RADICAL EDUCATION

WORK-BOOK

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Introduction

The Need for Radical Education Today

The production of this workbook began at the onset of the movement against the austerity programme that had been laid out by the Coalition Government in Britain in 2010. In this moment, and in the years and months since, students, teachers, nurses, doctors, migrant people, firefighters and many others have begun to invent and re-engage with practices of organisation: questioning measures of austerity, and more fundamentally, the process of neo-liberalisation that preceded them.

This UK dimension of a global movement, including occupations, street protests, strikes, people's rebellions and anti-capitalist co-operatisation has consistently struggled with the need to move beyond spontaneous actions. It has attempted to move away from big speeches and A to B marches, towards broader consciousness-raising initiatives, community and grassroots organising practices, consideration for the politics of speaking and listening, and attention to the dynamics of teaching and learning within our movements.

As a collective of students and educators working in a diversity of settings, from primary schools to universities, social centres to swimming pools, and straddling this work with our involvement in struggles on the Education front, we found ourselves poorly educated in the histories of radical education that have circulated in the UK and elsewhere. This, we understand, is not by any particular mistake or ignorance but because of the systematic erasure of questions of radical pedagogy from curriculum and, to a certain extent, from social movements themselves.

In the making of this workbook we have recounted our own experiences of teacher training - increasingly focused on behaviour management and test score achievement. Where radical education has been introduced, it is often marginalised to the theory section of our courses, divorced from our experiences, removed from the practical aspect of the teaching that constitutes the majority of our time as educators. The staff room, the only place for teacher congregation – where it has not been removed following current managerial trends, provides neither the physical space nor the time to allow for discussion of critical approaches to curriculum. This leaves teachers and teachers of teachers attempting to make even minor changes within the current system stigmatized if they propose critical or radical strategies.

This absence of critical approaches to curriculum also exists within social movements themselves. Where many radical bookshops have extensive sections of political analysis they rarely have sections on community organising, popular education, radical research or their histories. Many movement organisers are not aware of these practices, used in revolutionary and everyday struggles for social justice around the world and focus more on readings of key theoretical texts. For others, these histories of radical education are implicit in practice, but are rarely valourised as bodies of knowledge to be understood alongside key analytic debates. For a new generation of activists entering into struggles for a non-coercive, anti-authoritarian and anti-capitalist education, there is often a feeling that one is beginning from scratch.

Initiated in 2010, the Radical Education Workbook has been an attempt to rectify these different absences. It was created through collective readings and workshops exploring practiced concepts. These spaces have provided moments of solidarity between students and educators across many practices, and support for those bearing the physical and emotional stress of the Education system as it currently stands. In creating these spaces, we have been careful not to re-assert a new professionalized 'radical education' sector or subjectivity, but proceeded with the idea that Education (and radical education in particular) is not only the domain of teachers and students – it is fundamental to the production of life, as opposed to production of workers and 'good' citizens. In this, practices of education are central to social and political organisation.

The 'Radical' in Radical Education

Our use of the term radical is not meant to make grand claims of political purity, nor to be off-putting for those who don't think of themselves as 'radicals'. It is used provisionally to mark out a terrain that includes many very regressive forms of practices including popular education and research, militant or co-research, collective practice, popular theatre, critical literacy, participatory action research, social justice education and many others. We felt it important to encompass these practices with a more jarring and questionable term to counter the very nice language that can be used when speaking about education and to suggest that a focus on social justice is most definitely at radical odds with the forms of Education we are forced to work in today.

The Making of the Workbook

We have moved slowly in making this first version of the Radical Education Workbook. It was not assembled by people sitting at desks alone and imagining what the education of the masses could be, nor through a call to a select group of friends to write entries and gain marks for institutional validation, but rather through group encounters, readings, meetings and events. The earliest of these took place in the student occupations at the onset of the anti-austerity movements. There, different generations of students and teachers shared tools, histories and strategies with one another. We have since met in an anarchist bookshop, squatted social centres, art galleries and in locally focused community centres.

Taking Paulo Freire's suggestion of 'reading the word and the world together', each session – and subsequently each workbook entry – is divided into three parts.

* Key Concepts within radical education and their histories

* Practices associated with the concept in classrooms and other less conventional educational settings

* Reflection about the relevance of the concept to our struggles today.

This three-fold approach was to ensure that concepts were not dissociated from practice and that practices were not dissociated from their contexts and commitments, as has been the case with many radical educational methods enabling them to be turned into tools of neo-liberal managers. Our focus on the contemporary relevance of concepts was to ensure that we did not settle into nostalgic and overly idealized conversations about past movements, but ignited our present with what has come before while acknowledging the complexities into which they must enter today.

Many practices and histories in the workbook resonate with current tensions in the discursive field of education: between conservative educators on one side and well intentioned but seldom emancipatory reformists on the other; between dogmatic, top-down leftist party educators and universal humanists; between neo-liberal charities and de-colonising forms of education produced in and from various global sites of struggle. It is with the latter of these that we ideally align ourselves, knowing that we are sometimes forced to borrow from the others.

How to use the workbook?

This first version of the Workbook includes contributions from diverse educators and social movements. Some entries are derived from workshops, others are based on more historical research and some are foundational, articulating new vocations and possibilities.

They are organized into four sections:

Challenging Imposed Curricula

Collectivity

Self-Organisation

Using the Pedagogies of the Oppressed

Given that what often distinguishes critical or radical education from mainstream approaches is that it is based on commitments to social justice rather than strict disciplines, in many ways each entry touches on all of these themes. We have nonetheless divided them to provide possible entry points and categories for future expansion. Within these sections, each entry is based on a concept that can be used. We encourage you to try them out and let us know how it goes.

This is the first of many editions and we hope that it will inspire others to come forward with concepts, practices and histories of radical education used in their communities. It is in that sense completely incomplete, and more of an invitation to others.

Who Made the Workbook?

The Workbook was initiated by the Radical Education Forum with members of the sound art and political collective Ultra-red. It received a small amount of funding for printing from the Drawing Room as part of the exhibition, Best Laid Plans curated by Cylena Simonds in 2010. It was designed by Jackson Lam and printed at Hato Press. Contributors to the book include:

56a Infoshop, Alice Robson, Anna Wolmuth, Ashley L. Whitfield, Chris Jones, Colin Waugh, Dont Rhine, Feminist Fightback, Free University of Liverpool, Greggory Vass, Janna Graham, Jorge Goia, Laura Rogers, London Coalition Against Poverty, Michael Harding, Nelly Alfandari, Onni, Val Archer, Victoria Harris, Ultra-Red, the X-Talk project, and all those involved in the Radical Education Forum.

