Critical Education and the Development of a Multi-ethnic Citizenship
- a Southern European Perspective[1]

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Like all regions of the world, Southern-Europe and the larger Mediterranean area are under the sway of the phenomenon commonly referred to as globalization, a process that, strictly speaking, has always been a feature of the capitalist mode of production characterized by periodical economic reorganisation and an ongoing quest for the exploration of new markets. In fact, it is more appropriate, in the present historical conjuncture, to use the phrase 'the *intensification* of globalization.' This intensification is brought about through developments in the field of information technology. It is a period in which mobility occurs at different levels. There is the constant threat of the 'flight of capital' in a scenario where the process of production is characterised by dispersal and cybernetic control. We also witness the mobility of workers within and beyond the region. People from the south move up north in search of new opportunities.

Migration is an important feature of the Euro-Mediterranean region. As underlined at the 1997 Civil Forum EuroMed:

> Immigration represents the emerging aspect, probably the most evident, of the wide process which characterizes more and more the whole planet - globalization. Migrations represent more than a phenomenon, a historical certainty that can be found today, though with different features, in all countries and, in particular, in the most developed [*sic.read: industrially developed*].   Migration phenomena are becoming more and more important within the Mediterranean basin.(Fondazione Laboratorio Mediterraneo, 1997, p. 551).

With Southern Europe witnessing mass scale immigration from North Africa, the Mediterranean plays an important role in this process, serving, in the view of many, as 'a kind of Rio Grande.'(Malabotta, 2002, p. 73). As a colleague (Carmel Borg) and I have written elsewhere, it can be argued, with respect to the movement of people from the Southern

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[1] This contribution draws on three publications of mine:
I.   Mayo, P. (2001), 'Globalisation, Postcolonialism and Identity. The Role of Education in the Mediterranean Region.' In Nada Svob Dokic (Ed.), *Redefining Cultural Identities: The Multicultural Contexts of the Central European and Mediterranean Regions*, Zagreb: Institute for International Relations.
II. Chapter 5, ' Reinventing Freire in a Southern Context: The Mediterranean' in Mayo, P. (2004), *Liberating Praxis. Paulo Freire's Legacy for Radical Education and Politics*, Westport, Connecticut: Praeger.
III. Mayo, P. (2004), 'Adult Education and Multi-ethnic Relations in the Mediterranean' in D. Caruana and P. Mayo (Eds.), *Perspectives on Lifelong Learning in the Mediterranean*, Bonn: IIZ-DVV.
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Mediterranean to the Northern Mediterranean and beyond, that the 'spectre' of the violent colonial process the 'old continent' initiated has come back with a vengeance to 'haunt' it (Borg and Mayo, 2002, p. 45). This process is facilitated by the economic requirements of highly industrialized countries with respect to certain types of labour and the consideration that these requirements cannot be satisfied by the internal labour market, despite the high levels of unemployment experienced within these countries. (Apitzsch, 1995, p. 68). This gives rise to the presence of 'guest workers' who are often victims of terrible exploitative situations in terms of payment, conditions of work and the precariousness of their existence within the borrowed context. This point was addressed by Paulo Freire, to whom reference will be made throughout this piece in view of the fact that he represents a voice from the South that speaks to concerns of the South and also because this presentation takes place within the context of the Fourth International Forum being held in his honour. In *Pedagogy of Hope*, Freire speaks of his work in Geneva when he came in contact, through meetings and projects, with guest workers from Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Turkey and Arab countries. These migrant guest workers enabled Freire, on his own admission, to begin to come "in contact with the harsh realities of one the most serious traumas of the 'Third World in the First': the reality of the so-called guest workers…and their experience of racial, class and sexual discrimination"(Freire, 1994, p. 122). Freire goes on to indicate the fear of the oppressor as one of the challenges to be faced in this context in view of the fact that the opportunity to work, irrespective of how exploitative the conditions are, becomes the primary concern which takes precedence over the concern for political mobilization to confront the exploitation induced by this process of mobility of labor power across national boundaries. This mobility involves, in most cases, a severance from one's roots in view of the process of uneven levels of development that is a characteristic of the capitalist mode of production. Confronting the fear of oppression remains a key challenge here for progressive educators working with migrants; it is a key challenge for progressive educators working in the countries that many of these emigrants left.

Of course the foregoing point applies to most regions in the world and not just the Mediterranean. What renders the whole process significant in the context of this region is, once again, the fact that the receiving countries are the same countries that once witnessed mass waves of emigration. These countries have experienced the shift from being exporters to importers of labor power. This is not the place to engage in a discussion concerning the way the prejudice and racism experienced by settlers from North Africa and elsewhere differs from that experienced in the past by emigrants from today's receiving Southern European countries in such places as the USA, Canada, Australia, South America etc. Nevertheless, in combating xenophobia and racism in this context, one would do well to recall the plight of people from the receiving country when settling abroad or in a more industrially developed region of the same country (eg. migrants from Italy's Mezzogiorno settling in the country's North).

