

# Decolonizing Philosophies of Education

Ali A. Abdi (Ed.)



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**Edited by**

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Any book comes out of collective efforts that are undertaken by many people; the present work is no exception. The original idea of the book came out of my own discontent with the lack of available responses to the dominant constructions of knowledge that are extensively informed by the European colonial project which, among many other things, gave us the problematic inheritance of learning systems and structures that were not designed or undertaken for any liberatory purposes that affirm the identity, aspirations and/or the overall subjectivities of people. With this, I started writing an article which intended to challenge colonial philosophies and epistemologies vis-à-vis the African world. With that in place, I have decided to expand the project into a small reader that includes the topical understanding of other scholars who could contribute to the creation of a more robust project that could achieve some multi-centric deconstructions of the dominant epistemic and epistemological locations of learning and social well-being. It was with this in mind, that I invited the contributors who were very generous with their responses and have eventually given us the present book. I thank them for their excellent contributions and efforts. I am also grateful for the outstanding editing, formatting and indexing skills of Maria Veronica Caparas of the University of Alberta's Department of Educational Policy Studies whose graduate research assistantship with me was instrumental in completing the work. Finally, I would to thank Peter de Liefde, Michel Lokhorst and Bernice Kelly of Sense publishers for their support and patience.





ALI A. ABDI

CHAPTER 1

## DECOLONIZING PHILOSOPHIES OF EDUCATION: AN INTRODUCTION

The experiences of colonialism, in their psycho-cultural, educational, philosophico-epistemological and social development dimensions have been extensive, and with respect to the lives of the colonized, severely limiting in their onto-existential locations and outcomes. I will not go more than warranted into detail in terms of the immediate and enduring impact of this heavy world phenomenon on the immediate lived contexts of the colonized. It was, *ipso facto*, intensive, extensive, formative and undoubtedly deformative in relation to the hitherto globalizing interactions that have become the derivatives of such experience. And while the focus of this book should not be detached from that, it should also partially aim to problematize and interrogate the potentially misnamed postcolonial outcomes of colonial education and how that needs to be decolonized in contemporary spaces of learning, teaching and human well-being.

For a powerful critical history of colonialism, and to interact with a more than skin deep conjecture of the fateful story, which due to the endurance of its projects and their outcomes, we must continue researching and debating, one should consult the brilliant disquisitions of, inter alia, Chinua Achebe (1994 [1958], 2000), Frantz Fanon (1967, 1968); Julius Nyerere (1968), Aimé Césaire (1972), Edward Said (1978, 1993), Walter Rodney (1982), Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986, 2009), Albert Memmi (1991 [1965]), Ivan van Sertima (1991), Charles Mann (1996), Ranajit Guha (1998), Eduardo Galeano (1997, 2010), Ashis Nandy (1997, 2009), and Marie Battiste (1998, 2000). These writers have both vertically and horizontally dissected the program of colonialism at the very important cultural, educational and by extension, mental colonization levels which are seemingly more enduring and will take more time to heal than any physically ascribed subjugations that might fade away from memory, and unlike the former, might not be inter-generationally inherited. Indeed Memmi, in his excellent work, *The colonizer and the colonized* (1991 [1965]), narrates the long-term outcomes of the extensively unequal colonial relationships where eventually 'the concerned creatures' actually

collaborate in the tormenting of one of them (i.e., the colonized); that is, the relationship is naturalized via the mental domination of the colonized who comes to believe in the ‘naturalness’ of his/her subordination. And it is *à traverse* my firm belief of the inter-generationality of colonizing educational and cultural contexts, that the present work was proposed. It is also via this understanding that critical anti-colonial scholars must oppositionally interact with the dangerously benign, actually banal locations and relocations of postcolonialism/postcoloniality. Here, the temporal representations of the ‘post’ must be corrected as not indicating the end of colonialism, especially in its more powerful deformations of the mind, but as providing a critical space for re-evaluating the continuities of colonialism in contexts and themes that are more stealth, and therefore, even occasionally more dangerous than what has happened previously.

As many observers should have witnessed, the disciplinary emergence of postcolonial studies and its remarkable growth as an important sub-discipline in select areas of educational and social sciences research in the past 25 or so years, cannot escape from some presumption that we may be nearing the end of the multiple constructions of colonialism as well colonial structures of knowledge, knowing and being. But as it especially applies to the practical formations of ideas and knowledge, such understanding should be replete with errors and relational weaknesses. For starters, colonialism in its psychological, educational, cultural, technological, economic and political dimensions has not been cleansed from all of its former colonies and colonized spaces. So much so that in schooling and attached social development platforms, the way of the colonial is not only still intact, it actually assumes the point of prominence in almost all transactions that affect the lives of people. And it is even more complicated than that. With the identity and attached psychosomatic deformations of the colonized, long ago damaged self esteem and self efficacy platforms are not still healed, and as Taylor (1995) so cogently noted, the potential for self and social development among the misrecognized and the mislabeled are difficult and not attainable without massive reconstructions of what was lost.

Among the most potent elements of the deformative processes was colonial education, which in the African context, for example, assured, not only the supremacy of European languages and epistemologies, but as well, the horizontal inferiorization of African worldviews, epistemic locations, styles of expression and forms of description (Achebe, 2000, wa Thiongo, 1986, 2009). Moreover, the whole knowledge and learning traditions of oral societies were derided as backward, ineffective and unacceptable in the new modalities of colonial relationships (Abdi, 2007b). In his magisterial work, *How Europe underdeveloped Africa*, Rodney (1982) describes how, with the imposition of alien colonial education and ways of knowing, native people were suddenly detached from pre-colonial educational systems that represented and reflected their histories, cultures,

languages and actual needs. Clearly, the new learning arrangements, with their ontologically deforming intentions and outcomes, were not conducive to the well-being of peoples and their communities, but effectively served the interests of the colonizing entity, which was bent on maximizing the dehumanizing exploitation of everything that represented the lives of the colonized.