The Radical Education Forum is a group of people working in a wide range of educational settings in the UK. We meet monthly to discuss radical pedagogical theories and techniques, and contemporary issues of interest to those involved or interested in education. We explore and enact how these theories and questions can inform our practice. The Forum supports social justice in education, linking practitioners within mainstream educational institutions, community education initiatives, social movements, arts organisations and self-organised groups. Meetings are held on the first Monday of every month from 7–9pm and are open to all at Freedom Books (through side door rather than main shop entrance, meeting room on 2nd floor), Angel Alley, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London, E1 (nearest tube Aldgate East).

radicaleducationforum.tumblr.com

Ultra-red are a sound-based art and political collective founded in 1994 by two AIDS activists. Originally based in Los Angeles, the collective has expanded over the years with members across North American and Europe. Members in Ultra-red range from artists, researchers and organizers from different social movements including the struggles of migration, anti-racism, participatory community development, and the politics of HIV/AIDS. In 2008 they began working explicitly with practices of popular education, setting up learning experiments for students, artists and community organisers under the name the School of Echoes.

www.ultrared.org

No one received remuneration – apart from some free food – in the making of the guide.

CHALLENGING IMPOSED CURRICULA

ANTI-IMPERIAL EDUCATION

History

What is history for? What historical events should every child know? Should history be used to promote national identity? Or should history be focused on teaching skills and concepts?

The National Curriculum currently sees history as a means of helping students to develop their own identities through exploring the 'dilemmas, choices and beliefs of people in the past'. It sets out key concepts that every student studying history should understand: chronology; cultural, ethnic and religious diversity; change and continuity; cause and consequence; significance; and, interpretation.[1] In the current curriculum, due to be revised in 2014, national identity is relatively low-key but it appears set to have a much greater role in the future as the current government looks to conservative historians to re-shape the curriculum. According to Niall Ferguson, professor at Harvard University and Harvard Business School and author of Empire (2003) and Civilisation (2011) school history fails to give children a knowledge of the 'important' events in Britain's past. Ferguson, alongside the Better History group, believes that between ages five and fifteen children should begin with the Romans and 'progress' through to the Magna Carta, the Tudors, the 'Glorious' Revolution of 1688, through Industrial revolution and up to the twentieth century.[2]

The plans for the history curriculum appear as a re-invention of a nineteenth-century imperial teleology, the story of how wealthy, white Englishmen (later with a few Scottish collaborators) came to rule over everybody else. Niall Ferguson calls it the story of 'civilisation' and sees the baton having been passed to the USA and, in the future, China. His unapologetic capitalism spills over into racism and sexism. Take this quote from an interview in which he praises British imperialism, for example: 'I'm sure the Apache and the Navajo had all sorts of admirable traits. In the absence of literacy we don't know what they were because they didn't write them down. We do know they killed a hell of a lot of bison. But had they been left to their own devices, I don't think we'd have anything remotely resembling the civilisation we've had in north America.' I think many of us would see Ferguson's narrative as the story of how capitalism enslaved, violated and annihilated the vast majority of people living on this earth. If introduced to school-children as 'their' history, it will alienate the vast numbers of school children in England who live between multiple cultures, religions, languages and countries. History, already seen as an 'academic' subject for 'high-achievers' in schools, will remain a white dominated, middle class discipline. If this debate is reflective of wider society, then it stands to perpetuate the structures of prejudice (racism, classism, sexism and ableism) that we are fighting against today.

Practice

History through storytelling:

1. **Begin with a photograph or picture of a small group of people in the past and generate questions from it – Who are they? Where are they? Why are they there? When were they there?**
2. **The group gives each person a name and begins to build up a story about each of the characters. The example in mind is a photograph of street children in Victorian London. The names and stories must fit with the time, which might mean looking up popular names in the nineteenth century or researching poverty in order to think about about why children might be homeless. As the story builds up so do the questions and the subjects for research. What games might they have played? What food would they have eaten? Why might they have become orphans?**
3. **As the story builds up, so the group takes on the identities of the individuals in the photograph and thinks about their relationship to that character. More complex questions become possible. If my own ethnic heritage is South Asian, does that mean that I wouldn't have been there, or were there South Asian people in London? What kind of lives did poor South Asian people live in London? This might lead to research and discussion of lascars (sailors) or of ayahs (nannies) and the relationship between London, Britain and the empire in India.**

Reflection

Visions for History?

Aside from general outrage, our discussion explored the question of using history to shape identity and whether this could ever be desirable. We largely agreed that history should not be used to promote national identity, although it is difficult to understand historical narrative without the framework of the nation state. Is it possible to elide a national narrative and still study history in a coherent form that is accessible to young people? Perhaps, if we explicitly shape our study of the past according to questions that we raise in the present (which we do anyway, whether acknowledged or not). With care and nuance, thinking historically can be a creative way to think through situations that look similar but may turn out to be different or have resonances with our own world. We shared times that history has been inspirational for understanding our own worlds better and situating ourselves within them. Women's struggles against patriarchy and constructions of gender in the past, for example, might help us to think through our own positions and struggles today, as well as the demands that society makes in terms of gender conformity.

Our discussion generated more questions than answers – can the ability to think historically about contemporary questions only come about if a knowledge of the past is already extensive? As teachers, how much 'telling' do we need to do before we can begin to help our students formulate questions and answers for themselves? Yet we also agreed that with different methods, finding creative ways of exploring the past and not worrying when, as teachers, we do not have the answers, history can help students to explore their own identities.

1. *History: programme of study for key stage 3 and attainment target*, www.qca.org.uk/curriculum [24/08/2011], pp. 111–113.