The architectural and demographic landscapes of Southern European cities are undergoing significant changes. Against this scenario, we are witnessing the transformation of

Southern European cities.   While the population in these cities increasingly becomes cosmopolitan, the architecture is often a melange of the old co-existing with the new.   The global exists alongside the local in a situation of hybridity. One can imagine, for example, Giotto's *campanile* being juxtaposed against Macdonalds' 'twin golden arches'. Furthermore, in certain Southern European cities and towns, the *cupolas* of churches that, for centuries, were perceived as bulwarks of Christendom against Islam, now co-exist alongside *minarets*. This co-existence of architectural symbols of the different monotheistic religions, that have been the subject of much conflict in the past, is becoming an important feature of the skyline of some Southern European cities.

Within this cultural hybridity, one can easily encounter the tensions that have characterized the region for centuries.   Xenophobia, or more accurately, *islamophobia*, has become widespread.   It can be argued that the historical roots for this form of racism can be found, among other things, in the anti-Islamic crusades that left their mark in several places in this region, becoming a feature of their so-called ' cultural heritage.'   Cultures that, for centuries, had been constructed as being antagonistic are now expected to co-exist within the same geographical space

One of the great challenges for educators, in this context, would be that of encouraging participants to cross their mental and cultural borders, to use Henry A.Giroux's (1992) phrase.   Crossing borders would, in this context, entail that one begins to understand something about the culture of others, religion included. Perhaps the most important feature of a critical and anti-racist approach to adult education, in this context, is that of developing a process of learning based on authentic dialogue, a key concept in the Freirean pedagogical approach, that is regarded as the means to:

- permit the different cultures that make up our societies to become an integral feature of the educational process
- allow participants to listen to others; 'listening' is here being used in the sense conveyed by Paulo Freire in *Pedagogy of Freedom*, where it was argued that 'listening' is to be distinguished from simply 'hearing' and implies one's being "open to the word of the other, to the gesture of the other, to the differences of the other without being reduced to the other".(Freire, 1998, p.107).

The various situations of conflict which characterise this region, and which can cause tension in multi-ethnic societies, render it indispensable that one crosses boundaries in a variety of ways. Many of the Southern European regions have traditionally been steeped in the Christian religion, mainly Catholic and also Greek Orthodox.   In a truly multi-ethnic environment, it is imperative that knowledge of the different religions is provided in adult educational sites and other sites of learning.   There is always the danger, however, that one provides a caricature. The complexity of the situation can easily be ignored, with the religions being represented in simplistic terms (Fondazione Laboratorio Mediterraneo, 1997, p. 51).

The study of different religions should therefore be approached with the utmost seriousness and best preparation possible, with special emphasis being placed on the adult educator doing justice to the different religions involved. This applies to adult education carried out in different sites including courses for those involved in the mass media. In the case of the last mentioned, this would be in keeping with the recommendations of the 1997 Civil Forum EuroMed: "Mass media are invited to present a correct image of religions or cultures resorting, where suitable, to experts on the matter." (Fondazione Laboratorio Mediterraneo 1997, p. 512)

Misconceptions regarding Islam abound in the Western world. Countries of Southern Europe, which are recipients of immigrants from Arab countries, are no exception. For greater conviviality and dialogue to occur between people of different ethnic background with different cultural and related knowledge traditions, an effort must be made to learn about others, to cross the boundaries of one's social location and to obtain the necessary understanding and knowledge necessary to be able to engage in a critical reading of widely diffused texts (media images, news packages, representations in film and documentary) – reading the construction of the world through the word, if I am allowed liberties with Freire's famous phrase.[3] This is necessary for one to be able to confront and problematize (this entails a problem posing approach) the politics of misrepresentation that results from historically entrenched prejudices and deep-seated antagonistic dispositions.

In many countries of Southern Europe, we are confronted by a euro-centric cultural heritage that reflects a colonial past, especially in former centers of colonial power such as Spain and our host country, Portugal, and, as I mentioned earlier, a past marked by crusades against the Ottoman Empire. A critical approach to adult education in the Southern European regions would enable its participants to engage critically with the region's or country's much acclaimed 'cultural heritage' ('culture' not being used in the anthropological sense) and its politics of representation. Exotic and often demonic (mis) representations of 'Alterity' abound throughout this cultural heritage, 'alterity' historically having been ascribed, in these areas, to a variety of people, including the 'Saracen' who is regarded as the 'Other' in the context of 'Christian Europe'. The 'Other' becomes the subject of a particular kind of construction, a form of *Orientalism* in Edward Said's sense of the term. This construction denotes a sense of *positional superiority*, also in Said's terms (Said, 1978), on the part of those who promote this particular conception. It is a demonization reminiscent of the French colonial construction, "taught in the universities for over twenty years" and based on so-called " scientific proof" (Fanon, 1963, p. 296), of the colonized in Algeria, and North Africa in general, so forcefully exposed by Frantz Fanon in his classic anti-colonial volume (ibid.). A critical and Freirean approach to adult education in this region would entail one's engaging critically with the politics of representation underlying different features of the artistic and historical heritage of the various countries in the South European region. A similar politics of representation

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[3] Reading the word and the world.

characterises the realm of popular culture in the Southern European region, with the Sicilian marionette shows, involving Crusaders and the Predator (often the Saracen 'Other'), being a case in point. In introducing immigrants to popular culture traditions in the receiving country, one ought to be wary of the contradictions found within these traditions. They often contain elements that denigrate aspects of the immigrants' own culture.