Interestingly, the first colonial shots at the minds and corps of the to-be-colonized in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, were not launched by colonial administrators and soldiers, but by the *grandi literati* of the European intellectual space. The reasons here should not be too complicated to comprehend. As we should know, colonialism was first and foremost, psycho-cultural and educational. It was, indeed, after these critical points of conquest that it spread into the technological, political and economic domains of domination. That, even when those who do not systematically study colonialism generally see it as entirely economic, purposefully followed by the political, which serves as the administrative branch for the former. By making such innocent but dangerous assumption, one misreads the main point of the story. To subjugate people, willfully rob their resources, de-ontologize the main fabrics of their being, and eventually achieve the above mentioned naturalness of the project which convinces the oppressed to voluntarily partake in the de-centering of their world, an organized mental de-patterning must take place, and beyond what is done to the indigenous people, the implementers of the project must also be psycho-culturally deconstructed. That is, colonial agents must be convinced that the people they are about to colonize, oppress and exploit are fit to be treated as such. And in an epoch when the word of national philosophers and prominent social thinkers weighed so much, it was no wonder that these men were good at fabricating heresies about peoples they did not know, lands they have never visited and contexts they were not willing to interact with. Needless to add that the case was actually so much more than a favourite past time of scribbling falsified platitudes about Africans, Asians and others. Colonialism, from the European perspective, was essentially an economic survival at a time when old economies were failing, unemployment was rampant and social unrest was expanding in much of the continent. As I have written earlier (Abdi, 2002), even Cecil Rhodes who gained so much from colonialism including the grandiose achievement of naming two countries after himself, was aware of the expanding European crises and urged his English government to hasten and enlarge the processes as well as the magnitude of colonization. In speaking about an Africa he never saw and might have only instantly contemplated about, one of the so-called giants of European philosophy G.W.F. Hegel (1965), who is credited with revolutionizing philosophical discourses in his time with important works on ethics and freedom, prophesied about a continent and its peoples by somehow concluding that it was a space populated by a childish race that needed to be colonized. Others, such as the

quintessential philosopher of the enlightenment, Immanuel Kant equated blackness with lower intelligence (Eze, 1997), and one English man, Thomas Hobbes was sure that non-Europeans were not capable of achieving anything in letters and art.

About 400 years before Hegel's time, the physical and mental colonizations of the indigenous peoples of the Americas were in full force. As in later times, the onslaught was multi-phase: forceful subjugation, enslavement, cultural and educational domination including the debasing (indeed, outright denial) of the natives' achievement in agriculture, urban engineering and the art of governance, which according to Charles Mann (2006), were in many ways, superior to anything that was achieved in contemporary European cities. There again, de-philosophizing the psycho-cultural plateaus of peoples' lives was essential to multi-directionally justify their extensive chattel-ization. As Alain de Botton (2002) noted, the practice of denying even the humanness of native peoples in the Americas was propagated at the highest levels of the colonial order where doctors and priests justified the dehumanization of millions of individuals who were enfranchised citizens before the triumph of the Spanish and Portuguese conquistadores. In the case of Asia, on the other hand, Thomas Macaulay's (1995 [1935]) Englishization and anglicization of Indians was not only interesting, it might have actually achieved its intentions. As Ranajit Guha (1998) noted, the major component of the Indian sub-continent's colonization project rested on extensive cultural hegemony. This would be true of almost all colonial contexts, which should justify the needed emphasis on the historical, cultural and philosophical constructions of colonialism, which then critically locates the theme as well as the attached intellectual responses contained in this work.

#### DECOLONIZING PHILOSOPHIES OF EDUCATION

Philosophies of education generally focus on the rationale as well as the reasonableness of learning programs that are specific to historical and geographical locations. Clearly, these should not be the monopoly of any group, region or continent. But the de-philosophization of colonized populations rested on a premise that certified the idea and practical outcomes as requiring higher levels of organized thinking that was propagated as particular to the West. Interestingly, on cannot and should not disengage from the reality that all societies including those in traditional, pre-colonial contexts, designed their education on thoughtful, analytical trajectories that defined and justified this education as socially important, culturally and linguistically viable, and capable of ameliorating the livelihood of its recipients. Without that fact, these communities would have managed their situations successfully and would not have achieved functioning ecological relationships for thousands of years. As I have argued elsewhere (Abdi, 2007a), if there is one disciplinary space where quasi-equitable epistemic

perspectives could be claimed by peoples in different parts of the world, it is the constructions of the philosophical and its educational fragments and platforms.

That being as it should, it is also the case in most contemporary, so-called postcolonial spaces of education and schooling, the native elite has failed in deconstructing colonial philosophies and epistemologies of education, and has not done much in reconstructing indigenous systems that affirm the identities as well as the existentialities of the populace. Indeed, this should be one of the biggest plunders of the story, and undoubtedly, a major trigger point for the currently disturbed contours of social development in many corners of our world. In speaking about social development, which for me represents all forms of human well-being including the economic, the political, the educational, the cultural, the technological and the emotional, one has to insert a point of caution: previously colonized spaces are fully incorporated into the current world system, and are not necessarily seeking a disengagement from it, they have to survive within its boundaries, but with a more decolonizing agency that gives them the capacity to shape some of the interactions that should be salient in the context. And with education having a direct effect on the conditionalities of human well-being (income, employment, access to health care, food security, viable shelter, reliable transportation, etc.), the prominence of learning systems that do not disenfranchise (as colonial education and its postcolonial progenitor have been doing), but affirm the lives as well as the needs of people, have become the sine qua non of inclusive human progress.

In addition, the conventions of social development must themselves be subjected to critical inquiries where as the late Claude Ake (1996) said, these must not be imported in pre-packaged formats which have been the main reason so much of the endeavor has failed. It also central to note that with formal education having some relationship with positive forms of social development, a decolonizing philosophy of education that leads to decolonized platforms of learning, should also instigate decolonized platforms of development. In addition, the book's focus actually aims to have a global resonance, and despite the crucial discussions on the opposing geographies of the colonizer and the colonized, decolonizing philosophies of education are also needed in today's so-called liberal democracies where schools and informal forums of learning such as media impose colonizing cultural capitals on different minority groups who via such exclusions, might disengage from productive citizenship, and cannot, in the process, access the constructive outcomes of the educational and social well-being projects. Once again, the problems are philosophical, epistemological, and, by extension, can become onto-existentially debilitating.

The observational twinning of the philosophical and the epistemological is deliberate. That is, as worldviews and their thought systems are established, they spawn out clusters of situationally located knowledge possibilities and ways of

knowing, which then shape learning systems that can enhance people's locations vis-à-vis their points of eco-cultural significance. As such, it is important to counter, at least at the descriptive and analytical levels which are initially responsible for the formative stages of the philosophical and the epistemological, the continuities of colonially based education and attached ways of reading and relating to the world. And with that, it is important to establish a body of anti-colonial criticisms and deconstructionist notations that hasten the now incomplete processes of epistemic decolonization, which could slowly liberate spaces and intersections of learning and social progress. It is in the spirit as well as the praxis of this important decolonizing project, therefore, that chapters in this book were put together, with the select objective of **a)** revaluing indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing, **b)** minimizing the negative impact of the still ongoing deculturing schemes of education (in both general and specialized terms) that permeate the lives of people, and **c)** contributing to the beginnings of non-alienating schemes of learning possibilities, both internationally and within specific national spaces, that are historically interrogating and authentic, culturally enriching and developmentally empowering.

