

# **Fifty Years After Angicos**

## **Paulo Freire, Popular Education and the Struggle for a Better World that is Possible**

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### **Abstract**

The main thesis of this paper is that Freire's original experience in Angicos anticipated a grand design for social transformation of educational systems. As such it brought together two key concepts that formulated the basis of his educational system: popular culture as a counter-hegemonic project and popular education, more particularly what was later called citizen schools or public popular education as keystone of his new educational system.

I use the term Paulo Freire System to show that his original attempts were not only to challenge pedagogical the prevailing banking education system that was so pervasive in Brazil and Latin American at the time. In challenging the hegemony of banking education, its narrative, theoretical foundations, epistemology and methodology, Freire and his team sought to create a new system that could replace the old one. They saw banking education not only as obsolete in terms of modernization of systems but also oppressive in gnoseological, epistemological and political terms. In the conclusion of this paper I will discuss the twins obsessions of Freire, already present in the Angicos experience and that will stay with him throughout his life: the relationship between democracy, citizenship and education, and education as a postcolonial ethical act of social transformation. I would like to emphasize therefore that the Paulo Freire system, as conceived in the Angicos experience and its aftermath was a much larger and comprehensive system that originally considered, even by his critics.

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### **Key-words:**

Paulo Freire; Angicos; social transformation; banking education; oppression; postcolonial education.

## Paulo Freire, Educação Popular e a luta pela possibilidade de um mundo melhor

### Resumo

A tese principal defendida neste trabalho é a de que a experiência original de Freire em Angicos antecipou um grande projeto de transformação social e do sistema educacional. Nesse sentido, reuniu dois conceitos-chave que constituem a base de seu sistema educacional: cultura popular como um projeto contra-hegemônico e de educação popular, mais particularmente, o que mais tarde foi chamado de escola cidadã ou educação pública popular como pedra fundamental de seu novo sistema educacional. Utilizo o termo Sistema de Paulo Freire para mostrar que as suas tentativas iniciais não foram só para desafiar a pedagogia dominante no sistema de ensino bancário tão difundida, nessa época, no Brasil e na América Latina. Ao desafiar a hegemonia da educação bancária, o seu discurso, fundamentos teóricos, epistemologia e metodologia, Freire e a sua equipe procuraram criar um novo sistema que pudesse substituir o antigo. Consideraram a educação bancária não só como obsoleta em termos de modernização dos sistemas, mas também opressiva em termos gnosiológicos, epistemológicos e políticos. Na conclusão deste artigo discuto as obsessões gêmeas de Freire, já presentes na experiência de Angicos e que permanecem com ele ao longo de toda a sua vida: a relação entre democracia, cidadania e educação, e a da educação como um ato ético pós-colonial de transformação social. Gostaria de enfatizar, portanto, que o sistema de Paulo Freire, tal como foi concebido na experiência de Angicos e as suas conseqüências era um sistema muito mais amplo e completo do que o que originariamente foi considerado, mesmo pelos seus críticos.

**Palavras-chave:** Paulo Freire; Angicos; transformação social; educação bancária; opressão; educação pós-colonial.

## Paulo Freire, l'éducation populaire et la lutte pour la possibilité d'un monde meilleur

### Résumé

La thèse principale de cet article est que l'expérience originale de Freire en Angicos a prévu un grand dessein pour la transformation sociale des systèmes éducatifs. Comme tel, il a réuni deux concepts clés qui sont la base de son système éducatif: la culture populaire comme un projet contre-hégémonique et de l'éducation populaire, plus particulièrement ce qui a été appelé plus tard les écoles de citoyens ou d'éducation populaire publique comme clé de voûte de son nouveau système éducatif. J'utilise le terme système de Paulo Freire pour montrer que ses tentatives initiales étaient non seulement de contester la pédagogie du système éducatif bancaire en vigueur qui était si répandue au Brésil et en Amérique latine à l'époque. En remettant en cause l'hégémonie de l'éducation bancaire, son récit, fondements théoriques, l'épistémologie et la méthodologie, Freire et son équipe ont cherché à créer un nouveau système qui pourrait remplacer l'ancien. Ils ont vu l'éducation bancaire non seulement comme obsolète en termes de modernisation des systèmes, mais aussi oppressive en termes gnoseologiques, épistémologiques et politiques. Dans la conclusion de cet article, je vais discuter des obsessions jumelles de Freire, déjà présentes dans l'expérience d'Angicos et qui resteront avec lui tout au long de sa vie: la relation entre la démocratie, la citoyenneté et l'éducation, et l'éducation comme un acte éthique postcoloniale de la transformation sociale. Je tiens à souligner donc que le système de Paulo Freire, tel qu'il est conçu dans l'expérience d'Angicos et ses conséquences était un système beaucoup plus vaste et complet qui initialement considéré, même par ses détracteurs.

