarian ideas gaining popularity worldwide. Yet, the articles in this issue reinforce the notion that both Freire's ideas and alternative ways of seeing education can change the world for the better.

This Special Issue is organized into three major sections. In the first one, we present the articles related to Paulo Freire's pedagogy and ideas, highlighting how his theory and practice influence discussions in Comparative and International Education, power issues within the classroom, movements of liberation based on education, citizenship education, and policy implementation.

Offering a theoretical contribution to decolonial thinking, **Regina Cortina** and **Marcella Winter** highlight the significance of Freire's pedagogy, connecting it to Enrique Dussel's philosophy of education. The discussion proposed by the authors emphasizes how two concepts found in Freire's work, *conscientização* and *praxis*, are crucial to understanding that the collaboration between teachers and learners can empower them in transforming an unjust world.

**Rosaria Indah** centers her autoethnography on another essential concept in the Freirean perspective: dialogue. Drawing on experiences of providing feedback for medical students using Freire's ideas, the author explores how offering dialogical feedback in the context of disaster-affected people can improve the quality of the interaction between teachers and students.

**Tara Bartlett** and **Daniel Schugurensky** analyze the connections between Freire's conceptualization on citizenship education and school democracy and the current discussions on school participatory budgeting. They trace a line relating Freire's work at the Social Service of Industry (SESI), his work as Secretary of Education of Sao Paulo, and the contemporary school participatory budgeting (School PB) efforts in two cases from schools in Arizona.

In their article, **Krystal Strong** and **Rhoda Nanre Nafziger** show how Freire's ideas have influenced Pan-Africanist social movements since the period following African nations' independence. The discussion also explores the continued importance of Freirean educational praxis in contemporary Pan-Africanist initiatives, focusing on the Pan-African Activist Sunday School and Solidarity Collective.

Inspired by her experiences as an educator in a Freirean, Spanish-language, high school equivalency (HSE) program in New Jersey, **Elena J. Peebles** offers a narrative for relevant policy environments and actions through the assemblage of primary sources. Her discussion suggests that while ambiguity in policy implementation guidance can result in discrimination and disenfranchisement, adult education programs grounded in Freirean pedagogy can respond to these situations through an open dialectic that provides for exchange between internal program relationships and external organizational relationships.

Through an argumentative literature review, **Renata Penalva** and **Adriana Marcondes Machado** explore the connections between health and education in Brazil. Their piece

evinces that Paulo Freire's idea that an ethical posture in public policy consists of bringing people to participate in policy formulation was present in constructing the Brazilian Public Health System. The process brought together health and education professionals inspired by the idea that the people's involvement would advance democratic ideals and change towards equity.

This Special Issues' second section sheds light on how historically marginalized groups and individuals are using education as a tool to overcome oppression, promote more inclusive ways of teaching and learning, and the decolonization of educational practices.

**Yvonne Thevenot** contradicts the notion that Black people have not used innovation intentionally as a construct to alter unjust social realities. In her article, she reveals that their efforts to change, modify, and disrupt the systemic and societal processes that historically denied them educational opportunities happen as a visible effort to decolonize learning spaces while creating meaningful academic impulses for students of color.

In a conceptual article, **Jessica D. Murray** and **Monica C. Desrochers** offer a guide for educators to use Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Their discussion's main objective is to help educators critically examine their teaching and behavioral support practices, have better interactions with students and families and empower pupils through critical thinking.

**Katia Diaz** explores the Dominican Republic's educational system response to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. She highlights that, although the government has attempted to promote the digital inclusion of teachers and students through existing initiatives, its provision of education to low-income and special needs students. Through in-depth policy analysis and interviews, her study addresses the impact of digital learning on vulnerable communities.

**Ana Luísa Melo Ferreira** emphasizes that Brazilian higher education and scientific production were, historically, spaces destined to a privileged white elite. However, a new decolonial indigenous intellectual current emerges to reveal other valid ways of knowing. She analyses the role of indigenous participation in academic scientific production and how recent initiatives - such as the Bibliography of Indigenous Publications of Brazil - contribute to rescuing their self-esteem and culture valorization.

Essays and an article response compose the last section of this Special Issue. In a compelling piece, **Kevin Cataldo** reflects on how identifying the oppressor within helped him create new forms to decolonize his pedagogy, using his experiences as a historically marginalized individual of color. **Minoli Wijetunga** explores the hegemonic nature of Comparative and International Education knowledge production, offering a critical analysis of definitions within the field and the speeches of former CIE Society presidents delivered over a decade apart. Two Freirean concepts-critical consciousness and critical thinking-become central in the discussion presented by **Elizabeth Robinson** and **Curt Rhodes** on the non-formal education program designed for youth in Jordan. Considering personal experiences as an Iraqi at Oxford University, **Mariam Hassoum** draws on her identity and what it represents for her educational trajectory in a place where, not long ago, students like her did not belong. **Anisa Bora**, **Grace Choi**, **Thomonique Moore**, **Rongwei Tang**, and **Claire Yiming Zheng** discuss digital technology as a channel of art activism to address issues pertinent to students and their communities. They propose the ART of Inequality, a curriculum that combines social justice and art activism. Lastly, **Peter**

## *Editorial Introduction*

**Simpson** offers a response to Will Foley's article published in CICE's 2021 Winter Issue, suggesting that more can be achieved if decolonial critiques and critical pedagogy are applied to the field of human rights education.

This Special Issue calls attention to the diversity in the field of Comparative and International Education and the multiple ways in which education and knowledge production comprise realities produced within power dynamics and various social, political, cultural, and economic contexts. The collection of articles contributes to our understanding of distinct layers of complexity in education matters. At the same time, it opens a window of opportunities for us to identify possibilities in educational theory and practice. We on the editorial team hope that these debates represent one of the precious lessons Freire taught us: liberating knowledge emerges from the hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other.

**Marcella Winter** is a doctoral fellow in the International and Comparative Education program at Teachers College, Columbia University, and the editor-in-chief of *Current Issues in Comparative Education* (CICE). Email: [md3809@tc.columbia.edu](mailto:md3809@tc.columbia.edu). For CICE-related matters, please contact [cice@tc.columbia.edu](mailto:cice@tc.columbia.edu).