Studies utilizing the perspectives of postcolonial theory have become established and increasingly widespread in the last few decades. This series embraces and broadly employs the postcolonial approach. As a site of struggle, education has constituted a key vehicle for the “colonization of the mind.” The “post” in postcolonialism is both temporal, in the sense of emphasizing the processes of decolonization, and analytical in the sense of probing and contesting the aftermath of colonialism and the imperialism which succeeded it, utilizing materialist and discourse analysis. Postcolonial theory is particularly apt for exploring the implications of educational colonialism, decolonization, experimentation, revisioning, contradiction and ambiguity not only for the former colonies, but also for the former colonial powers. This series views education as an important vehicle for both the inculcation and unlearning of colonial ideologies. It complements the diversity that exists in postcolonial studies of political economy, literature, sociology, and the interdisciplinary domain of cultural studies. Education is here being viewed in its broadest contexts, and is not confined to institutionalized learning. The aim of this series is to identify and help establish new areas of educational inquiry in postcolonial studies.

Series Editors:

Antonia Darder holds the Leavey Presidential Endowed Chair in Ethics and Moral Leadership at Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, and is professor emerita at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

Anne Hickling-Hudson is associate professor of Education at Australia’s Queensland University of Technology (QUT) where she specializes in cross-cultural and international education.

Peter Mayo is professor and head of the Department of Education Studies at the University of Malta where he teaches in the areas of Sociology of Education and Adult Continuing Education, as well as in Comparative and International Education and Sociology more generally.

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Culture, Education, and Community: Expressions of the Postcolonial Imagination
Jennifer M. Lavia and Sechaba Mahlomaholo
Culture, Education, and Community

Expressions of the Postcolonial Imagination

Edited by

Jennifer M. Lavia and Sechaba Mahlomaholo
Contents

List of Figure and Table vii

Series Editors’ Preface ix
Anne Hickling-Hudson, Antonia Darder, and Peter Mayo

Preface xiii

Acknowledgments xv

Introduction: Imagining the Postcolonial 1
Jennifer Lavia and Sechaba Mahlomaholo

1 Postcolonial Thought: A Theoretical and Methodological Means for Thinking through Culturally Ethical Research 15 Laurette Bristol

2 Validating Community Cultural Wealth: Toward Sustainable Empowering Learning Environments 33 Sechaba Mahlomaholo

3 Rethinking Education in South Africa: Amplifying Liberation Pedagogy 49 Milton Molebatsi Nkoane and Jennifer Lavia

4 The Politics of Restrictive Language Policies: A Postcolonial Analysis of Language and Schooling 69 Antonia Darder and Miren Uriarte

5 Súil Eile: A Different Perspective on Migration, Language Acquisition, Belonging, and Multicultural Society 103 Simon Warren
6 Reimagining Lines of Flight in Schooling for Indigenous Students in Australia 125
   Bob Lingard, Greg Vass, and Elizabeth Mackinlay

7 Border Crossing: Conversations About Race, Identity, and Agency in South Africa 147
   Dennis Francis

8 Constructing a Nation: The Role of Arts Education in South Africa 163
   Lorraine Singh

9 Calypso, Education, and Community in Trinidad and Tobago: From the 1940s to 2011 183
   Gordon Rohlehr

10 More in de Mortar dan de Pestle: Recruitment into Secondary Teaching in Trinidad and Tobago 211
    Joyanne De Four-Babb

11 Comparative Collaboration: A Transgressive Academic Practice of Being and Becoming 235
    Laurette Bristol, Joyanne De Four-Babb, Talia Esnard, Jennifer Lavia, and Lisa Perez

Conclusion: Postcolonial Strivings 255
   Jennifer Lavia and Sechaba Mahlomaholo

List of Contributors 261

Index 265
Figure 4.1 Annual high-school dropout rate, comparing EP and LEP in Massachusetts from the 2002/2003 to the 2007/2008 academic years

Table 7.1 Summary of participants’ identity
Culture, Education, and Community: Expressions of Postcolonial Imagination takes us on a variety of postcolonial journeys that explore issues of identity, domination, and change in education. The contributors to the volume wrestle thoughtfully with the problems of how to bring about equitable change in education in a world that continues to be marked by the injustices of the colonial aftermath. They confront these problems in several global contexts—Africa, Australia, the Caribbean, Ireland, and the United States. The complexity of the problems is made particularly vivid by the South African man who challenges academics by asking what meaning there is in the high-sounding ideas of reconciliation, equity, and educational change for a person like him, who was deprived of an education under apartheid, who is now 52, unemployed, uneducated, living poverty-stricken in his mother’s home, and unable to provide a promising future for his children (Mahlomaholo, chapter 2).