**Mots-Clé:** Paulo Freire; Angicos; transformation sociale; éducation bancaire; opréssion; éducation postcoloniale.

## Paulo Freire, la educación popular y la posibilidad de un mundo mejor

### Resúmen

La tesis defendida en este trabajo es que la experiencia original de Freire en Angicos ha anticipado un importante proyecto de transformación social y del sistema educativo. En consecuencia, ha utilizado dos conceptos fundamentales que forman la base de su sistema educativo: la cultura popular como un proyecto contra-hegemónico y la educación popular, en particular, lo que más tarde se llamó la escuela ciudadana o la educación pública popular como la piedra angular de la su nuevo sistema educativo. Uso el término sistema de Paulo Freire para demostrar que sus primeros intentos no fueron sólo para desafiar la pedagogía dominante en la la educación bancária, tan extendida en ese momento en Brasil y América Latina. Al desafiar la hegemonía de la educación bancaria, su discurso, fundamentos teóricos, la epistemología y la metodología, Freire y su

equipo trataron de crear un nuevo sistema que podría sustituir el anterior. La educación bancaria no sólo era considerada obsoleta en términos de sistemas de modernización, sino también opresivo en términos gnoseológico, epistemológico y político. Al final de este artículo discuto las obsesiones gemelas de Freire, que ya están presentes en la experiencia Angicos y van a permanecer con él durante toda su vida: la relación entre la democracia, la ciudadanía y la educación, y la educación como un acto ético postcolonial de transformación social. Quiero destacar, por lo tanto, que el sistema de Paulo Freire, tal como es concebido en la experiencia de Angicos y sus consecuencias fue un mucho más amplio y completo de lo que se consideraba en el origen, incluso por sus críticos.

**Palabras clave:** Paulo Freire; Angicos; transformación social; educación bancaria; opresión; educación pós-colonial.

Que un individuo quiera despertar en otro individuo  
recuerdos que no pertenecieron más que a un tercero,  
es una paradoja evidente. Ejecutar con despreocupación esa paradoja,  
es la inocente voluntad de toda biografía.<sup>1</sup>

## 1. All started in Angicos

"Revolution, between you and me a heap of contradictions that,  
together, make me fearful enough to build you  
with the sweat of my brow."<sup>2</sup>

This paper doesn't attempt to situate the gigantic figure and voice of Paulo Freire in the context of Latin America or international comparative education and pedagogy<sup>3</sup>. Some of us have done it years ago in a Bio-Bibliography that appeared in Spanish and Portuguese, and still constitute the most authoritative biography and bibliography of Freire's life and work.<sup>4</sup>

In this paper I would like to present a synthesis of the Angicos political literacy experience, asking what Freire learned from the Angicos experience. How Freire consolidated his pedagogical model through a social science based on a critical hermeneutics. How his thinking evolved into a theory of social and cultural reproduction, looking particularly to the role of education, and how then he moved into a critical social psychology focusing on domination and the developmental pedagogical subject. How Freire, inspired by the profound political and pedagogical experience of Angicos and his political pedagogical practice, understood praxis as collective learning. In the conclusion I will discuss the twins obsessions of Freire, already present in the Angicos experience and that stay with him throughout his life: the relationship between democracy, citizenship and education, and education as a postcolonial ethical act of social transformation.

## 2. The Angicos Experience: Recreating the Public Sphere

With you we knew that the pilgrimage of this world only has meaning in struggle. With you, a teacher who sheltered himself beneath the mango tree, practicing words and world there on the back patio of your childhood home in Recife, we came to understand the anguish and hopes of all teachers.<sup>5</sup>

We should recall that it was 50 years ago, in the small and impoverished municipality of Angicos, 178 Km from Natal, in Rio Grande do Norte, Northeast Brazil, the first systematic experiences of Freire's literacy training took place. Freire and a group of utopian left-leaning Catholic students at the outset of the Theology of Liberation movement, transformed literacy training, making possible that 300 rural workers learned to read and write in 40 hours, working at night, after a long day of their tedious and grueling demanding agricultural completed under the extenuating sun of Northeast Brazil.

