

Editorial Introduction

Ali A. Abdi

University of Alberta, Canada

aabdi@ualberta.ca

Articles in this second issue of the *Journal of Contemporary Issues in Education* speak about and selectively problematize the general themes and intersections of colonization, anti-colonialism and the important role of education in achieving new and enduring spaces of decolonization for inclusive socio-economic and cultural developments. The importance one should attach to the discussions and possible practices of decolonization should be salient in current counter-projects that aim to minimize the continuities of colonialism that are still impacting the lives of billions of people across the world. Indeed, with the ending of the mostly territory-based colonialism, mostly in the early and mid-twentieth century, we should have spoken of a postcolonial period where extensive programs of liberation and attached community well-being would have been established. But the hoped-for-pragmatics of the postcolonial program did not give way to the ideological/cultural and monetary/economic recolonization of select spaces and territories in different parts of the world. So much so that when we speak about postcolonialism today, we are not, in reality, describing a new era of ‘after colonialism’ that is free of imperial influences and power. To the contrary, postcolonialism and even the now popular academic sub-discipline of postcolonial studies are about an understanding as well as the critique of the quasi non-militarized extensities of empire in the lives of individuals and institutions, complemented, of course, by a highly uneven international power brokerage that has thus far affirmed the fact of an empowered West ‘pushing around’ the disempowered rest.

So some questions might, indeed, be should be asked. What went wrong? Why has so much promise, in educational and social development, never achieved in supposedly decolonized spaces of our world? What is the role of education in becoming the new vanguard of achieving proactive learning projects that aim and achieve, not a partial or even nominal liberation, but a full decolonization where people become the agents of their histories, actualities and futures? These are of course, complex questions and they may not be sufficiently answered in one essay, or in one issue of a journal, but continuing the discussions and even minimally enlarging the boundaries of the propositions and the arguments will be important, not only in explaining the issues and potentially showing the way for better outcomes, but as well, in sustaining the counter-hegemonic, psycho-cultural existentialities that should affirm the determination of the ‘Other’ (either in the international context or within specific national boundaries) to continue the struggle. And on the spirit of all of it at least, the three articles in this issue respond to the call for decolonized institutional, educational and livelihood spaces.

In the first article (*Katrina, Cronulla Beach and France on Fire: An Anti-Colonial Critique of Empire in 2006*), George Dei and Arlo Kempf engage a multi-directional, critical dialogue that successfully deploys a number of theoretical and practical intersections to harness the possibilities of an anti-colonial paradigm that can annul, possibly once and for all, the quasi-‘permanentized expansive marginalizations of so

many people all over the world. As pertinent, actual examples, the article discusses a number of cases where marginalized populations in different parts of the world have been exposed mainly via the immensity of the natural and/or social disasters in which they were located. To prospectively and critically respond to these, the authors suggest some potential anti-colonial practices, including changing the ways in which race is discussed in the mainstream media, and the urgent need to confront the “strategic denials, powerful silences and re-invocations of dominant colonial and racial paradigms.” To achieve these possibilities, Dei and Kempf re-emphasize the need to re-launch effective anti-colonial discourses that can instigate and sustain action-oriented, resistance-based responses to the oppressive actualities of the colonial project.

In the second article (*Independence is we nature...: growing up in a postcolonial Caribbean country*), Cecille DePass recasts select anti-colonial historical narratives, as those were located in the context of her personal life, the life of her family and the wider social ecologies of her native Jamaica, to speak about the *problematique* of retrograde development practices that did not liberate the masses. Again, the expansiveness of the unfulfilled promises, even if there was some upward mobility by some groups (mainly the elite and their offspring) immediately after ‘independence’, were real and enduring for the majority of the population. To manage its institutions, for example, Jamaica today depends on Western donors and their International Financial Institutions (IFIs) to manage its national life. But here, as in other cases, the story is not and should not be limited to the problems described; there is a lot of grassroots associations including women’s groups who are challenging current structures of inequity, and achieving discernible, indeed, reliable spaces of popular ‘survivals’ mainly constituted in people’s ways of responding, writing, and overall epistemic recreations.

In the third article (*Citizens educating themselves: the case of Argentina in the post-economic collapse era*), Luis D’Elia achieves a very cogent analysis of how people, especially workers and others victimized by the economic collapse in Argentina, organized themselves, re-created new schemes of educational intentions and platforms and achieved a countervailing social and political project that empowered them vis-à-vis the government and attached intra and extra-national organizations. The case of Argentina, a country that was supposedly developed some decades ago and that eventually could not hold the weight of the debt it owed to International Monetary Fund(IMF), leading to a default of over US\$140 billion, the collapse of the Peso, and the overnight pauperization of its sizable middle class, is another classic case that affirms the thesis of recolonization by the IFIs, where countries’ economic and political making powers are defeated by debilitating loan schemes and conditions that produce results such as this one. Hence, the necessity of Argentinean workers and their civil society allies, circumventing the conventional projects of education and development, and responding in ways that affirm their agency and determination in the face of immense socio-economic difficulties. Indeed, one should see this ‘education by citizens for citizens’ as an important and timely project that is counter-empire in all its forms, intentions and results. To re-affirm, Argentina’s difficulties were horizontally located with the realities of a word system that brought about the collapse of the economic system; one should therefore, speak about them in the context of empire and monetary colonization, with the Argentinean government previously being complicit in the scheme.

In all, the three pieces should be seen , not only as recording the problems of empire, or just repeating the apparent need to decolonize education and development possibilities, but also as strategic refusals that would continually challenging both the intellectual and material dimensions of empire and its local and international attachments. As such, the three articles should extend a cluster of informational, analytical, and critical notations and perspectives that could persuade us to rethink the current shape of our world, and the role educators and educational programs should assume to aim for more liberating and inclusive praxes that can decolonize both the minds and the bodies of people. Beyond the three articles, there is also one book review in this issue, Ingrid Johnston's *Re-mapping Literary Worlds: postcolonial pedagogy in practice* (2003) reviewed by Khalida Syed. Interestingly, the topic of this book is not completely detached, especially from a trans-cultural dialogic perspective, from the general *foci* of the three articles.

Ali A. Abdi, Editor