But the task is not easy, for the organized processes of mental colonization (Nandy, 1997), are constructed in ways that unite strong trajectories of living and being which eventually affirm their durability. It is with this crucial understanding and attachable extensive counter-hegemonic discursive formations that the cure for the still colonizing master-narratives has to be comprehensive, of high dosage and tempo-spatially responsive. It is also with this in mind that the different chapters engage, from different angles and emphasis, in what might actually be seen as a new *court de guerre*, the problematic fabrications of knowledge methodologies, and from the opposing side, the historically interventionist works of cognitive decolonization thinkers, complemented by the analytical reclaiming of geographies and spaces of knowledge and knowing, which should facilitate the critical recasting of minority and gender representations, as well as the re-reading of the enduring legacies of science and mathematics education.

#### ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

Besides this introductory chapter, there are 11 other chapters in the book. In chapter two, '*Discursive epistemologies by, for and about the decolonizing project*', Paul Carr and Gina Thésée discuss the importance of epistemology, which is connected to political literacy and *conscientization*, as was charted in the work of the Brazilian philosopher Paulo Freire, with the central aim of understanding the salience of colonialism at a time when there is a *de facto* official recognition of de-colonization. They note, the formal, structural crassness and de-humanization involved in literally controlling countries from afar, as part of the

center-periphery dynamic that has been discussed in the works of major dependency theorists such as Andre Gunder Frank, Samir Amin and others. As has been extensively analyzed by these and other writers, the formations of the centre-periphery dichotomies (and all their subordinated and oppressive educational outcomes) were not of accidental formations, but were deliberately set up so as to sustain levels of interdependency that actually developed the West, while underdeveloping the rest.

In chapter three, *'Decolonizing social justice education: from policy knowledge to citizenship action'*, Lynette Shultz starts with how she has realized in the past few years that the theme of "social justice education" has become visible in more than few progressive education journals and meetings that resisted the neoliberalization and globalization of education and policy. Over time, however, she notes, she has started to worry about what it means that social justice is declared from such disparate places as conservative government education documents, activist networks, international institutions, and even from the offices of few corporations that name social justice in their efforts to project images of sustainability. She adds that while the whole thing might suggest that it is best to abandon the term and look for another signifier for citizens' attempts to overturn systems and practices of injustice, she chooses to argue that the power of "social justice" as a container for centuries of wisdom, activism, and social transformation should be reclaimed and restored for these purposes. To deal with these potentially contradictory pointers and issues, Shultz attempts to locate social justice education in a way that might help practitioners, policy makers, and academics claim it for the generative and regenerative work that will improve the lives of the many who continue to suffer through poverty, racism, patriarchy's sexism, and other exclusions. In chapter four, *'Nyerere's postcolonial approach to education'*, Peter Mayo examines the educational program of Tanzania's first postcolonial President and philosopher-statesman, Julius Nyerere. Despite all his detractors, notes Mayo, Nyerere was one of Africa's most celebrated leaders, mainly because he dared envision a different educational and development trajectory for his country and for Sub-Saharan Africa at large. Nyerere was not willing to absolve colonialism of the ills it imposed on the African person, its deliberate destruction of people's learning and related life systems, and the desire of former colonizers to install their control over the existences of supposedly independent African countries. As noted in the chapter, one area where Nyerere's achievements are prominent is education; he believed in a new type of education that affirms African ways of living, and as is explicated in his well-known essay, 'Education for self-reliance', promotes equality, sharing of resources, and the end of exploitation.

In chapter five, *'Tagore and education: gazing beyond the colonial cage'*, Ratna Ghosh, M. Ayaz Naseem and Ashok Vijn attempt to capture some aspects of the Indian thinker, poet and Nobel Laureate, Rabindranath Tagore's philosophy of



education including those bearing on education in the colonial India of his time. As noted here, the outlooks he expounded on, led the educated classes of British India of his time to think and act outside the shackles of colonialism. To discuss this, his educational philosophy and practice is outlined by delineating its liberating influence on the evolution of educational thought in colonial India at that time. The authors state that Tagore's four pillars of his concept of education were: nationalist traditions; syntheses of Western and Eastern strands of philosophy; science and rationality in approach; and an international and cosmopolitan outlook. In addition, the original way in which Tagore interwove these various strands to expound a system of free and creative enquiry that gazed beyond the shackles of colonialism in India was unique, and his manner of liberating the mind and the people through this approach to education and learning is outlined. The sixth chapter is interrogatively entitled, '*Decolonizing diaspora: whose traditional land are we on?*' Here, Celia Haig-Brown considers the possibility of decolonizing discourses of diaspora, and to do so, asks not only where people of the diaspora come *from*, but where have they come *to*? She notes how in North America, nations have been superimposed on Indigenous lands and peoples through colonization and domination. By taking this relation seriously in the context of discourses of race, indigeneity and diaspora within university classrooms, one interrupts business as usual and promises a richer analysis of one's particular similarity amongst diasporic, as well as settler groups in North America with possible implications beyond this context. In short, the author asks readers to respond to the question, "Whose traditional land are you on? as a step in the long process of decolonizing our countries and our lives." While part of the focus for this paper is on theorizing diaspora, there are obvious implications for all people living in a colonized country. Drawing primarily on three pedagogical strategies and events arising from them, Haig-Brown takes up some of the possibilities for the theory-building they suggest. To do so, she engages select reflections on courses taught, student feedback and textual representations from Toni Morrison's *Playing in the Dark* to James Clifford's "Indigenous Articulations", which all ground the discussion.

In chapter seven, '*Forts, colonial frontier logics, and Aboriginal-Canadian relations: imagining decolonizing educational philosophies in Canadian contexts*', Dwayne Donald explores possibilities for the decolonization of Aboriginal-Canadian relations in educational contexts, with a specific focus on curricular and pedagogical considerations. He notes that the significance of colonialism, as a social, cultural, and educative force, has not yet been meaningfully contemplated in Canadian educational contexts. For the most part, the average Canadian citizen comprehends colonialism as something that happened elsewhere, like Africa or Asia, a long time ago. This disposition, Donald notes, is symptomatic of a deeply learned habit of disregarding the experiences and memories of Aboriginal peoples of Canada. This habitual disregard of Aboriginal peoples stems from the colonial

experience and is perpetuated in the present educational context as a curricular and pedagogical logic of naturalized separation based on the assumption of stark, and ultimately irreconcilable differences. As the author says, the overriding assumption at work in this logic is that Aboriginal peoples and Canadians inhabit separate realities, and the intention is to deny relationality. In chapter eight, *'The Problem of fear enhancing inaccuracies of representation: Muslim male youths and western media'*, Dolana Mogadime, Sherry Ramrattan Smith & Alexis Scott discuss how in the Western world, there is an ongoing colonization of Muslim male youths' representations, where without their voice and knowledge, they are routinely portrayed as a threat to national security. In so doing, the popular press serves as the main vehicle for reproducing assumptions about Muslim youths as potential terrorists. The authors argue for the use of critical discourse analysis (CDA) in critiquing the popular print media's distorted representation of Muslim youths as troubled and violent. In searching the keywords *'Muslim, youth'* and *'Muslim, youth and alienation'* among international daily, weekly and monthly newspapers and magazines, Mogadime, Ramrattan and Scott coded and analyzed 100 articles to arrive at an understanding of common language use to describe Muslim youths. When imploring CDA, they asked questions such as who are the voices of authority that are given credibility in discussions of Muslim youth, alienation, and national security issues? From there, the authors present the counter narratives of the everyday life of Muslim youths who are striving to exercise their rights to live as democratic responsible citizens and as contradictions to a fear enhancing popularized public image. Drawing from a research project based in a Southern Ontario school, they juxtapose the life of Muslim youths with the image in the popular press in ways that call for a critical re-examination of the representation of Muslim youths in public forums.

