

EDITORIAL

Following the inaugural issue of *Postcolonial Directions in Education* towards the end of 2012, after the lengthy preliminary work that goes into launching a new journal, we are now in a position to pursue our goal of producing two issues a year. We are pleased to furnish readers with the first issue for 2013. This is the launch of the second volume. As with the previous issue, we present three peer-reviewed articles and two book reviews.

The early part of this year was marked by the death of a controversial postcolonial political leader whose widespread reforms, including educational reforms, were lauded among the poor and derided by the wealthy in his country. We felt that it would be appropriate to include a timely obituary for the late Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez penned by Peter McLaren, from the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), a scholar who has made an important contribution to the critical education field. A member of the journal's Editorial Advisory Board, McLaren has written extensively about the Bolivarian revolution over the years. We felt it would be fitting that he writes this tribute emphasizing both Chavez's achievements as a postcolonial leader in general and his efforts in the field of revolutionary postcolonial education.

This period was also marked by the death of one of Africa's leading literary figures, Chinua Achebe. His ideas have been taken up in the educational field especially in the postcolonial education field. Given his stature in the area of postcolonial studies, we invited two persons to write

a tribute to him. The first is Somali scholar, Ali Abdi, from the University of Alberta in Canada, who also sits on the Editorial Advisory Board. A household name in comparative education with special focus on sub-Saharan Africa, Professor Abdi frequently refers to Achebe in his work. The second scholar is US based Sierra Leone researcher Salwa Halloway who comes from the literary studies field. She also provides us with one of the book reviews for this issue.

As far as research papers go, this is a miscellaneous volume. The first two papers connect with the field of immigration, an important area in postcolonial politics. The first is by another key proponent of critical pedagogy and an advisory board member, Antonia Darder, and her colleague, Miren Uriarte. The abstract for this paper is provided both in English and Spanish, the latter being the first language of the two authors. This is in keeping with the policy for this journal, underlined in our previous editorial, which attempts to provide visibility to the language of the authors concerned. The provision of an abstract in the author's first language is a modest attempt at reaching this goal. The same applies to the two other authors, with abstracts in Maltese and Bengali respectively.

Darder and Uriarte's paper deals with the issue of bilingualism among Latinos/as in the USA and consists of an exposition and critique of restrictive policies, in this regard, in the city of Boston, Massachusetts. The paper sheds light on the right wing drive to roll back the frontiers of bicultural and multi-ethnic politics through policies that attempt to affirm the pre-eminence of Englishness and

therefore mono-culturalism, policies which, as always, are met with resistance.

The second paper, by Maria Pisani, directly focuses on the issue of immigration, this time in the Mediterranean which has been witnessing, over the last couple of decades, migration from sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and/through North Africa towards Europe and particularly Southern Europe. The paper focuses on a small Mediterranean and Southern European island state experiencing an influx of SSA migrants. It shows how knowledge of the 'other' is constructed and generated to inform policies and medical practices in Malta regarding the bodies of SSA rejected asylum seekers, notably from Somalia. It is primarily concerned with the experience of Female Genital Mutilation arguing that the 'technologies of power' that are followed to address this issue are westernised and orientalised, in Said's use of the term. The paper shows how such epistemic violence, to echo Spivak, can result in surgical interventions that violate the rights and dignity of female asylum seekers, thus contributing to the reproduction of the docile body. It also documents efforts by Somali women to speak back. It stresses both their non-formal education strengths and needs.

The third paper also deals with epistemological issues concerning the colonial and postcolonial condition, this time with a focus on two great postcolonial thinkers in education, Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi, better known in the fields of literature and politics (including development issues) respectively. The author, Asoke Bhattacharya, also on the journal's advisory board, is an Indian professor, living in Kolkota (Calcutta). The Indian context no doubt immersed him in the ideas of

Tagore and Gandhi. Gandhi is arguably the more prominent of the two in the educational literature, especially in connection with the Sarvodaya (universal uplift) movement and 'Nai Tailim' (new learning).

Tagore is a literary figure and Nobel Prize winner who does not receive the recognition he deserves in mainstream international education discourse. Like Count Lev (Leo) Nikolayevich Tolstoy, Tagore came from a distinguished family, a joint landlord's family. Like Tolstoy, he exerted a lot of effort into providing opportunities for peasant learning including the organization of cooperatives. He also stands out as a figure active in community education, action and development, given his initiation of a village development programme in his North Bengal estate. His initiatives in founding other institutes such as a university and an Institute of Rural Development are also worth studying, at a time when we are witnessing the emergence of such projects as the 'rural university' in certain parts of the world.

Gandhi, for his part, has appeared prominently in writings on education, especially concerning contexts where traditional education was markedly colonial. Both Gandhi and Tagore focused on the language issue in education, recognizing how the colonial foreign language serves as an important source of social differentiation, as well as a cultural imposition. Gandhi certainly tackles this issue in his educational endeavors, not least those connected with the settlement aptly named the Tolstoy Farm. Gandhi's ideas are best enunciated in his proposals submitted to the Wardha Conference and adopted by the Congress Party, which, we are told, did not implement them after independence.

The issue provides two book reviews. One, by Gillian Martin, reflects on revealing photographs capturing different features of life in a postcolonial state. The other review, by Salwa Halloway, focuses on a book in the Postcolonial Studies in Education series published by Palgrave-Macmillan. It ends with an extended report by Alessio Surian, from the University of Padova, on the World Social Forum (WSF) which occurred in Tunis as this issue was about to go into production. We postponed production by a week (issue was meant to come out end of March) to make sure we include a timely extensive piece on the WSF in this issue. An item on the WSF in a journal such as this is *de rigueur*.

The WSF provides a great and visible platform for postcolonial ideas spanning a variety of fields, education being one of them. Of particular interest was the workshop held on Friday 29th March focusing on the role of civil society in educational politics, organized by the Moroccan Society of Comparative Education.

Professor Surian was present in Tunis for the WSF and immediately set us his report following his return to Italy.

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Editors.