2. Niall Ferguson, *History has never been so unpopular* http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2011/mar/29/history-school-crisis-disconnected-events [29/03/2011]

SEX AND RELATIONSHIPS EDUCATION

History

Feminist Fightback is an anti-capitalist feminist collective for self-defining women. With sex and relationships education (SRE) back in the spotlight following MP Nadine Dorries' terrifying attempt to introduce abstinence training for girls, we have been considering what feminist sex education might look like and how resources for teaching it could be made available. Although teenagers can only expect 6 hours of SRE a year, it is one of the most hotly contested issues in young peoples' education, and is becoming increasingly crucial as a site of feminist struggle. In addition to Nadine Dorries' lobbying for abstinence classes for girls, 2011 saw Richmond Council outsource its SRE provision to a Catholic charity, and parents in Tower Hamlets encouraged to participate in meetings called by East London Mosque and the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child to a rally against the provision of SRE in primary schools. All of these developments are moving us further away from comprehensive SRE for young people, which has always been inconsistent in quality and quantity of provision.

Following discussions about our own experience of SRE, Feminist Fightback set about thinking about what we wished we had been taught, told, made to think about and allowed to ask. Acknowledging the pitfalls and inadequacies of our own experiences both in school and in our adult lives, we asked ourselves: *'what is feminist sex and relationship education?'*

Our collective experience was mainly characterised by scientific and medical approaches. Anecdotes included human reproduction being learnt about alongside plant reproduction, and nurses coming in to run sessions about disease prevention. The emotional aspect tended to be dealt with in negative terms – the emphasis on waiting until the 'right time' and 'saying no' etc. made it all feel very scary, and left no avenue open for what to think, feel or do if someone wanted to say yes. Overall, it was clear that provision was patchy – different people got different amounts of SRE at different levels, but all of us felt we were missing the same things: discussion of sexuality; relationships; non-reproductive, non-heterosexual sex; self-pleasure and, in some cases, any discussion of sex outside marriage. This chimes with the findings of the UK Youth Parliament's survey of 20,000 young people ('SRE: Are you getting it?' London: UK Youth Parliament, 2007, www.ukyouthparliament.org.uk/sre).

The neglect of pleasure in school-based SRE, or the 'missing discourse of desire', has particular consequences for young women. This is because they are already socially constructed as having lower levels of sexual desire and being able to experience sexual pleasure less easily than young men. The image of women as passive recipients of active male desires is reinforced through curricula which take girls off to learn about periods and sanitary towels while boys are free to ask lots of questions about erections and wet dreams. Male orgasms are present in the curriculum, while female orgasms are not. In this way, SRE fails to convey a sense of empowerment and entitlement to sexual pleasure for young women. At the same time, for young men, although SRE is more likely to provide a discourse of sexual desire, it offers them limited ways of understanding their sexuality. As dominant expressions of male sexuality require young men to exercise power over women, such discourses limit alternative expressions of male sexualities, including homosexuality.

After all, SRE lessons are only one of the many sources from which young people can learn about sex and relationships, with peers, television, films, the internet and social media playing a much more prominent role. Without a discourse of erotics, SRE cannot contest discourses of 'erotica' in mainstream pornography, which present women as objects of male desire rather than subjects of their own. We believe schools should be supporting young people to think critically about these messages, challenging them rather than imposing an agenda, such as abstinence, that would in practice work to reinforce them.

With the rise of right-wing and religious groups organising to limit access to any kind of SRE and promoting a narrow and moralistic agenda in the classroom, it seems more important than ever that those concerned with education for liberation go on the offensive and envision and practice something better.

Practice

As many of us work in education and health, have brought up children and are part of a group of feminist activists that have experience of contributing to workshops in and out of schools, we felt able to put together some resources aimed at young people in and out of formal schooling. We created two resource packs: the primary pack is a looser collection of ideas for discussion, activities and everyday practice, while the secondary pack is a more structured scheme of work. Both are available on our website: www.feministfightback.org.uk.

These materials aim to offer educators tools and exercises for teaching about sex and relationships in an honest and positive way. They deal with relationships from an emotional perspective as well as a physical one, acknowledge diversity and individuality and enable open discussion of gender and sexualities. They help students to consider respect and consent in a way that is relevant to their own experiences. They provide activities and resources for teaching about the language, social myths and media messages surrounding sexuality, as well as for confronting the prejudice surrounding female sexuality and non-heterosexual relationships. They aim to give teachers practical tools to add to their SRE teaching, to help address what we felt was missing from our own experiences of learning and teaching SRE.

Reflection

Pockets of good practice are a starting point. Educators who promote values of sexual and gender equality and empowerment can often feel like they are fighting a losing battle. An hour a week six times a year of progressive SRE is easily drowned out by the atmosphere, behaviour and language prominent across the rest of the timetable or institution, and of course in life. Teachers are acutely aware that the standards regime allows no time or space for dealing with the day to day instances of sexist, homophobic or any other kind of harassment. If we want to precipitate a cultural shift rather than just presenting an alternative to mainstream ideas, a holistic approach is essential; opportunities for exploration and discussion of issues of equality and choice with regards to gender, sex and relationships need to be recognised and exploited throughout the curriculum, timetable and institution.

We are now at the stage of promoting the resource packs to educators, inviting suggestions and additions to the materials and discussing the opportunities and challenges of putting them in into practice. This involves making the case within our workplaces and communities for a feminist approach to SRE. It also involves continuing to challenge the idea, prominent in current attacks on SRE, that young people should not be empowered to think about, and make decisions about, their own sexualites.

We invite you to reflect on this process with us.

Feminist.fightback@gmail.com
www.feministfightback.org.uk

CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

The struggle between rich and poor is not social reality, which politics then has to deal with. It is the actual institution of politics itself... Politics exists when the natural order of domination is interrupted by the institution of a part of those who have no part.

(Ranciere 1995, p11)

History

Citizenship Education was introduced as a compulsory element of the National Curriculum in primary and secondary schools in 2002. It is essentially political education, with a focus on active involvement – supporting students to develop the knowledge and skills needed to become active citizens in communities ranging from local to global. The 'light touch' curriculum includes three conceptual areas: 'democracy and justice'; 'rights and responsibilities', and 'identities and diversity – living together in the UK'. The key skills included are: 'critical thinking'; 'advocacy and representation', and 'taking informed and responsible action'. In primary schools, these curriculum requirements are generally addressed as a cross-curricular theme, whereas in secondary schools it has been common practice to introduce 'Citizenship' as a discrete subject, often in combination with Personal, Social and Health Education.