In chapter nine, *'Clash of dominant discourses and African philosophies and epistemologies of education: anti-colonial analyses'*, I examine the hastened and arbitrary constructions of Africa in the philosophical, educational and by extension epistemological traditions of the West. As I relay them here, these constructions are problematic, both descriptively and analytically and mainly based on misguided colonial assumptions that are fundamentally standing on very shaky epistemic platforms. As such, these are contrasted with the realities of African philosophies and ways of learning, and via these critical re-locations, the chapter attempts to dismantle those hollow European fabrications about Africa, attempting to reconstruct in the process, counter-colonialist discursive and learning reflections and their possible practices, which together affirm both the historical and actual viability of African thought systems of philosophies of education. In chapter 10, *'Gender equity in Africa's institutions of tertiary education: beyond access and representation'*, Philomina Okeke-Ihejirika attempts to analyze and extend the debate on African's women's participation in tertiary education beyond the

persistent appeals for equal representation across the disciplines, and in the proportion of teaching and administrative staff. The chapter begins with a brief review of the reasons advanced by those who advocate African women's access to and representation in tertiary education. It also takes a cursory look at African women's progress at this level, highlighting the barriers they face. The author's primary purpose, however, is to explore the ideological content of African women's training, and the various ways it might be implicated in the struggle to achieve gender equity at the tertiary level. As Okeke-Ihejirika, less attention has been paid to women as products of a training that should improve their economic status as well as bargaining power to participate in social transformation. Perhaps as a reminder that women will only be empowered when they lead the initiative themselves, the author ends her discussion with a section entitled, 'A challenge to African female academics and administrators.' In chapter 11, '*Are we there yet? Theorizing a decolonizing science education for development in Africa*', Edward Shizha explores ways and means of decolonizing science education, and discusses social and cognitive significance for a decolonizing paradigm and how it may benefit the African student and the African community. As he notes, the debate regarding the relationship between science and development, and the role of indigenous knowledges in Africa is very controversial. Arguments for or against the use of indigenous knowledge in science or regarding indigenous sciences are informed by what is perceived as the appropriateness or inappropriateness of indigenous perspectives and epistemologies in science education and development. The author states how those scholars who are rooted in Eurocentric definitions of science and development do not authenticate indigenous sciences nor do they see any validation of the sciences or knowledges in bringing about "modernization" and scientific well-being. Shizha adds that in order to achieve decolonization in African science classes, we need to approach education from an antiracist and anti-colonial perspective; it was the case and continues to be the case that colonial and racial perspectives on Africa misconstrued Africa as a continent without science.

In chapter 12, '*Critical curriculum renewal: The character of school mathematics in Uganda*', Immaculate Namukasa, Janet Kaahwa, Madge Quinn and Ronald Ddungu discuss how the government of Uganda, in partnership with bilateral and multilateral agencies, is currently expanding the education system, which was inherited from colonialist Great Britain, through programs such as privatization. But most of these programs, they note, are focusing on improved access and management of education, with minimal development of curriculum taking place. As such, it becomes crucial for the authors to examine the character of the Ugandan school curriculum, taking the case of school mathematics - a subject that, besides languages, is allocated a high mean percentage total of instructional time in the world. This examination of the struggles, successes and failures of school mathematics

education is put into the contexts of the country's education, the country's history and mathematics education in a globalized world. The methodology utilizes document research techniques of Ugandan curriculum documents. The examination draws attention to how complex relationships between historical, socio-economic and political contexts shape school curricula. With these realities, the authors state that the character of school mathematics education in Uganda exemplifies curricula in several developing countries whose development has for a long time been marginalized by economic and political decisions.

In its entirety, therefore, the central objective of this book should not be limited to posing effective intellectual challenges against European philosophies and epistemes, but as well, to provide timely inclusive ways of going beyond the monocentricity of official discourses, thus aiming for the critical construction of new epistemic formations that are not *a priori* anti-anybody, but want to affirm the collective credit that should be given to all humanity in the across-millennia constitution of philosophies, knowledges and socially located epistemologies.

As such, the chapters in this book, should minimally achieve a critical re-examination, indeed, analytical recasting of both current and historical intersections that explain the locations, descriptions and operationalizations of general learning platforms, educational philosophies and attachable possibilities of social well-being that constructively or otherwise interact with the lives of diverse populations across the globe. With the longue durée outcomes of colonial psychologizations and de-culturalizations, it should always be the right time to seek out and establish new decolonizing trajectories that affirm the onto-epistemological and philosophico-pedagogical liberations that can reconstruct the learning structures that re-affirm the right identity and intentions for all those who aspire to benefit from them. As some of the most prominent philosophers of education including John Dewey, Paulo Freire and the two treated in this volume, Rabindranath Tagore and Julius Nyerere have pointed out in their scholarly and working lives, one cannot achieve identity liberation and social development in alienating systems of schooling.

It is based on such understanding that re-doing contemporary realities of education for the subjective freeing of the colonized, can achieve the inclusive existential grounding that also enlists the intellect as well as the constructive fragments that come for perennially colonizing clusters of knowledge and learning. As I have written previously (Abdi, 2002), the new decolonizing alignments (in these post-facto intermeshed world 'ecologies') cannot aim for the deliberate delinking of world knowledges and educational systems from each other, from the perspective of the philosophico-epistemologically colonized, the immediate possibility of re-enfranchising suppressed epistemes and ways of knowing, complemented by how these locate history, culture, social and physical environments and the encircling social contexts that create, define and use them,

with what is useful and relevant from dominant Western learning systems, thus establishing a co-created schooling/educational arrangements and outcomes that can achieve actual and tangible well-being for all.

Needless to add that this book cannot and should not achieve some stand-alone deconstructions of the epistemically colonizing edifice, and could only serve as one small step to re-write the topographies of the story, which can contrapuntally interrogate the problematic postcolonial status quo, thus disturbing the structural as well as the functional coherence of official knowledges and learning discourses and their selectively dysfunctional scribbling of totalizing Eurocentric metanarratives. It is via this objective that the anti-colonial projects (in its many forms including that which opposes what may be selectively termed as 'postcolonial internal colonization' of certain groups) contained in the following pages would be situated, in re-calibrated descriptive and analytical constructions, some miles beyond what that brilliant student of colonialism Frantz Fanon would have described in his classic, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1968), as the conventionally incomprehensible and rationalist trajectory-deprived noises which were induced, in the first place, via the maddening and methodical projects of the colonizer. They should, in these first years of the third millennium, , represent a little bit more sinister (perhaps trickster) discursive insurgency that achieves a deliberate clash with colonial and conformist postcolonial discourses, thus potentially reconstructing something that is onto-existentially, educationally, developmentally and therefore, practically more enriching and more liberating.