Cultural productions, at the popular level and at the level of so-called 'highbrow culture', can serve as codifications, in the sense intended by Paulo Freire. In conceiving of such productions as codifications, we as adult educators would enable ourselves, and those with whom we are working in the educational setting, to engage in a critical reading of our contemporary reality. The concepts that form part of our 'common sense', used in Gramsci's sense of the term, can partly have their roots in our cultural and folklore traditions. Once again, they are concepts that have been accumulated over a long historical period.

I should like to dwell very briefly on one form of cultural production that, in my view, has potential to serve as an educational tool that enables people, from a country that receives immigrants, to empathise with their fellow humans who have arrived from more southern and other shores. Drama is the form of cultural production I have in mind. Drama has been serving as an important educational tool, including a community-learning tool, for several years. The work of Augusto Boal and other cultural workers in various parts of the world, well documented in the popular education and community studies literature, testifies to this. It has served as a vehicle for the process of codification and decodification that has been a feature of the Freirean pedagogical approach, although one should be wary not to make a fetish out of this process. I would submit, however, that drama can serve as a powerful pedagogical tool to foster greater inter-ethnic solidarity and understanding. I found quite instructive, in this regard, a dramatic representation to which participants at a 1998 conference on education in the Mediterranean held in Sestri Levante, Liguria, Italy, were exposed (Mayo, 1999). It was carried out by a troupe of players from Genoa and involved a juxtaposition of situations concerning the harsh realities of migration, both past and present. The plight of Italians migrating to the U.S., Argentina and elsewhere, and of Italians from the South moving into the country's Northern regions, was juxtaposed against that of Africans (including Arabs) and Eastern Europeans, with their personal narratives, moving into Italy. The scenes were poignant and quite revealing, based on a dialectical movement between past (a kind of 'redemptive remembrance') and present in the hope of a transformed and healthy multi-ethnic democracy.

To conclude, I would identify the following from among the many challenges to be faced by critical educators in the Southern European region to help develop a strong democratic citizenship in a multiethnic context:

- Educators should not regard incoming migrant groups as 'deficits'; the programmes and experiences provided should be those in which the members of all ethnic groups

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involved, including the ethnic groups to which the educators belong, are conceived of as 'subjects' and not as 'objects' in Freire's sense of the terms.

- Educators and policy makers should avoid developing programmes that smack of what the Italians call *assistenzialismo* (a term frequently used by Freire that is often given a literal translation in the English language texts) that often results in a form of 'learned helplessness.'

- Critical educators should be wary of not misrepresenting those constructed, as part of the hegemonic western discourse, as 'other'.

- Critical educators require a good understanding of political economy and knowledge of how the economic system segregates on ethnic lines.

- Critical educators need to become 'border crossers': they need to begin to understand something about the culture of others, religion included.

- Critical educators in receiving countries need to recognise the contribution of others to the development of their own culture; this would include recognition of the contribution of non-European cultures to the development of aspects of what is termed 'western civilisation.'(see Elsheikh, 1999 on this and the related issue of the 'debtor's syndrome')

- The pedagogical approach should be one based on the key concept in Freire's work, and that of others (eg. Buber), the concept of Dialogue that entails listening and not mere hearing.

- Critical educators must recognise that being a migrant constitutes only one aspect of the person's multiple and shifting subjectivities and the culture of origin intersects with a variety of other cultures that emerge from other aspects of the person's identity, namely cultures related to gender, class, 'race'/ethnicity, sexuality, age, religion.[4]

- A critical education would be based on the recognition that, although the work factor weighs heavily on the minds of those who migrate, the notion of citizenship ascribed to them should not be a two dimensional one, that of producer and consumer, but one whereby they are conceived of as social actors in a multicultural democracy.

- One other point which would draw on Freire's work as Education Secretary in São Paulo is that schools should not remain isolated from the rest of the community but should be an integral part of this community and their surrounding contexts conceived of in all their multiethnic, multicultural and bio-diversity.

- In light of the preceding point, schools should therefore begin to be developed as multipurpose community learning sites with implications for curricula (covering conventional hours and after hours programmes), administration, teacher/adult educator formation and school architecture; migrants and other groups within the

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[4] The term 'multiculturalism', as I use it, is meant to capture the various cultures that characterised peoples identities and societies in general and should not be used, as seems to be the case in many parts of Europe, interchangeably with multi-ethnicity.

community should be able to feel a sense of ownership of and belonging to the school that would appeal to their children and their own frameworks of relevance both during conventional school hours and after school hours (where physical adjustments need to be made for the creation of spaces that accommodate adults).

The list is not exhaustive and is intended as an attempt to help stimulate even further debate in this dialogical circle. Hopefully, by the end of the discussion, more challenges will have been identified and added to the list.

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