The unfortunate title of Citizenship Education evokes the government's notorious 'Citizenship Test', designed to limit access to the UK for asylum seekers. We would hope that the two are very different in nature. However, although Citizenship Education is clearly not about having a British passport or learning the names of the longest rivers in the UK, there are still significant ambiguities in its aims. Is it about being a 'good citizen', as envisaged by the state? Pykett (2007) suggests that one of the government's motivations for Citizenship Education was to police student autonomy through the creation of 'a certain political subjectivity'. Or is citizenship about being an active citizen? This could look very different from the government's ideal. The Ofsted report on the subject alludes to this tension with the question - 'the purposes of citizenship: compliance or challenge?' Indeed, there are reports of students being suspended after skipping school to protest about issues they have learnt about in Citizenship lessons – from the Iraq War to student fees and education cuts.

The most frequently quoted aim of Bernard Crick's 1998 report, which laid out recommendations for Citizenship Education in the UK, is that the subject would offer 'no less than a shift in the political culture of this country'. The intention of a 'political shift' came hot on the heels of low voter turn-out, especially amongst 18 to 26 year olds, as well as concerns about 'social exclusion' and 'Islamic extremism'. Interest in Citizenship Education in the UK must be seen in the context of New Labour's political project of the 'Third Way'. This has a particular vision for the relationship between citizens and state – it accepts the economic inequality resulting from a capitalist economy, and sees the role of the state as providing support and opportunities for empowered citizens to 'help themselves'.

Despite its origins in this context, Citizenship Education offers a unique space for critical educators within the state education system to explore political issues with young people. The fact that the curriculum is 'light touch' allows it to be responsive to students' interests and their own relationships with the world around them. For example, ways to protest against the cut to Educational Maintenance Allowance, legal rights during stop and search, the causes and consequences of the riots.

Given the character of our education system, there are challenges being made for the space opened up by Citizenship Education. This is largely caused by intense pressure on schools to compete against each other in league tables for their 5 A*-C GCSEs (including English and Maths). This lowers the status, time and resources available for Citizenship teaching. In addition, with the current government's explicitly conservative views on the purpose of education and schooling, it is unsurprising that Citizenship Education has come under attack. It is likely to become non-compulsory, replaced with a more fixed and traditional set of subjects. Michael Gove's 'English Baccalaureate' (5 A*-C GCSEs, including English, Maths, Science, History or Geography and a Modern Foreign Language) is already squeezing out Citizenship Education, alongside the arts and sport. It is an important struggle to fight for all young people to have an entitlement to Citizenship Education in their schooling. If Michael Gove doesn't like it, it must be a good thing, right?

Practice

Below are a series of examples from educators who have used Citizenship Education or the values and approaches it can embody to facilitate critical education in a school and college.

Pressure Groups:

We have found it possible to introduce some of the active aspects of Citizenship to an A-Level politics course. This hasn't engaged students directly in their communities through volunteering or projects - rather it has taken each topic and provided active engagement between the key concepts and ideas about authority and rights, mainly through the development of simulation activities. In a module on pressure groups, a campaigns officer from a large environmental organisation was invited to come and do a campaigning simulation with the students. This engaged them directly in the relationships that exist between MPs, corporations, lobbyists, the media, lawyers, 'the people', activists and campaigning organisations. The students were allotted to a group, which had a different set of rules, money, and 'powers'. We devised a scenario where oil had been discovered outside the college and the Government and an oil company wanted to extract it. The aim of the game was for all groups to successfully complete their objectives; they either wanted the oil to be extracted or to be left alone. Each group's power was a token or 'bonus' that they got to use as the game went on. For example, 'the people' had to give their vote to one of the MPs, while the lobbyists could gag the media once. The more media coverage the groups got, or the more they stopped the actions of the other groups, the more points they were awarded. Ultimately a winner was decided. Beyond entertainment, this game highlighted to the students the disparity in access to power between public and private interests, and also that collective action (between the campaigning and direct action groups, sympathetic journalists and MPs) could limit the actions of government and ultimately lead to secured rights.

Who Owns the News?

Students can be encouraged to look at the media with a more critical eye once they have had the chance to be editors themselves. Each group of students ('editorial team') is given a selection of current headlines and a brief. The briefs range from 'Peoples' TV' - ('a small independent channel that is broadcast on the internet. You try to broadcast important stories that are left out by mainstream channels') to Popular TV ('the channel relies on money from advertising. The more viewers, the more companies will pay to advertise their products – so you are desperate to be the most popular') and 'Government TV' ('your owner is good friends with the Prime Minister and is looking forward to her knighthood. She likes to make sure that the editors present the Government in a good light'). Each channel broadcasts its chosen headlines to the class and this opens up discussion about why certain stories make it to the top of news bulletins, and others don't.

Local and Global Solidarity in the Classroom

Links with local groups taking action, such as those involved in London Coalition Against Poverty, can introduce students to the principle that 'through solidarity and direct action, ordinary people have the power to change their own lives' (LCAP principle). After all, what goes on inside school should not be seen as separate from the community outside the gates. Developing links between schools and grass-roots struggles in other countries can keep an international perspective and challenge the 'Comic Relief' approach and accompanying discourses of charity / dependency. These in particular can dominate global Citizenship Education in schools. Many of the mainstream educational resources for this area of Citizenship Education are produced by the big NGOs, who see Citizenship lessons as a way of marketing their work to young people. For example, after learning about the Eurozone crisis and what teachers and students in Spain were doing to protest against cuts to education - which left black outs in schools and slashed salaries - students from London wrote questions to students in Valencia. They asked them about its impact on their lives and how they felt the protests were going.

Student-led Campaigns

Citizenship lessons can be planned to give students the opportunity to take action on an issue they care about, and to support them in the campaign planning process. Setting an aim, breaking it down into measurable and achievable targets, identifying who has the power to help, or how power could be built up amongst people who currently have too little, and so on. Despite its terrible methods of assessment (which mainly assess literacy), the GCSE Citizenship 'controlled assessment' active Citizenship project led to students running their own campaigns on tuition fees, Education Maintenance Allowance and anti-fascism, to give some examples. These were worth 60% of the qualification.