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## DECOLONIZING PHILOSOPHIES OF EDUCATION

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CHAPTER 2

**DISCURSIVE EPISTEMOLOGIES BY, FOR AND  
ABOUT THE DE-COLONIZING PROJECT**

Although colonialism is generally thought of to be buried in the past, similar to the mainstream pop-culture mantra that we are now in a post-racial society because of the election of an African-American president in the US, it is clear that our realities, experiences and minds have been shaped by the platform of centuries of colonial exploitation and degradation (Galeano, 1973). With a handful of White, European-centered countries—predominantly England, France, Spain, Portugal and the United States—having spread their hegemonic reach around the world, centuries later we are saddled with tangible, entrenched political and educational systems, languages and cultures, religious traditions, and economic processes that were, in general, forcibly imposed to ensure a regime of domination (McLaren, 2005). The long-lasting assault on indigenous peoples, as a result, has been substantial, with some viewing it as nothing short of genocide (Churchill, 1998). What do we believe to be true, and why do we believe in these truths, and not others? Epistemology, ultimately, can help us understand the perseverance of colonialism (Kincheloe, 2008b). Whether or not we believe that colonialism was as deleterious and far-reaching, or, conversely, not as debilitating and entrenched as many argue, has some connection to the critical historical, philosophical and political contours shaping today's realities. Have we witnessed a veritable de-colonization, or are we simply ensconced in a more sophisticated process of re-colonization?

This chapter discusses the importance of epistemology, which is connected to political literacy and *conscientization*, as Freire (1973/2005) would put it, in understanding the salience of colonialism at a time when there is a *de facto* official recognition of de-colonization. The formal, structural crassness and de-humanization involved in literally controlling countries from afar, part of the center-periphery dynamic that Gunder Frank (1979) elaborated on, has been nuanced in a legal sense. Yet, the reality of their being a *developed* North and *under-developed* South speaks to the (semi)permanent legacy of colonialism.



In its enhanced state, whereby mass migration, intolerably high levels of poverty, comparatively weaker prospects for gainful employment, burgeoning military conflict, and pervasive instability, characterized by rampant corruption and political nepotism, are a reality for much of the previously colonized world, could we realistically speak of the end of colonization (Chomsky, 2007; Chossudovsky, 2003)?

For this chapter, we start with a vignette related to a conference organized by a French-language, European, intercultural research association that took place in Brazil in 2009. We then elaborate on the epistemology of identity, ethics and politics, providing arguments to buttress our contention that de-colonization does not signify an end to human suffering, but, rather, pushes us into other, complex, equally problematic spheres of inequitable power relations. Next, we discuss briefly the conceptualization of the environment within an epistemological framework, highlighting some of the concerns related to hegemonic control over the *developing*, formerly colonized world. We end with a discussion of the potential for epistemological liberation through critical pedagogy as a means to establishing a more tangible de-colonization.

#### A VIGNETTE ON THE END OF COLONIZATION

Intercultural relations are, arguably, at the base of humanity. The world is filled with different languages, cultures, ethnicities, religions, races, orientations, and diverse identities. If we are not to understand, appreciate, and seek meaningful engagement and solidarity with the *other*, then what would be the (il)logical outcome? The devastating wars, conflicts, racism, hatred, xenophobia and despair that have characterized human civilization? Within distinct geographic and cultural zones, diverse peoples must reconcile differences based on *lived experiences* resulting from the social construction of identity. For instance, simply because someone is American does not mean that there may not be enormous cultural differences in the way that this individual has experienced American life, especially when one thinks of race, class and gender. Moreover, the world has been continually re-made through mass migration, which further concerns about identity, values, power and change (Macedo and Gounari (2006) speak of the “globalization of racism”. Every nation has some level of heterogeneous pluralism woven into its tapestry. When one considers how colonial regimes de-based local, indigenous languages, cultures, and traditions through forcible and sophisticated forms of enslavement, domination and oppression, it is not difficult to appreciate why intercultural relations should be a necessary and meaningful part of any society, educational system and political discourse.

Thus, with the backdrop presented above, we would like to briefly illustrate an example of how contentious and problematic intercultural relations can be,

even amongst those who have a particular specialization in the area, and who, equally, are committed to more fulsome, productive and tangible connections between peoples at several levels. We have been involved in the French language *Association pour la recherche interculturelle* (ARIC/Association for Intercultural Research) for the past several years (Carr since 2005, and Thésée since 2000) as researchers, collaborators, conference organizers and members of the 22-member international executive. In the past few years, we have attended conferences in Algeria, Romania, Italy, and twice in Brazil. Before these conferences, all previous meetings were held in (French-speaking) Europe, where ARIC was founded twenty-five years ago. ARIC offers a forum for the international community to its work, scholarship and activism in relation to intercultural relations (in French) with major conferences every other year, interspersed with colloquia on alternate years. With members from over forty countries, including much of the French-speaking world, ARIC has represented a unique and important forum to establish contacts, disseminate research, and to, importantly, seek to resolve problems and issues. There are many English-language and international intercultural relations associations, and the typical problem of how to co-exist in the other language is probably one of the guiding reasons behind the establishment and continuation of a uniquely francophone association. Anyone familiar with Canadian politics will understand how it is not necessarily a seamless venture to create national associations, policies, practices, etc. when considering which language, and, therefore, which culture, will predominate.

For the past five years, there have been discussions at ARIC's conferences and colloquia about "opening up" discussions, holding events outside of the traditional territory, and in engaging with colleagues from the *South*. At one level, in earlier formulations of intercultural relations, one common perception was that the problematic reposed squarely on the difficulty for Third World immigrants to assimilate into their new host countries. This psychological perspective has evolved, recognizing that an individual's integration into a society is also contingent on various extraneous and concrete factors outside of one's control, such as racism, intercultural acceptance, educational systems, support structures, and political climate, among others. As the debate within ARIC crossed over into a more centrally-focused analysis of broader, systemic issues, and this is not to infer that these matters were never dealt with before, members started to suggest that the conferences should take place in diverse locations so as to meet with colleagues and others in unique intercultural environments. A decision was made to hold the 2009 congress in Florianapolis, Brazil, under the stewardship of the recently elected President, Reinaldo Fleuri, a distinguished professor at the Universidade federal de Santa Catarina, the host-university for this event. The title of the conference, which signalled an important shift in the evolution of ARIC,

*was Dialogues Interculturels: décoloniser le savoir et le pouvoir* (Intercultural dialogues: Decolonising knowledge and power).