Let us briefly recall what happened at the time in Northeast Brazil. Freire was already known because he presented the theoretical foundations of his adult literacy system in the Second National Conference of Adult Education in Rio de Janeiro, July 9-16, 1958. The following year he became the chair of History and Philosophy of Education at the school of Fine Arts in Pernambuco, and also Director of the Faculty of Extension.<sup>6</sup>

These were times of enormous political activism. The foundations of the Popular Culture Movement (Movimento de Cultura Popular) were created in Recife under the administration of the newly elected Mayor Miguel Arraes. The MCP fused culture with political struggle aiming to increase people's consciousness and promoting literacy through cultural circles. Education and culture were understood as tools of liberation. On March 21 1961 the Grassroots Education Movement (MEB) was formed from a initiative of the Catholic Church. This was a partnership between the Federal Government and the National Conference of Bishops of Brazil (CNBB) to contribute to the process of adult literacy and help to develop communities. In April 1961, the national Union of Students (UNE) creates the Popular Center of Culture (CPC) paving the way for the politicization of social issues. They wanted to create and disseminate popular revolutionary art with engaged artist challenging people's alienation and naïve consciousness. In 1961 President João Goulart was inaugurated when a military coup took place. He signed on April 13 the Brazil-USA Agreement on the Northeast. On September 18, 1962 Darcy Ribeiro takes office at the Ministry of Education. In September 1962, Calazas Fernandes, Secretary of Education of the State of Rio Grande do Norte and Coordinator of the Office of Cooperative Education of Rio

Grande do Norte (SECERN), and Maria José Monteiro, a former student of Paulo Freire's, meet with Paulo Freire at the University of Recife to discuss the Angicos Literacy Project. Freire, fearing that resources from the Alliance for Progress could interfere with his work insisted in autonomy to hire coordinators and teachers and no political-academic and ideological interference. In December 1962, Marcos Guerra, a law student and president of the National Union of Students formed a team of teachers (facilitators) for the Angicos Literacy Project. Thus, the project became a partnership between SECERN and the Cultural Extension Service of the University of Recife (SEC/UR) while directed by Paulo Freire. The work begins with a survey of the number of illiterates in Angicos and a research of people's specific vocabulary (words and generative themes).

December 3, 1962 is the signature of the Agreement between the Ministry of Education, the Superintendence for the Development of the Northeast (SUDENE), the State of Rio Grande do Norte, and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) within the guidelines set forth by the Alliance for Progress. January 18, launching of the project and the inaugural class of the Angicos Literacy Program. Three-hundred eighty residents began their literacy program. January 24, 1963 the first class of the project took place entitled the Anthropological Concept of Culture. This marked the start of the "Forty Hours of Angicos." February-March, 1963 classes for students took place at the same time as the meetings for the training of coordinators in the Cultural Circles.

On April 2, 1963, the final fortieth hour of the program was taught by President João Goulart. This was attended by several governors in the Northeast and representatives of the Alliance for Progress. Aluísio Alves, Paulo Freire, and the ex-illiterate Antonio Ferreira also shared their experiences in this class. The oldest student, Maria Hermínia, gave the president a letter written by participants of the course. This was the first graduating class of Angicos.

General Humberto de Alencar Castelo Branco, commander of Military Region in Recife and who will become the first Military President after the coup de etat of April 1 1964, attended the meeting and told Calazans Fernandes, "Young man, you're fattening rattlesnakes in this area" (Fernandes & Terra, 1994: 18).

April 1963, the experiment ends. The evaluation results of the Angicos Literacy Project are released: 300 participants are considered literate, with a 70 percent success rate on the Literacy Test and 87 percent success rate on the Test of Politicization (Lyra, 1996:171). May 1963, the city of Angicos had its first strike. Landowners call the experience of Paulo Freire a "communist plague" (Fernandes & Terra, 1994: 126).

June 2, 1963 *The New York Times* publishes a report on the experience of Angicos, spurring greater international attention. Reporters from well-established

publications such as *Time Magazine*, *Herald Tribune*, *Sunday Times*, *Associated Press*, and *Le Monde* also travel to Angicos to cover the project.