A Space For Reflection

When invited to create an action for an issue they care about, students will often resort to the standard examples to which they have been exposed, such as cake sales or sponsored sporting events. The kinds of questioning and reflection we do in Citizenship lessons can lead students to think for themselves about whether these are in fact the best ways of tackling issues such as war and poverty, while developing their ways of taking action for next time.

Likewise, engaging with the political establishment, for example by writing to local councillors or MPs, or inviting them in for meetings, can offer richer learning about politics in the post-action discussions than in the acts themselves. When a local councillor 'mislaid' a class' letters about local issues they were concerned about, and then wrote an unsatisfactory response back to the teacher, this was discussed in class – and this will inform their approach to future problems.

Reflection

There is an ongoing tension for critical educators working in the state education system. Citizenship Education brings these tensions to the fore, in the classroom – how much space is available for an education that empowers students to criticise the structure that provides their education? Can we really engage in education for social change in this context?

In our experience, the subject does have the potential to provide a space for students to reflect upon the world around them, its structures and relationships. It is important that all young people have access to this kind of education – not just those whose parents and carers are politically active or interested themselves. Ideally this kind of education would not be limited to (often less than) one hour a week, squeezed out by the 'core subjects' of English, Maths and so on. It would be a theme running through a much more holistic and socially critical curriculum. Meanwhile, as we continue to fight for a socially just and critical education system, the small concession of Citizenship Education will need to be defended.

L'ECOLE MODERNE

Presented at the Radical Education Forum in London in autumn, 2010.

History

Elise and Celestin Freinet were communist educators active in France from the 1920s until Celestins' death in 1966. A member of the French Communist Party (who met with Party Education Minister N. Krupskaya in 1925) Celestin Freinet broke from traditional party education processes to produce practices of co-operative learning with children of the working classes in rural areas. The Freinet's work inspired a movement that spread from France to Italy and Germay throughout the twentieth century, first known as the Secular Education Co-operative and then as the Institute Moderne Education. While some of Freinet's ideas regarding 'learning by doing' and his belief in natural processes as the basis for Education are in keeping with the pedagogies of Piaget, Decroly, Montessori and others, Institute teachers prefaced their work with a commitment to a pedagogy against capitalist exploitation and for the liberation of the poor. As opposed to specialized private schools for the middle and upper classes, their work took place in rural and later urban state schools.

The core feature of every Freinet school was a collectively owned and operated printing press. Students learned to read and write by making collaborative newspapers based in their observations of the world. Freinet felt it important that students and teachers have a very material relation to the language that they produced so that this language would not become detached from the practices with which it was associated. This relationship to language did not end at the school walls, but created a connection between the inside of the school and the wider community. He called the printing press and other teaching practices developed in the popular schools, 'techniques for living'.

Texte libres or 'free texts' were points of departure for newspapers and group discussions. Free texts began with free-form student and teacher observation of their environment. They helped to inspire student wonder, and from there to articulate desires for transformation. Students and teachers would begin to organise terms into categories or themes relating to what they observed and what they felt should be transformed. They refined the language of terms into a story or treatise or question and then set the text on the press to produce a publication. Publications were read and responded to by people in the immediate milieu but also by students in other regions of France, through the Institute's inter-school correspondence programme. Freinet teachers, who co-operatively owned their own publishing house for the production of pamphlets reflecting on educational practice, used a similar process to share experiences of teaching and learning toward liberatory aims. Each school had a Council comprised of teachers and students who used the opportunity to invent the school and its functions through collective decision making.

Practice

Freinet as adapted as a collaboration between artists, activists, teachers and students in a West London School:

Time: Six days

Day One

1. **The group goes for a walk in their school with a central question such as: what is the sound of the future of this place? Each student must choose a place to visit on the walk.**
2. **The group walks in silence, with one student guiding at a time. They are equipped with papers and pens, cameras and audio recorders.**
3. **At each stop, the group makes a recording for a set amount of time (1–2 minutes).**
4. **On returning to the classroom, the group shares their recordings, asking other students to respond in a uniform fashion i.e by asking fellow students: what did you hear?**
5. **Notes are taken based on observations.**
6. **These notes are then organized into a series of questions.**

Day Two

The group uses these questions to go through the same process as Day One – making recordings and noting observations – but in relation to sites in their surrounding neighbourhood.

Day Three

Looking at the notes from their conversations on days one and two, the group(s) begins to examine the relationship between the future of the school and the neighbourhood. What is this relationship? Are there contradictions between the school and the outside? Are there consistencies? How do the themes operate in each location? How and in what way might students imagine participating? What questions and observations might be concluded about each?

Day Four

Students write texts in small groups and pass their text on to another group for feedback and editing.

Day Five

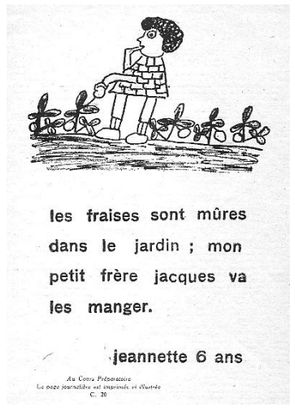
Students lay out the texts graphically. Final editing.

Day Six

Students visit a printing press committed to social justice work, learn about how the press works in relation to these commitments. There they print their material. Final Proofs. (See Elephant Press, Calverts, the London Print Studio, Hato Press, among others).

Day Seven (one week later)

Students distribute print to other student groups, organising discussions of the content.



Reflection

It is little known that the Freinets' methods were influential for hundreds of students in France. Many of those who occupied the Ministry of Education in 1968, for example, studied using updated versions of Freinet's school methods.

Where these processes are no longer visible, concepts such as 'Learning Through Work' and 'Co-operative Education' have survived, but, much as they have in the UK, have been used to support the movement of (often poor) students into vocational education and to enter into the exploited classes of labour. In 2005 prime minister Dominique de Villepin, announced the 'law on equality of chances', creating the First Employment legislation allowing apprenticeships for people as young as 14 years old at which time students would be allowed to quit the compulsory school system in order to quickly learn a vocation. This was met by opposition from trade unions and students including protests of over 3.1 million people, university occupations and strikes.