Traditionally, conferences for ARIC are frequented by 400 to a thousand participants, almost all of whom are francophone, and the majority of whom are from Europe, with a good representation from French-speaking Canada as well. Few participants actually came from French-speaking African countries or other areas of the world, in large part, one could speculate, because of funding issues. Holding the 2009 event in Brazil would allow for a broad number of Latin Americans to attend the event. However, a first and fundamental issue/dilemma that arose related to the language of the conference. ARIC is a proud French-language organization, up until now publishing, communicating and having a presence only in French. A pivotal and critical question from an epistemological vantage-point relates to what we may not know or discuss because of linguistic barriers. Thus, from the outside as well as at the conference, with Latin America being populated with a couple of hundred million Spanish speakers, and Brazil, the host country, being home to almost 200 million Portuguese speakers, language became an issue. The conference mobilized some seven hundred participants, including a majority of roughly six hundred from Latin America, almost all of whom could not speak French. A vigorous debate ensued concerning the lack of translation and interpretation, which is costly, and requires technological support, and a high level of expertise to ensure that it is effective. Ultimately, intercultural participation was not always possible because of these linguistic barriers, and, sadly, almost all of the people attending the workshops and symposia in French were francophones, and vice versa for the sessions in Spanish and Portuguese (although Spanish and Portuguese are close enough whereby people can and did attend diverse sessions in the other language). Some people came away with the sense that there were two different conferences because of some innocuous but real issues related to linguistic domination.

Did all participants benefit from the numerous intercultural exchanges that took place before and after the formal part of the program, indeed the part of the conference that people long remember for the friendships, contacts and discussions that take place? Many did, and yet many, we submit based on discussions and observations, were left without the full enjoyment of knowing the *other*. The last general assembly had most of the Latino participants in the halls with the francophone ones on the inside where a retrospective of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Association was celebrated. In no way are we trying to diminish the experience of the conference, nor the efforts of the organizers or the people in attendance. We are simply exemplifying how the best of intentions by people focused on such matters as intercultural relations can face significant challenges, which speaks to the confluence of problems that can arise related to de-colonization

when one may underplay the intricate socio-linguistic, cultural, political, economic and epistemological details.

Another important issue at this conference related to the title and the focus. Latin Americans considered it an invitation to critique colonialism and the advent of de-colonization, especially in relation to indigenous peoples on the continent. Many of the plenary discussions were challenged by people in the audience. Perception, perspectives, experiences and narratives varied widely, as they should in an academic gathering, according to the location of the individual and group. How should people in the *North* talk about de-colonization, and should this differ while being in the *South*? Have people from the *North* already spoken too much, and should it now be time to listen? How can we advance intercultural relations without diminishing the *other*? One can see many valid vantage points from a range of groups involved in this conference: the organizers believed that "opening up" discussion would be a positive contribution and experience but they did not believe that the French-language character of ARIC would or should be challenged; Latin Americans believed that, especially since, comparatively speaking, there are fewer opportunities to meet with *Northern* colleagues in their territory, the conference could and should address the substantial harm caused by colonizing countries, both historically and in the present. How do we reconcile that our languages, cultures and identities have been fabricated over long periods of time, and that they are not neutral? Hegemonic forces conspire to give salience to what we know, why, and how it is considered valid and relevant.

At this conference, we were asked to deliver a keynote address, titled *Le tango épistémologique : Deux voix différentes dialoguent sur la décolonisation du savoir/pouvoir* (*The epistemological tango: Two different voices dialoguing on the decolonization of knowledge/power*), in which we spoke about the themes enunciated in this chapter. The reaction to our address was illuminating: while a few people asked questions during the allotted discussion period about why we were focusing on race, at least fifteen people, all of whom were "of color," came to the stage to embrace us afterwards. It would seem that the subject as well as the way that it was conceptualized had an impact for many of the people in attendance. Why? We were intrigued to learn more, especially since Brazil has been considered, at a pop-cultural level, to be a racially accepting society. Why were so many people "of color" interested in, in solidarity with, and compelled to voice support of a critiquing of the supposed end of colonialism while, simultaneously, our work was critiqued by many of the Europeans in attendance. One comment that arose from some (White) Europeans in attendance concerned whether or not we were presenting *scientific research*. Indeed, Carr (2006; Carr & Lund, 2009) has met a similar reaction to his work on Whiteness in North America on the part of Whites (at a National Association for Multicultural Education conference in Baltimore in 2007, one African-American participant to his session told him:

“your work is good, and we agree with you but do you think that Whites will buy into it?”).

In sum, this vignette of the French language intercultural conference held in Brazil dealing with de-colonizing knowledge and power demonstrates for us the deeply-entrenched meaning that is evident in the faces, hearts and minds of people around the world in relation to subjugations, oppression, domination and difference. To be indifferent, ignorant or openly disengaged is to accept the benefits and the *malheure* of inequitable power relations. Epistemological inquiry represents a way of seeking more constructive intercultural relations.

#### EPISTEMOLOGY AND IDENTITY, ETHICS AND POWER

A significant area of our research over the past several years has related to racism and social justice. Although we are leery of presenting ourselves in such stark silos of potentially deceptive confusion, Carr is a White, anglophone male of European origin from Toronto, and Thésée is a Black, francophone woman of Haitian origin from Montreal. It is necessary to state the obvious, while it clearly does not capture the more important aspects of culture, experience, ideology and engagement, because we have learned that who talks about what is often challenged based on who that person is. For example, a man speaking about women, or a Jew speaking about Muslims, or a Canadian speaking about aboriginal peoples can all conjure up certain values, prejudices and mythologies, rightly or wrongly. Carr has undertaken work on Whiteness for the past several years, and has found that White people are more apt to listen to a discourse on White power and privilege from a White person rather than a “person of color,” the latter term of which conjures up a certain normative value to begin with (“of color” in relation to what?). Thésée has worked with epistemological racism for a number of years, and has found that the very notion can be rejected based on the perception that it was developed by anglophones. Thus, as we attempted to exemplify in the vignette related to ARIC, language matters in relation to what we know, what we believe and what we can say in addition to what others believe to know about themselves and others.

Carr (2006) undertook a project on Whiteness with Darren Lund, who is also White, culminating in a book, *The great white north? Exploring whiteness, privilege and identity in education* (Carr & Lund, 2007a), which involved presentations, interviews, articles and other work, both inside and outside of the classroom. Our conceptualization of Whiteness includes the following (Carr, 2009; Carr & Lund, 2007a):

- Cultural conventions, literature (Babb, 1998), art and societal “metaphors, analogies, images, and cultural landmarks (that) all speak to the sanctity, beauty, and the hypnotic predominance of the colour white in the Western world. Not merely the opposite of black, white has been a signifier for global

racial supremacy—good against evil, lightness versus darkness, and benevolence over malevolence—and symbolizes cleanliness, kindness, serenity, and youth. White is associated with Europe the conqueror, while Black is inexorably fused to colonial notions of the ‘dark continent’ of Africa.” (Carr & Lund, 2007b, p. 9)

- There has been a long and virulent history of hate groups in North America (Kinsella, 2001; Daniels, 1997), with different manifestations elsewhere, which have emphasized erroneous notions of biological racial superiority, often based on xenophobic interpretations of Christianity, to justify violence and segregation against non-Whites.