July 16, 1963, the Ministerial Ordinance #195 established the Committee of Popular Culture within the Office of the Ministry of Education in order “to deploy, nationwide, new educational systems eminently popular, to cover areas not yet reached by the benefits of education.” Paulo Freire was appointed chairman of this committee. His first task was to survey the national number of illiterates to support the future National Literacy Program. The number of illiterates between 15 to 45 years of age totaled 20,442,000—from a total population of 79,599,340 people.

October 1963, an envoy of U.S. ambassadors visit Governor Aluísio Alves in Natal to prepare for the visit of President John F. Kennedy to Angicos, scheduled for December of 1963 (Kennedy was assassinated on November 22).

We should remember and celebrate the Angicos experience for what it signified as the first milestone of Freire’s political pedagogical journey. Angicos needs to be remembered and celebrated. Remembered not only as an experience of successful literacy training, but also as an attempt to expand the notion of the ‘public’ and public education, enhancing the public sphere. As distinguished political theorist Nancy Frazer has persuasively argued:

The concept of the public sphere was developed not simply to understand empirical communication flows but to contribute a normative political theory of democracy. In that theory, a public sphere is conceived as a space for the communicative generation of public opinion, in ways that are supposed to assure (at least some degree of) moral-political validity. Thus, it matters who participates and on what terms. In addition, a public sphere is supposed to be a vehicle for mobilizing public opinion as a political force. It should empower the citizenry vis-à-vis private powers and permit it to exercise influence over the state. Thus, a public-sphere is supposed to correlate with a sovereign power, to which its communications are ultimately addressed. (Frazer, 2005)

Angicos needs to be celebrated because it constituted a landmark in the process of social transformation of Brazil, of creating a public sphere moving from an enfeathered capitalism and yet marked by distinct pre- and feudal forms of domination to a process of national and popular transformation. Angicos was also timely in the context of the social transformations of Latin America in the fifties and sixties. But the experience of Angicos and its possible aftermath was thwarted by the *coup de’etat* of the Brazilian Military dictatorship that inaugurated the new authoritarianism of Latin America, particularly in the Southern Cone (O’Donnell, 1988; Collier et al, 1979).

The conclusion of this experiment of literacy training catapulted Freire to national fame, and as discussed above the President of Brazil, João Goulard, made him the President of the National Commission of Popular Culture, in charge of developing a fast paced and massive literacy training program in Brazil. Since by that time those who couldn't read and write couldn't vote, the Freire's experiments were a true exercise in citizenship building, and as such, an experience of creating and recreating the public sphere in Brazil. If only for this Freire should be remembered and studied, but there is much more. His contributions made a big difference in the life of people all over the world, and not surprisingly, the Brazilian government of the socialist democratic Worker's Party, has just passed in 2012 a Congress law making Freire the patron of Brazilian education.<sup>7</sup>

### **3. Education as Critical Hermeneutics: An Epistemology of Suspicion.**

De toda palabra ociosa daras cuenta a Dios<sup>8</sup>  
(Written in the door of a Church in Viscaya, the Basque Country, Spain.)

Freire shares with Paul Ricoeur (1974) a hermeneutics of suspicion. Their models of critical hermeneutics evolved from the tradition of textual interpretation that originated in methodological questions regarding the Bible, "a problematic that also becomes central for the study of cultural documents. Critical hermeneutics is differentiated by its orientation towards a 'hermeneutics of suspicion' or what in social theory has often been called the ideology critique of cultural criticism." (Morrow and Torres, 2002, p. 43).

Freire's intellectual life could be characterized as a form of eclecticism within a project of radical modernism. Reflecting upon the influences of his writings he told us that:

I remember, for example, how much I was helped by reading Franz Fanon...I was writing *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* ...when I read Fanon, I had to rewrite the book in order to begin to quote Fanon.. I had different cases like this, which I felt conditioned, "influenced" without knowing. Fanon was one. Albert Memmi who wrote a fantastic book, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, was the second. The third who 'influenced' me without knowing it was the famous Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky... when I read him the first time, I became frightened and happy because of the things I was reading. The other influence is Gramsci... When I meet some books, I remake my practice theoretically. I become better able to understand the theory inside of my action (Horton & Freire, 1990, p. 36).