In London, where we find the de-funding of schools and the rise of youth unemployment covered up by a similar push towards 'work experience', internships, apprenticeships and other forms of free labour, student 'work experience' programmes often prepare students for a life of poor working conditions such that being paid appears to be a privilege. Additionally, new Workfare programmes have been introduced, making it mandatory for people to work for free when receiving social assistance or 'benefit'. Campaigns such as Boycott Workfare suggest that host organizations (many of them NGOs and public sector organizations) refuse such a policing of social benefit. This becomes increasingly important within policies of the Big Society that promote the use of unpaid work to cover up the massive gaps resulting from public funding cuts. However, at a moment when it is difficult to find time to work with students outside of the insidious regimes of testing and short encounters and to engage in investigations of life, could we think of ways to use 'work experience' to create more liberatory forms of 'learning by doing' in the school and other aspects of public life?

Students in the school activity – on such a work experience scheme – identified a number of key issues to impact upon the future of their school and the neighbourhood: increasing surveillance, the privatisation of housing and of public space and the feeling that the school is detached from the neighbourhood. Through their work experience they brainstormed campaigns and actions that might directly intervene.

Quarterly Review of Comparative Education, Paris: UNESCO: International Bureau of Education, vol XXIII no ½ 1993

Beattie, N. *The Freinet Movements of France, Italy and Germany 1920-2000* by Edwin Mellon Press, Ontario: 2002.

COLLECTIVITY

CIRCLE TIME

History

When primary classrooms were organised around the focal point of the carpet – a large empty space where children could sit together – circle time was, I imagine, a more common and meaningful feature of many primary school teachers' timetables. Since classrooms have become more functional spaces for a narrower type of target driven learning, the carpet as a space for coming together throughout the day has been eaten up by tables and seating arrangements that are designed to organise children by ability; the focus has shifted from the class as a collaborative community to a room that holds a lot of individuals as they rise, or do not rise, up the ladder of personal achievement.

Recently, Circle Time has had a resurgence, largely due to the curriculum's emphasis on Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL). However, Circle Time as it is wheeled out in many schools today, often focuses on developing the self-esteem of individuals through routines that have been produced and sold as corporatised learning packages, devoid of their original commitment to collective learning.

Over many years, a Tower Hamlet's organisation called the Circle Works has developed an ideology and practice of circle time that aims to address the needs of the community, both the microcosm of community inside the classroom and the larger community outside it. The Circle Works grew out of teachers' belief that this space for reflection was necessary, both for them and the students they worked with, many of whom arrived in Tower Hamlets through very difficult circumstances. This strand of Circle Time is less about a corporate methodology and more about enabling teachers to see themselves as facilitators, enablers of rituals that children make on their own – objects, stories and routines become symbolic of a togetherness that influences the workings of the classroom in every instance.

Practice

Circle Time

One hour a week:

1. **Ask everyone to make a circle.**
2. **Introduce the objects one by one:**
   - **Conch (or equivalent) – an object that indicates who will speak at any given moment (symbolic of communication);**
   - **Something else, special and intriguing, that comes with a story that can be owned by the group through its use (symbolic of 'us' – the collective);**
   - **A bottle or spinner that can do the choosing (symbolic of the role of the individual).**
3. **Place the objects in the middle of the circle, spin the bottle to choose who will start. That person is given the special object and begins passing it around the circle to focus us together. Once it reaches the beginning again, place it in the centre as a focal point.**
4. **The conch is there ready to be received by anyone who needs to say something.**
5. **When issues are brought up, participants think about what could be done about this issue - developing rituals, games and concrete solutions for dealing with issues**
6. **At the end of circle time, again the bottle is used to choose someone to begin the rotation of the object again. I use a candle which can be lit and blown out to boundary circle time.**

Reflection

In my time as a primary school teacher I have used circle times to build a dynamic community of people – children and staff. It is our shared strategy for dealing with difficult things. When someone dies, leaves, is unhappy, or has a big change or decision to make, we use circle time as the space to deal with it. Grounded in a set of familiar routines, this practice has got me and my class through some very tough times in a way that has felt genuine and thorough, sensitive and robust. It is not always an easy space, sometimes it is a space for challenge and confrontation, dealing with issues of sabotage, rejection or power. Sometimes it is simply a time to take stock or be still. There are many games which can be used to initiate discussion on these themes. Children love it; they rely on it and feel honoured by it.

Often you will hear children say, 'we dealt with that in circle time so it's sorted,' or 'I think we need a circle time.' The children give circle time a different status to other times they spend in school, and I think this is because this time is demarcated through ritual and has a slightly different set of values attached to it. As the year roles on I am less and less a leader in the circle and more and more an equal member, and so the children have to step-up and take responsibility for safe-guarding the space in order that it can be what they want it to be. Both the self-expression of the individual and the inter-relations of the community are able to thrive.

EDUCATION AGAINST EMPIRE

History

Since the 1830's, the British administration in India had been adjusting the education system to find native employees to work in low-level jobs around the empire. Acts such as the McCauly Minute had made it impossible to get a government job without a Western education; in practice, this meant attendance of a British run school, which taught the basics of a few academic subjects, including a pro-West history and English lessons. The minor funding available for these schools was outstripped by the demand; the lack of alternate employment encouraged parents to send their children to the facilities purely to secure jobs in the administration of the Empire. As a result, Bengal, where hundreds of millions of families survived through agriculture, found themselves with a centralized Western model of education, which taught no skills relevant to agricultural life and exacerbated the prejudices of the Caste system. With the death rate in Bengal rising, a series of independence movements began to develop. The radical education practice of Rabindranath Tagore was inititated in 1904, shortly before he was awarded the Nobel Prize for the Ginjali, his collection of poems. His school, Santiniketan, named after the village outside of Calcutta where it was based, deliberately rejected the British model in favour of rural Hindu principles and urban European high culture. The school's ideals took form alongside Tagore's involvement in the Swadeshi movement, which successfully defended Bengal against early partition by the British administration. Tagore, unlike Ghandi, promoted the empowerment of Indians through localised adjustment, as opposed to top-down legislative change. In terms of education, this meant focusing on the economic and cultural needs of a specific area, and fermenting an atmosphere of co-operative learning between community members and international outsiders. The practice of this 40 year project, outlined below, was funded by means which rendered it independent of the colonial administration. A self-imposed tax, collected by a network of villages; an agricultural bank; international fundraising and the development of marketable skills as a central part of the curriculum all helped keep the project going. In addition, practical help was requested from various state and international organisations, such as the Ministry of Public Health. Santiniketan, the school, grew into Visva-Bharati, the university, which still exists today - but the project never became a movement. Between Tagore's death in 1941 and the partition of India in 1947, the efforts outlined below were either co-opted by the government or ceased activity. What follows is an outline of how the educational ideals of Tagore operated in practice.