- “Slavery, colonialism of First Nations and other peoples, neo-colonialism, imperialism, and a host of other political, economic, and cultural strategic manoeuvres and mindsets have all been buttressed by the grandiose conceptualization of the White man as morally enlightened” (Carr & Lund, 2007b, p. 9).

- The most abhorrent forms of human degradation perpetrated by Whites against “people of color,” especially aboriginals (Churchill, 1998) and Africans, have permanently scarred the human experience, and also, significantly led to what has been characterized as the colonization of the mind (Dei & Kempf, 2006).

- There have been numerous examples of White power and privilege in Canadian history pertaining to racist immigration policies toward the Chinese, the internment of Japanese-Canadians during World War Two, the razing of the African-Canadian section of Halifax (Nelson, 2002), and numerous other visible acts that have served to institutionalize discrimination with Canadian society (Henry & Tator, 2005).

- It is acknowledged that grasping with Whiteness is equally complex and problematic, and that many Whites may refute the very notion because they perceive no real advantage to being White (McIntosh, 1992), especially in light of longstanding conflicts between White racial groups (i.e., the French and the English in Canada, Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland, the Basques and the Spanish in Spain, and numerous other conflicts in Eastern Europe).

- The pervasive notions of meritocracy, individualism and a belief in political neutrality underpin an ideology of “color-blindness,” making it unacceptable for many to consider race as a meaningful concept in society (Carr, 2006; Dei, Karumanchery & Karumanchery-Luik, 2004). Yet, there is documented racism at multiple levels, and avoiding acknowledgement of this fact can lead to more entrenched discrimination.

- The obvious manifestations of racism in contemporary society, such as academic under-achievement for some minorities, under-representation of

“people of color” at the highest levels of government, business, the judiciary, the media, and key decision-making levels, higher rates of incarceration and poverty for aboriginals and African-Canadians, employment disadvantage despite higher levels of education for minorities, housing segregation, and a plethora of human rights issues, all point to the widespread influence of Whiteness (Fleras & Elliot, 2003; Boyko, 1998).

- Whiteness is still exemplified through intricate networks of social interaction, restrictive clubs, private schools, elite business circles, and other configurations that effectively keep people of color on the outside, explicitly or implicitly, overtly or covertly (Kincheloe, Steinberg, Rodriguez & Chennault, 1998).

- For many Whites, the notion of inter-racial marriage is still taboo, and one can also see racial segregation on the day of worship where churches remain largely segregated, exemplifying the stark reality of supposed “colorblindness” in multicultural nations like Canada.

Whiteness, as indicated in the title of the book, relates directly to power and privilege, and is not focused on guilt and shame. The intersecting reality of identity (one is never only a Black person, a woman, a Spaniard, a homosexual, etc.) nuances our understanding of Whiteness but the predominant influence of racialization as a fundamental organizing principle necessitates a critical and lucid examination into why and how Whites have, in a general sense, when considering history, laws, politics and economics, exempted themselves from the equation of being a full participant in the legacy and perpetuation of racism (Dei, Karumanchery & Karumanchery-Luik, 2004). The concept of being *color-blind* or now being in a *post-racial society* was most undoubtedly not advanced by people who are not White, those that Whites have labelled “of color.” If we are past, or are post, race, why are people’s experiences, based on race, so salient (for example, residential segregation, outcomes in education and the job-market, poverty levels, racist incidents, etc.) (Carr & Lund, 2007b)?

Thésée (2003, 2006) has undertaken research on the experiences of Blacks in education, especially in relation to the francophone context. She has encountered systemic and institutional layers of complexity that serve to justify and rationalize limited inclusion and responsibility in ensuring equitable outcomes for all groups in education, particularly with regards to racialized and marginalized communities.

In our work together, we have found that having different racial identities is an important symbol to discuss racism. Thésée’s work on epistemology and science education has provoked a number of reactions: first, there is opposition to her contention that positivism should be critiqued; second, there is criticism of her analysis that race and identity are not disconnected from science and science education; and, thirdly, there is concern over her argumentation around the notion that positivistic science has further entrenched the colonial project. As Carr (2006)

has found, Thésée (Carr & Thésée, 2008) has noted that the most vociferous challenges to her work come from White, European-origin scholars and educators.

Thésée (2006; Carr & Thésée, 2008) has developed a colonial resistance model as a means of seeking some form of veritable de-colonization. This model consists of the following features:

1) *Refuse*: Globally, this strategy is used to address the different discourses which are infused into the mind continuously in everyday life. These discourses present strong symbolic, implicit and explicit content. The symbolic content includes images, styles, attitudes or relations which fill the ordinary social environment with, for example, media and artistic productions.

2) *Re-questioning*: This strategy relates to new forms of questions to address issues of scientific knowledge. Re-questioning is similar to de-construction: the de-construction of the technocratic world, which asks mostly "how much," seeking the measurable goals in various situations. Re-questioning the "How," therefore, shatters the certainty and rigidity of methodologies by daring to structure procedures differently.

3) *Re-define*: There must be a re-definition of knowledge in all its dimensions that is social in nature: formal traits, aesthetics, choices, ethical values, and collective rituals. The formal traits of knowledge include concepts, basic principles, rules, laws and theories which have been formalized through periods of inert-subjectivity and broad consensus.

4) *Reaffirm*: To reaffirm the self is necessary in order to deviate from the pervasive Eurocentric view of others that one is inferior. Going further in the resistance process is supposed to affirm the collective self supported by all actors at all levels (societal, community, family and individuals of all ages).

Thésée (2006) concludes by emphasizing that:

The most important factor associated with the resilience of the persons in posttraumatic syndrome, as well as in school, is the positive support offered by a nurturing social environment which can buffer the trauma. Despite the impregnation of colonization through scientific knowledge, and despite the erosion of vernacular cultures (re)generated by people and nations, the hope for a meaningful resistance and resiliency is situated within the framework of understanding, meaning and empowering, which can be only achieved within a strong and supportive communitarian-based experience, and a strong racial socialization and identity (p. 40).

Therefore, a fundamental concern in relation to the epistemology of a de-colonized world is whether Whites, those largely of European origin, are proverbially "on the same page" as those most affected by colonialism. Similarly, how should we heal the wounds caused by colonialism? While those inhabiting the Earth today did not



directly cause colonialism, they have most definitely been the recipient of its legacy, including the benefits as well as the deficiencies that presently plague society. Should there be reparations to compensate those now toiling in poverty from centuries of colonialism? Should there even be a debate? How should we understand democracy in the *developed* world in spite of our relations with the *developing* world (Lund & Carr, 2008)? What do we know about how the colonized world was colonized? (For example, is there an understanding of the Berlin Treaty and the perverse division of Africa by European countries in 1895?) Thus, education, and we would argue, critical pedagogy (Freire, 1973/2005; Kincheloe, 2008a, 2008b; McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007) plays a substantial role in cultivating a critical interrogation of our epistemology, and must be factored into the mix as to how de-colonization is understood.