Freire's Critical Theory of Society, on parallels with the Frankfurt School, is based on a philosophy of science or a meta-theory that attempts to mediate between the polarization of subjectivism and positivism (or idealism and materialism) that has long plagued the Marxist tradition and social theory more generally. Freire works within the broader meta-theoretical tradition of critical hermeneutics that attempts to ground social inquiry in the understanding of agents (hence its hermeneutic or interpretive dimension), as well as taking into account the social structural context of action. Yet, one of the key elements of Freire and many other who work closer to the phenomenological tradition is to assume that every social exchange involves a moment, a relationship of domination. This is the reason that an epistemology of suspicion that all social exchanges involve social domination is the trademark of pedagogy of the oppressed.

From this vantage point, Freire assumes a theory of social and cultural reproduction (Morrow & Torres, 1995, 2002). Freire does not presume that cultural reproduction is a static and deterministic process through which a society replicates itself from generation to generation. Freire's theory of cultural and social reproduction is guided by an understanding of historical specificity and effectively deals with the dialectic of agency and structure.

Because the key elements of the Angicos experience are based on the dialectical unity between developmental subjects and processes of domination, Freire works from a Critical Social Psychology. Just now some scholars are beginning to look seriously at the intersections between *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and psychoanalysis. This problematic of domination *vis a vis* the developmental subject was anticipated in Marx's theories of alienation and praxis, as well as the Frankfurt School, especially the studies on authoritarian personality. Freire added a substantial contribution to theories of a dialogical and developmental subject positing that developmental models are suggestive of universal human possibilities whose realization is impeded by relations of social domination. Unequivocally Freire states that:

The pursuit of full humanity, however, cannot be carried out in isolation or individualism, but only in fellowship and solidarity; therefore it cannot unfold in the antagonistic relations between oppressor and oppressed. No one can be authentically human while he prevents other from being so. Attempting to be more human, individualistic, leads to having more, egoistically: a form of dehumanization. Not that is not fundamental to have in order to be human. Precisely because it is necessary, some men's having must not be allowed to constitute an obstacle to other's having, must not consolidate the power of the former to crush the latter (Freire, 1985, pp. 73-74).



Freire's theory of domination and emancipatory practices focuses on domination exemplified in the culture of silence. For him education cannot be the lever of social transformation, but plays a fundamental role as a cultural action for freedom. His solution is *conscientização*. Because the culture of silence is produced by anti-dialogical action, that is distorted communication, it produces relations of domination that deceive subjects. Hence Freire's extraordinary insight that relations of dialogue – as a form of learning – may contribute to the possibility of emancipatory consciousness which is grounded in the capacity for self-reflection which defines reason. But we need not only language, narratives and discourse (all of them central elements in the educational adventure) but also and very importantly the capacity of social movements, communities, NGO's or popular political administrations to be agents of cultural action for freedom. For Freire, conscientization unleashes an ethical discourse through which agents develop a capacity for social criticism. Here Freire comulgates with Habermas' idea that particular ethical reflection are not completely situated and local, but rooted in the human potential for ethical dialogue with universal dimensions as part of a discourse or communicative ethics.

Thus, and not surprisingly Erich From after meeting Freire declared that "This kind of educational practice is a kind of historical-cultural political psychoanalysis" (quoted in Freire, 1994, p. 55).

In the next section, I will see how this meta-theoretical tradition of critical hermeneutics, based on a theory of social and cultural reproduction, challenges the process of domination that subjects confront in their developmental processes (challenging 'false consciousness'). Freire's theoretical framework and the way it was implemented in Angicos constitutes a central threshold in the tradition of popular education in Latin America.

#### **4. Paulo Freire and Popular Education**

The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life-process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but on the contrary it is their social being that determines their consciousness.<sup>9</sup>

Popular education was born from radical models of education, many of which were linked to Paulo Freire's experiences in Brazil in the 1960s. Characteristics common to popular education have been discussed by various analysts, and synthesized in other places (Gadotti & Torres, 1992, 1993, 1994; Torres 1990). Popular education rose from a political and social understanding` of conditions

endured by the poor, as evidenced by their most visible problems, including malnutrition, unemployment, and illness, with intention of shedding light upon these conditions at both individual and collective scale of consciousness. Basing educative practices upon individual and collective experience, popular education took previously acquired knowledge about people very seriously, and worked in groups more than on an individual basis. These projects used an education intimately related to concrete abilities that could be taught to the poor (such as reading, writing, and arithmetic) but as a mutual process of teaching and learning (Gadotti, 2012).