The conditions decried by this man vividly come to mind when one watches the film Invictus, which highlights the Mandela-led policy of national reconciliation and “unity” in support of the South African rugby union team, the Springboks—a team that had excluded blacks during the apartheid period. Although many praised Nelson Mandela for his effort, others saw the policy as a politics to sanitize the country’s racist colonial past. In light of similar postcolonial concerns, the book offers a multilayered look at educational problems, in places where people under colonialism were, in the words of another South African man, “hated, despised, detested on the basis of…physical makeup…made to feel inferior and incapable of challenging the colonial order”—and whose indigenous culture/knowledge, including ancestral knowledge, was denigrated and pathologized, in contrast to the exaltation of the imported and imposed dominant one. Moving beyond critique, the authors take us into the terrain of attempted
solutions and the implications for those who now have a chance to “rediscover [their] own genius and reassume [their] life history” (Nkoane and Lavia, chapter 3).

How do societies confront the imperative of paying the enormous debt owed to those deprived of an education by the former colonial system, and or denied an equitable education by the current system? What are the prospects for those determined to resume their rightful place in their societies? What forms should equity measures, affirmative action, and cultural restitution take in these contexts? The mesh of neoliberal governance that currently entraps governments globally means that these governments are less able and less willing than previously to provide the support services and affirmative action that would allow disenfranchised and oppressed people a fighting chance, let alone their inalienable right to redress the social imbalances created by colonialism and concomitant policies of cultural invasion, linguistic racialization, and economic exploitation.

The debt stemming from the educational neglect of people in formerly colonized and enslaved societies remains massive. The market economics and small government of neoliberal policies betray the idealistic objectives of independence movements and liberation struggles to create more equitable societies, where the rights to high-quality educational and other essential services were to be accessible to all, irrespective of social class, race, creed, or gender. This volume describes how educational conditions remain inequitable, whether in newly democratic South Africa or older independent nations, such as those of the Caribbean and Ireland, or in settler societies with indigenous and other multicultural minorities, such as Australia or the United States. The postcolonial critique of the authors shows that, although educational opportunities have grown, the system still reflects in many ways the gross inequities, disparities, and distortions of the educational system under colonialism or apartheid. Although the processes involved are perhaps more covert than in previous times, they generate persistent inequalities nevertheless.

What would it be like if a curriculum were to draw on the strengths of impoverished communities, rather than remaining mired in the neocolonial perspectives of Europeanized dominant cultures? Would this be akin to the notion of “inverse hegemony”? Toward this end, the book argues for a curriculum to be shaped by forms of community cultural wealth that are “aspirational, navigational, linguistic, familial, and resistant” as well as sociocultural (Mahlomaholo, chapter 2), and to draw inspiration from projects in which universities, parents,
students, and teachers use the everyday life stories and practices of schools and their communities to learn, to teach, and to research (Nkoane and Lavia chapter 3). The colonial shaping of the curriculum continues to be contested in these and other ways. Unfortunately, it is remarkably successful in persisting with the troubling legacies of the past and resisting change, as Rohlehr points out (chapter 9). Political independence for new nations does not necessarily mean decolonizing minds and the structural legacies of the discriminatory and differentiating colonial state.

Deep racial, cultural, and identity problems are manifested in the complex struggles for equitable education in the various contexts examined in the book. The linguistic issue is particularly difficult, partly because of its complexity in the societies of former colonies. The neoliberal state discourages effective bilingual language learning in U.S. schools, where working-class immigrant communities desperately need it; yet encourages it in wealthy schools preparing students for careers in a globalizing world (Darder and Uriarte, chapter 4). This linguistic inequity is part of a broader system of racialized economic and political oppression that positions immigrant learners of English and their families as unworthy of the kind of high-quality education that includes multilingualism, making a culture of and programming for academic failure more likely. In the context of Irish-speaking Ireland (Warren, chapter 5), many parents insist that their children’s schools operate as English-dominant (given that the colonizing English language is the language of power and international currency, as with other former colonial states) rather than bilingual, seeing the maintenance of the indigenous Irish language as a private responsibility. Yet, the native Irish language is the one of indigenous belonging.