### *Epistemology and the Environment*

In order to further explicate our concern over how de-colonization may not have taken place in a comprehensive and socially just manner, we now introduce the theme of environmental destruction in relation to inequitable power relations and hegemonic forces, largely in favour of the North over the South. We highlight the domination of Whites over people “of color,” and present the concept of vulnerability. The connection to our subject of de-colonization is brought to light when considering that the harm caused by developed countries over developing countries is largely predictable and preventable. In sum, it is important to consider epistemological racism as a substantive factor in determining which regions, groups, and problems are considered ripe for military or economic destruction (Thésée & Carr, 2008).

In linking together the Vietnam War (1959-1975), Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans in 2005, the Iraq Wars (1991 and 2003-present), the 2006 Israeli invasion into Lebanon, the deplorable environmental degradation and impoverishment in Haiti as well as in many First Nations reserves in Canada and the US (see Thésée & Carr, 2008), we ask the following questions:

- Necessity (are our actions necessary?)
- Risks (do we evaluate the level of risk for our actions?)
- Predictability (do we know of the impact of our actions in advance?)
- Objective and result (do we achieve what we plan to achieve?)
- Costs and benefits (are we satisfied with the results of our actions?)
- Centrality of the environment (what is the place of the environment in our actions?)
- Vulnerability (who is the most affected by our actions?)
- Social justice (is social justice a part of our actions?)

Critical of the usage of military means as well as weakly constructed but forcefully implemented economic measures, we have found some common denominators:

- 1) people “of color” are generally the victims, and White people are generally the aggressors;
- 2) enormous environmental catastrophes are often over-looked because of hegemonic arguments that consist of vested interests, national security concerns, human rights and the “permanent war on terror” (McLaren, 2007);
- 3) the media are either complicit, ignorant and/or incapable of reporting on the reality of war, environmental devastation, and corruption within developed nations (Chomsky, 2007, 2008);
- 4) the notion of development is often usurped by thin arguments about democracy (Moyo, 2009);
- 5) the absence of a vigorous debate on the root causes of problems in the South as well as a negation of a link to colonialism (Thésée & Carr, 2008).

Thus, a more critical and fundamental process of epistemological interrogation, in and through education, can help us strive for more meaningful solutions to war, poverty and environmental destruction in which the poor are further punished for what the rich have done to advance wealth generation and hegemonic control of limited resources.

#### DISCUSSION: CRITICAL PEDAGOGY AS A MEANS TO FACILITATING DE-COLONIZATION

Critical pedagogy offers us a framework to understand political literacy and social transformation, in which static representations of power, identity, and contextual realities are rejected (Denzin, 2009; Giroux, 1997; McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007). Critical pedagogy is not about providing a checklist against which one can determine the level of social justice within a given society (Carr, 2008a). Rather, it is concerned with oppression and marginalization at all levels, and seeks to interrogate, problematize and critique power and inequitable power relations. Giroux (2007) emphasizes that critical pedagogy “refuses the official lies of power and the utterly reductive notion of being a method... (It) opens up a space where students should be able to come to terms with their own power as critical agents; it provides a sphere where the unconditional freedom to question and assert is central to the purpose of the university, if not democracy itself” (p. 1). Critical pedagogy makes a direct, explicit and undeniable linkage between the formalized experience in the classroom and the lived experience outside of the classroom, in which bodies, identities and societal mores influence what takes place in schools. Giroux (2007) boldly states that “Democracy cannot work if citizens are not autonomous, self-judging, and independent—qualities that are indispensable for students if they

are going to make vital judgments and choices about participating in and shaping decisions that affect everyday life, institutional reform, and governmental policy.

Freire (1973/2005), the leading figure around which a broad range of scholarship and activism has taken place, theorized that the conceptualization of education based on traditional modes that enshrine the social order—what he labelled as the banking model—can be harmful and destructive for society: “Whereas banking education anesthetizes and inhibits creative power, problem-posing education involves a constant unveiling of reality. The former attempts to maintain the submersion of consciousness; the latter strives for the emergence of consciousness and critical intervention in reality” (p. 81).

Being conscious, able to *read the world*, immersed in humane acts, and engaged in a meaningful interrogation of what the purpose of teaching and learning is should be uppermost in the minds of decision-makers as much as the populace in general. Condemning those who would question hegemonic practices as cynical, negative, uncooperative, unconstructive (even destructive) and corrupted can only further widen the gap between those who enjoy comfort and those seeking a more just conceptualization of society. Education, which - we argue - must underpin democracy for it to be relevant and consequential in favour of the masses, is a political project which needs to be understood for it to challenge systemically entrenched practices, values, norms and conventions (Freire, 1973/2005; Kincheloe, 2008a, 2008b). Comprehending the dialectical relations between oppressed and oppressor requires a re-thinking of the premise of education, one that properly labels *banking* models of education.

Joe Kincheloe puts it quite simply: critical pedagogy is the study of oppression. Some of the components of a critical synthesis of critical pedagogy, according to Kincheloe (2007), are the following:

1. The development of a social individual imagination.
2. The reconstitution of the individual outside the boundaries of abstract individualism.
3. The understanding of power and the ability to interpret its effects on the social and the individual.
4. The provision of alternatives to the alienation of the individual.
5. The cultivation of a critical consciousness that is aware of the social construction of subjectivity.
6. The construction of democratic community-building relationships between individuals.
7. The reconceptualization of reason-understanding that relational existence applies not only to human beings but concepts as well.
8. The production of social skills necessary to activate participation in the transformed, inclusive democratic community.

The inextricable linkage to the establishment of a more decent society is ingrained in the foundation of critical pedagogical work. The desire to enhance human agency, imbued in a process of theory and action, thus underscoring praxis and the liberatory potential of critical engagement, is a central consideration, not an afterthought. Political literacy and media literacy provide a mandatory platform from which education can be explored, cultivated and transformed. Critical pedagogy can assist us in asking questions that are far from the mainstream political process and the corporate media but which resonate with the lived realities of the majority of people who do not partake fully in the myriad societal, institutional, political, economic and cultural decision-making fora that serve to shape their lives. In relation to the de-colonization project, we favour a robust critical pedagogical and engaged epistemology as a means of understanding and acting upon difference, problems, concerns and longstanding inequities. Rejecting rigid, positivistic truths about science and society (Kincheloe, 2008b; Thésée, 2006) can only further subjugate and colonize a range of peoples, minds and interests.

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