Popular education sought to inspire a sense of pride, dignity, and confidence in participants, so they might become autonomous both politically and socially. These projects could be integrated by governments into the process of rural development, as done in Colombia and the Dominican Republic (Torres, 1995a; 1995b); as done by Freire himself, from 1989 until 1991, when he was Secretary of Education for the Workers' Party (PT), within Municipality of São Paulo (O'Cadiz, Wong & Torres 1998); and as done by popular education collectives in Nicaragua (Arnové 1994). These popular education programs could span all ages of students, from children to adults.

For Freire, the main educational problems are not methodological or pedagogical, but instead political. Educational programs inspired by this model had earned a strong historical presence within field of adult and literacy education, by trying to constitute themselves within politico-pedagogical mechanisms of collaboration with socially subordinated sectors. Popular education is a pedagogy for social change, defined by educational activity that formed a "cultural action" whose central objective was conscientization.

In its most radical form, conscientization resided within development of critical consciousness, as knowledge revealed during this process of class oriented social transformation, appearing as part of the "subjective conditions" of this process. In strictly educational terms, popular education was intended to be a non-authoritarian pedagogy. Its educational program could be realized as easily in a classroom, as in a "cultural circle," transmitting ideas and knowledge along a path of sharing provided by "knowledge of previous knowledge," as known to those being educated (Freire, 1998). One of the last books written by him, *Pedagogy of Hope* (1994), offered an appraisal of the conditions implemented by his earlier work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970).

This liberatory pedagogy provided a model diametrically opposed to predominant neoliberal agenda within Latin American education, paradoxically constituting an accumulation of the most conservative and capitalistic positions in the whole world, and a flagrant contradiction against the liberal tradition and

the spirit of public, obligatory, and free education that predominated on the history of education in the nineteen and early twenty century (Torres, 2011).

Freire and many of those who endorse his political and pedagogical agenda have been linked to dissent and contentious politics, particularly how social movements throughout the world use education to pursue their political goals challenging neoliberalism. There is extensive research on the counter-hegemonic practices of new social movements, through the disciplinary lenses of political science (Rocco, 1990, 1997, 1999, 2002, 2010; Rocco & García Selgas, 2006, Tarrow, 2011), the political sociology of education (Torres, 1989, 1991, 1995a, 1995b, 1996, 2009a, 2009b, 2011; Teodoro & Torres, 2007) or the sociology and learning theory (Mayo 2005; Morrow & Torres, 1995).

However, one area that is yet relatively unexplored is the role of education in creating, facilitating or renewing the political interaction between social movements and the state. Morrow and Torres (1995) have theorized regarding this question, and Paulo Freire put forth one well-researched example (O'Cadiz et al, 1998) in the manner in which he created ties between the secretary of education in São Paulo and literacy initiatives within regional social movements. These insights notwithstanding, the extensive role that education has played in setting and pushing the political agendas of social movements has not been researched or theorized to nearly the degree that its pervasiveness warrants.

Freire's concepts and theories are still a source of inspiration for some of the most innovative counter-hegemonic processes in the world, including the occupy wall street movements, the *indignados*, and other experiences of social struggle (Bryne, 2012) in the creation of a global or transnational public sphere.

While popular education and participatory action research emerge as practical tools for research and social transformation, Freire also gave a legacy of formidable insights dealing with some of the key dilemmas of contemporary education.

## 5. Freire's Dilemmas: Education, Citizenship and Ethics

(...) el escepticismo es un lujo de minoría... Al resto le serviremos la felicidad bien cocinada y la humanidad engullirá gozosamente la divina bazofia.<sup>10</sup>

Freire addressed a serious dilemma of democracy, the constitution of a democratic citizenship. He expounded many of his ideas about the question of diversity and border crossing in education in the 1960s. Freire taught us that domination, aggression and violence are intrinsic parts of human and social life. He argued that few human encounters are exempt from one type of oppression or another. By virtue of race, ethnicity, class and gender, people tend either to be victims or

perpetrators of oppression. Thus, for Freire, sexism, racism, and class exploitation are the most salient forms of domination. Yet exploitation and domination exist on other grounds including religious beliefs, political affiliation, national origin, age, size, and physical and intellectual abilities, to name just a few

Starting from a psychology of oppression influenced by psychotherapists like Freud, Jung, Adler, Fanon and Fromm, Freire developed pedagogy of the oppressed. With the spirit of the Enlightenment, he believed in education as a means to improve the human condition, confronting the effects of a psychology and a sociology of oppression, contributing ultimately to what Freire considered the ontological vocation of the human race: humanization. In the introduction to his highly acclaimed *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire states, "From these pages I hope my trust in the people is clear, my faith in men and women, and my faith in the creation of a world in which it will be easier to love." (Freire, 1972: 19).