Practice

'From the outset, our aim was to awaken the villagers from their slumber and enable them to be self-reliant, self sufficient and economically independent.' – Leonard Elmhirst.

The Institute for Rural Reconstruction, also known as Sriniketan ('the Abode of Plenty'), was established in 1922 as an educational facility in the Bengal village of Surul. The district had been an outpost for the East India Company until their relocation in 1835, at which point the area began to spiral into poverty and social disintegration. In 1922, following the opening of Visva-Bharati university in nearby Shantiniketan, Tagore purchased a small farm in Surul, and sent a team of ten students, two Japanese carpenters and an Anglo-American agronomist called Leonard Elmhirst to create an Institute. Their brief was to conduct a systematic and detailed study of the village, rather than foist a ready-made system designed to fit every town and village in India. The project was initiated with awkwardness and inefficiency, the locals suspicious of the privileged outsiders who seemed unusually interested in their lives. Within 6 months, the team had identified impoverishment of the soil, endemic starvation, emaciated farm animals, malaria-infested jungles, dilapidated buildings and temples, a culture of suspicion and mistrust between the inhabitants, poverty, and the drain of brains from Surul to Calcutta. In addition, there were very few community activities undertaken, and no co-operation between villagers.

Over the following decade, the small team grew into a group comprising scores of foreigners and Bengalis. In addition to inaugurating a series of agricultural reforms, festivals, celebrations, markets and so on, numerous educational programmes were introduced to the village. Firstly, day and night schools were held for children. These were linked to nearby Shantiniketan and Visva-Bharati, which rejected the Western curriculum imposed by the British. Instead, in classes run by teachers and practitioners, boys and girls were exposed to a combination of technical skills, natural sciences and the arts. As an example, a male student of 8 or 9 years old would be taught to make and sell sun-dried mud bricks, cotton looms, vegetable dye, or to raise poultry. Through this work, largely conducted outside, students would be trained in geology, mathematics, botany, bacteriology or agricultural sciences. In addition, literacy in English and Sanskrit would be taught through exposure to English and Indian literature, with an emphasis on performance and recitation. At first, girls received an education that left them subordinated to the typical domestic roles of rural women; until they reached university, focus was put on their learning weaving and cookery. However, the Mahila Samities - Women's Association – came to play a considerable role in the economic and social welfare of the community. From 1936, Mahila Samities were very active in Bolpur, Bandhgora, Bhubandanga, Surul and Goalpara. Information, education and communication material were prepared and distributed among the villagers for creating awareness and to develop a sense of solidarity. Indira Ghandi is perhaps the most famous female student of the Institute. As well as the creation of schools, a Bengali equivalent of the Scout movement was formed. Boys in the village were taught to organise into a corps to fight fires, combat malaria epidemics, fundraise and provide personnel for social events, or assist with repairs on damaged infrastructure. In addition, a Home Project was assigned to each student at the school; while at home working for their family, they were expected to begin an independent business, however small – the manufacture of condiments, straw sandals, cotton wicks and so forth, which they could sell to support their communities. They would be visited at home by teachers and tradesmen, whose role was to foster the skills and relationships necessary for the children to become independent earners.

Coupled to the programme available to farmers – for instance, a 'Demonstration Plot' was available to all in the village, who could learn modern agronomic techniques from international specialists – the Institute sought to "take the problem of the village to the classroom for study and the experimental farm for solution." The institute ended with Tagore's death in 1941, and was deemed at best a quaint experiment by the Independence movement, who took elements of the project and blended them with the Basic Training which they made mandatory to school children after Independence in 1947. The project moved with Leonard Elmhirst to Dartington village in the UK, where it became famous. Before he died, Tagore came to view the Srinitekan project as having drifted from its original intent, with the involvement of experts causing fragmentation and a weak sense of unity between the Institute and the villagers. Nonetheless, the infrastructure, prosperity and community of the villagers was markedly improved – the festivals and markets inaugurated in the 1920's are still held today, and the university of Visva-Bharati attracts students from around the world.

Reflection

It was noted that, although the majority of educators are female, a large proportion of texts, movements and theories are often attributed to men. In Tagore's case, 'his' institutes – although his involvement was crucial – were created and maintained by a team of hundreds of teachers, scientists, volunteers and their families. Leonard Elmhirst's wife, Dorothy, for instance, largely funded the Institute of Rural Reconstruction. In 1922, Tagore's daughter-in-law, Pratima Devi introduced lac work, calico printing and batik work to the Institute, in a small room with tin roof called the Bichitra Studio. In addition, the complexity of the programme, which sought to create a bridge between Western industrial modernism and rural India, saw attempted communication between British Officials, high and low, local farmers, children, public figures and politicians, potential donors, educationalists, Christian missionaries, artists and writers, agricultural scientists, zamindars, Tagore's family, education staff at Shantiniketan, non-cooperaors and Gandhians, among others. All belonged partially to each other's camps; none could entirely encompass all. Perhaps it would be helpful to consider Tagore as a logo, behind which an inspiring cultural phenomenon can be examined - albeit a neglected one in current conversations about independence struggles. In schools today, dissidents are often presented as individualist, entrepreneurial figures to whom students can aspire; Martin Luther King or Che Guevara strike poses, refuse subordination and propose models of mass reform - it would be harder to put a postcard of the Insitute of Rural Reconstruction on a classroom door.

It was noted during our talk that the modern Conservative ideal of the Big Society, where the state withdraws its support and expects 'the Community' to look after itself, has a similar terminology to some of the educational principles outlined by Tagore. It could also be argued that the ideals of the project have been taken over by the free market to exploit regions after the withdrawal of colonial powers. Today, there are numerous 'Institutes for Rural Reconstruction' – NGOs under the influence of private companies and international interests, using rhetoric of autonomy to capitalise on the needs of locals hoping to provide a high quality of life for themselves. In answer to these concerns, it is important to make clear that Shantiniketan, Visva-Bharati and Sriniketan was neither an outright rejections of state support, nor a top-down intervention by the forces of the administration. Instead, efforts were made to enable a particular village – Surul – to end its history of subordination and impoverishment and establish a more dignified relationship with the rest of India, and the world.