How then to utilize educational resources to help preserve and expand the mother tongue? As with other educational issues examined in the text, authors offer a variety of suggestions. Warren, for example, considers both educational and community contexts to explore how the society could construct a popular cultural politics, and argues for an approach that is of relevance for multicultural societies—that is, building the political and public defense for living in and with diversity as a public good. In Australia, reforming indigenous schooling takes us on the dangerous terrain of who can speak about whom. The terrain is negotiated by Lingard, McKinlay, and Vass (chapter 6), discussing the strengths and weaknesses of three important approaches to educational change, contested by Indigenous
educators themselves—the demand for personal effort and a pedagogy of direct instruction; the advocacy of high motivation, self-pride, teacher effort, and indigenous context; and the Federal government’s aim of funding the direct teaching perceived as needed to close the gap in achievement between indigenous and other learners.

At a time when educational contexts around the world have become ever more contested due to neoliberal policies that propose the increasing instrumentalization and privatization of schooling for those populations most dependent on public means, *Culture, Education, and Community: Expressions of Postcolonial Imagination* provides readers with key insights into both theoretical and practical aspects of the postcolonial experience in education. With themes centered on autobiography, citizenship, curriculum, pedagogy, community development, language politics, indigeneity, changing identities, postcolonial aesthetics, and resistance, the book provides a much needed multifaceted analysis of education and community, through a postcolonial lens. The volume’s exploration of curriculum decolonization and research collaboration in terms of social equity, racism, cultural and gender identity, language policies, and knowledge paradigms is important for constructing a broad interdisciplinary and postcolonial view of education and culture in the world today.

Anne Hickling-Hudson, Antonia Darder, and Peter Mayo
We live in an era defined by rapid shifts and flows in peoples, ideas, capital, and cultures, in which identities and experiences are constantly being transformed and rewritten. Arguably, education occurs within community, and as an academic discipline, it continues to be a contested site in which the imperialist intent of modern capitalism continues to thrive through crisis and becomes manifest in a parade of neoliberal policies and practices. How these policies and practices are experienced as epistemic outcomes of hegemonic knowledge can be seen as having a globalizing effect. Yet it can be argued that education occurs at the local site, and, as dangerous as these times are, they do provide challenges and opportunities for developing a politics of recognition in which voices of subaltern professionals can struggle to be articulated within multicultural settings.

It is within this context that this book has emerged. Out of conversations and reflections on professional practices among and between the contributors of this volume, have come a series of interpretations of the postcolonial condition. As editors of this book, we became preoccupied through email exchanges and face-to-face conversations with the urgent and unfinished business of postcolonial discourse, and more so, in striving to push the boundaries of postcolonial theories to glean deeper and more critical understandings of how such theories can contribute to how we think about education and schooling. The aim of this book therefore is to reexamine how postcolonial theories might contribute to understandings about education, and we pose two questions to provoke the debate: Can education contribute to cultural confidence of peoples and communities who have endured centuries of oppression and marginalization? If so, what is education, and what is education for given such historical circumstances? Our hope is that the book has provided a critical space in which to interrogate the ways in which postcolonial voices are imagined and struggle
to be valued, heard, and responded to. The book takes the imagination of the postcolonial and the experience of postcoloniality as its focus, acknowledging that postcolonialism is a troubling, unsettling, and ambiguous concept requiring revisiting and reinterpretation. Through these chapters, the book seeks to promote the opportunities for, and begin to remove the limitations of, articulating postcolonial theories to understanding education and all the other aspects of the human condition and draws upon the lived experiences of postcolonial scholars to provide interpretations that foreground missing perspectives that are often marginalized, silenced, ignored, or denied.

By bringing together postcolonial understandings as well as critical theories that are allied to postcolonial thinking, we have sought to work through studies of culture and learning in human and social sciences. Autobiography, citizenship, curriculum, pedagogy, community development, indigenous perspectives, changing identities, postcolonial aesthetics, and resistance are examples of unifying themes throughout. By addressing the contested, yet related, themes of culture, education, and community, we are aspirational in our outlook that the impact of a postcolonial agenda for understanding education and for changing cultures and communities will be significant to those working in and for education and community development. Such an agenda, therefore, is central to this book and is considered in the book, from a number of different postcolonial and critical perspectives informed by the personal, professional, and research experiences encountered by its authors.
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