Freire was known as a philosopher and a theoretician of education in the critical perspective; an intellectual who never separated theory from practice. In *Politics and Education* he forcefully states that "Authoritarianism is like necrophilia, while a coherent democratic project is biophilia.." (Freire, 1998: 56). It is from this epistemological standpoint that Freire's contribution resonates as the basic foundation for transformative social justice learning. The notion of democracy entails the notion of a democratic citizenship in which agents are active participants in the democratic process, able to choose their representatives as well as to monitor their performance. These are not only political but also pedagogical practices because the construction of the democratic citizen implies the construction of a pedagogic subject. Individuals are not, by nature, ready to participate in politics. They have to be educated in democratic politics in a number of ways, including normative grounding, ethical behavior, knowledge of the democratic process, and technical performance. The construction of the pedagogic subject is a central conceptual problem, a dilemma of democracy. To put it simply: democracy implies a process of participation where all are considered equal. However, education involves a process whereby the 'immature' are brought to identify with the principles and life forms of the 'mature' members of society (Torres, 1998).

Thus, the process of construction of the democratic pedagogic subject is a process of cultural nurturing, involving cultivating principles of pedagogic and democratic socialization in subjects who are neither *tabula rasa* in cognitive or ethical terms, nor fully equipped for the exercise of their democratic rights and obligations. Yet in the construction of modern polities, the constitution of a pedagogical democratic subject is predicated on grounds that are, paradoxically, a precondition but also the result of previous experiences and

policies of national solidarity (including citizenship, competence-building and collaboration). (O’Cadiz & Torres, 1994; O’Cadiz, Wong & Torres, 1998; Torres, 1997).

A second major contribution of Freire is his thesis advanced in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, and reiterated in countless writings, that the pedagogical subjects of the educational process are not homogeneous citizens but culturally diverse individuals. From his notion of cultural diversity, he identified the notion of crossing borders in education suggesting that there is an ethical imperative to cross borders if we attempt to educate for empowerment and not for oppression.

Thus, Freire created specific contexts for emancipatory learning. Freire’s thesis of critical literacies, which argues that critical consciousness depends crucially on forms of literacy that facilitates a structural perspective for understanding social reality is well represented in his mantra of ‘reading the word and reading the world’. A dialogical understanding of the pedagogical practices required for acquiring critical communicative competence, and illustrated in Freire’s account of the methodology of thematic investigation. Therefore the possible generalizability of Freire’s political and pedagogical principles to formal and non-formal settings, challenging models of banking education based on the important distinction between reflexive and non-reflexive learning. From these principles we identify the intimate interrelations between reflexive learning, the formation of critical citizenship, and the potential revitalization of democratic public spheres in diverse settings.

## 6. Conclusion: Education as Postcolonial Ethics.

The real freedom is freedom from fear <sup>11</sup>

Freire is first and foremost a postcolonial thinker, and his focus on otherness is one of his central contributions. Combining in a complex synthesis existentialism, phenomenology and the Latin American tradition of liberatory ethics, Freire understood otherness as personhood interaction mediated by love. He tells us:

My love for reading and writing is directed toward a certain utopia. This involves a certain course, a certain type of people. It is a love that has to do with the creation of a society that is less perverse, less discriminatory, less racist, less *machista* than the society that we now have. This love seeks to create a more open society, a society that serves the interest of the always unprotected and devalued subordinate classes, and not only the interest of the rich, the fortunate, the so-called “well-born” (Freire, 1993, p. 140).

Clearly Freire is in tuned with Edward Said who has asserted that ‘the responsibility of intellectuals is to “speak the truth to power” and to criticize

"on the basis of universal principles: that all human beings are entitled to expect decent standards of behavior concerning freedom and justice" (quoted in Morrow & Torres, 2002, p. 171).

I must conclude with two observations. The first one is that for critical theorists like Freire, research cannot be separated from political struggle; hence scholarship and activism are inevitably part and parcel of our life journey. Paulo Freire argued that politics and education cannot be easily separated. The same applies to scholarship and political struggle which cannot be easily dissociated, not even for purely didactic purposes. We conduct research and teaching to change the world, not simply to observe as the detached scientist what happens around us or to manipulate knowledge as social *alquimia* or as social engineering. Critical scholars do not share with technocrats the illusion that manipulating knowledge, using technocratic means and the stern application of instrumental rationality, will solve most if not all the problems of education.

The second observation is that Freire's postcolonial positions were based on considering education as an ethics of love. Enrique Dussell discussed the concept of emancipation as part of a non-Eurocentric liberation ethics, looking as the 'other' as oppressed, where the "majority of the humanity finds itself sunk into 'poverty,' unhappiness, suffering, domination, and/or exclusion (Dussell, 1997, p. 285). It is in this context that Dussell turns to Freire's concept of conscientization as a description of the processes within which liberation ethics unfolds not only in the consciousness of the oppressed but also in those who have shared experience with the dominated and/or excluded.

Few years ago I was interviewing Freire and asked him what he would like his legacy to be. He answered that when he died, he would like people to say of him: 'Paulo Freire lived, loved and wanted to know'. Freire, in his poetic style, provided a simple and yet powerful message about the role of critical intellectuals. For Freire, critical intellectuals should live passionately their own ideas, building spaces of deliberation and tolerance in their quest for knowledge and empowerment. They love what they do, and those with whom they do interact. Love, then, become another central element of the political project of intellectuals agonizing in producing knowledge for empowerment and liberation. Following Gramsci, critical intellectuals know that always common sense has a nuclei of 'good sense'. From this 'good sense' of the common sense, critical intellectuals can develop a criticism of conventional wisdom, knowledge, and practices. In educational policy and planning, this 'good sense' could be a starting point for a critique of instrumental rationalization.

The lessons of Critical Social Theory for education are clear, and need to be remembered: politics and education intersect continually – there is an inherent

politicity of education. Power plays a major role in configuring schooling and social reproduction. Social change cannot be simply articulated as social engineering from the calm environment of the research laboratory or the corridors of a Ministry building. Social change needs to be forged in negotiations, compromise but also fights in the political system; needs to be struggled in the streets with the social movements; needs to be conquered in the schools struggling against bureaucratic and authoritarian behavior, defying the growing corporatization of educational institutions, particularly in higher education, and striving to implement substantive rationality through communicative dialogue; and needs to be achieved even in the cozy and joyful environment of our gatherings with our family and friends. Dialogue and reason cannot take vacations if one pursues the dream of social justice education and peace.

#### Notas

- <sup>1</sup> Jorge Luis Borges
- <sup>2</sup> A phrase of the Cuban poet Miguel Barnes' collected in the emblematic book of the Nicaraguan poet Ernesto Cardenal, *Ernesto Cardenal en Cuba*: Buenos Aires, Lohle Editor, 1972,
- <sup>3</sup> This paper is a version of the Keynote prepared for the World Congress of Comparative Education, Buenos Aires, Argentina, June 24-28, 2013.
- <sup>4</sup> Gadotti, M., A. M. Araújo Freire, A. A. Ciseski, C. A. Torres et al., eds. Paulo Freire: Uma bio-bibliografía. (Paulo Freire: A bio-bibliography). São Paulo, Brazil: Institute Paulo Freire, UNESCO, and Cortez Editores, 1996. This is the most comprehensive study of its kind in the world, including an international bibliography about Paulo Freire, and more than one hundred short analytical contributions discussing the work of Freire and his influence in contemporary pedagogy). (First edition in Portuguese). Spanish edition, Mexico: Siglo XXI publishers, (2001).
- <sup>5</sup> Fragment of Carlos A. Torres poem "Requiem for Paulo Reglus Neves Freire." Translated by Peter Lownds in published in Carlos Alberto Torres *Poesia perdida al atardecer*. Valencia, Germany, 2005.
- <sup>6</sup> I would like to thank Moacir Gadotti for preparing the chronology that informs this section of the paper and for his willingness to share with the reader in this paper. Joana Nogueira translated from the Portuguese.
- <sup>7</sup> Lei nº 12.612, de 13 de abril de 2012. (Law Nº 12.612, April 13, 2012).
- <sup>8</sup> Every idle word God will notice.
- <sup>9</sup> Karl Marx, Preface to a *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*.
- <sup>10</sup> Roberto Arlt, *Los Siete Locos*.
- <sup>11</sup> Attributed to Burma Nobel prize recipient Aun Saan You Kim.

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