COLLECTIVITY

History

Although written forty years ago in the dynamic storm of the 1970's second wave of feminist action and debate, both the *The Tyranny of Structurelessness* by Jo Freeman and *The Tyranny of Tyranny* by Cathy Levine continue to circulate today in print and online editions. Both texts have their origin in the enduring discussion and often heated arguments centered around the question

How do we organise politically?

Rather than simply posing the question of *why* do we organise, these texts bridge both socialist feminist and anarcha-feminist camps, attempting a practical investigation of what a non-elitist, non-patriarchal revolutionary organising might look like. Neither the socialist nor anarchist movements could be said to be free of elitist and patriarchal ways of doing politics and this was at the very heart of both Tyranny texts' insistence on questioning the 'how'.

The most famous quote from Levine's text was that 'men tend to organise the way they fuck – one big rush then that 'wham slam, thank you maam'. In other words, with all the theoretical answers about revolution posed by men, Levine questioned whether they could organise the everyday slow, often mundane work of politics? Could they organise the processes of listening and dialogue? Could they even just make the tea and not feel the need to articulate complex but often abstract theoretical truths?

Freeman's *The Tyranny of Structurelessness* arises at a point when women-only consciousness raising groups needed to direct themselves into on-the-ground movement building. She writes that groups without a sense of democratic structuring often have hidden power bases, foster elites and tend to thus be politically 'impotent'. Freeman outlines certain principles for organising – delegation of internal authority, transparency of information, task rotation, open discussion etc.

Levine's more anarchist response is sisterly but also sceptical and even scathing – 'what we definitely don't need is more structures and rules, providing us with easy answers'. Levine argues that consciousness-raising would always remain a vital part of any movement-making and would not be something to now leave behind in favour of numbers and strength. She writes that a mass movement itself does not make a revolution. What would be lost in this mass model would be the movement's own personality, its local autonomy, its long fought decoding of internal power relations and its own sense of culture. She ends with a call to re-evaluate anarchism as a mode of practice with a nod to radical feminism as the best example of the ethos that anarchism preaches.

Reflection

The Black Frog meetings sometimes lasted three hours. They were always passionate, argumentative, painstakingly slow, funny but rigorous. Despite the arguments and occasional outbursts, there was a lot of love in the room. Sometimes this only came out when the meeting was over with a few hugs. Three hours is a lot of time to put in on a weekly basis especially when you have a full time job. People thought that this way of organising a space meant that this time was worth the effort.

Practice

Time: Weekly

Black Frog is a squatted centre in Camberwell, South London. Every Monday night at 7pm is an open meeting to organise the building, deal with problems, discuss forthcoming events and to eat together. The meetings are open to anyone who wants to take part. Often people who are traveling through London come to the meetings. Their voices and ideas are just as important as anyone else's.

1. **The meeting begins with everyone sharing food around a table. Someone will ask everyone present for items to be put on agenda for the meeting. This person usually reads through the agenda item by item and facilitates the discussion. Facilitation is not always easy and needs to be practiced. Each person speaks in the order that they have signaled although the facilitator might let small counterpoints or arguments happen if they feel it will help the discussion. The facilitator keeps track of who will speak next. They need to be aware of people dominating the discussion, people who haven't spoken, the energy of the item under discussion and also of the meeting itself. They must also interject to move items on if they are taking too much time. It is also important to keep track of practical suggestions that have been lost in the discussions and to make sure that they are brought back in. Another vital task is to make sure latecomers are brought into the meeting space around the table and not left physically outside the debates.**
2. **Decisions are made by consensus. Something that cannot be agreed by all will not happen but will come up again at a later meeting. Usually there is a way to find consensus through dialogue.**
3. **Another person takes notes on the discussion including who has volunteered for which job or task. They will write up the notes and make sure everyone gets a copy.**
4. **Facilitating or taking the notes often means that it is impossible to speak in the discussions.**
5. **These notes of this meeting will be gone over at the start of the next meeting to follow up on who has done what.**

Organising this space with a long background in anarchist and feminist movements meant that we were familiar with and happy to take insights from both Tyranny texts. Neither one nor the other argument dominated. Things do have to be transparent. Tasks do have to be rotated. Elites or alliances are part of group dynamics. They have to be understood and dissolved. There is no quick way to do this.

With this in mind, not speaking in a meeting due to facilitating or note-taking is something you have to get used to. The same can be said when some times some things have not been done as promised. That's just the way it is – for this is not a 'job' and we are not 'staff'. We want to organise from the depths of affinity and love and to involve all those rebels who wish to organise in this way or who wish to learn, experience and contribute to this way of organising.

[1] *The Tyranny of Structurelessness* by Jo Freeman (Berkeley Journal of Sociology, 1970, reprinted by Organisation of Revolutionary Anarchists and the Anarchist Workers Association, 1972) / *The Tyranny of Tyranny* by Cathy Levine (Black Rose No.1, Rising Free Collective). Both texts reprinted as *Untying The Knot: Feminism, Anarchism and Organisation* (Dark Star and Rebel Press, 1984)

DOUBT IN GROUPS

History

This is an exercise that deals with doubt. It is from the Royal Court Theatre Young Writers' Programme and it turns doubt into possibility. It works with any type of group, with all specialties and ages. Not just playwrights. All it takes is a cake-tin and some scraps of paper. Each participant writes two doubts about a subject on scraps of paper and puts them in the tin. The facilitator then spreads them all across a table, and asks the group to tick any they've experienced themselves. Those scraps with the most ticks are discussed first. Once the exercise is underway, the facilitator just keeps an eye on the pace, asks questions about the doubts, encourages conversation across the group and makes sure everyone gets a chance to speak. This exercise lets the class learn from each other. The facilitator is therefore encouraged to share their own doubts.

Reflection

That's enough from the class for now. We talked for about an hour about the doubts, but it could have been 3 hours. There were 20 people in this class and a lot of them had similar anxieties. We got all of them out in the open, as honestly as possible. At the end, people no longer felt so overwhelmed by their weak characters, or of the end of their plays. Most of the teaching came from other class members. The group realised that everyone has common doubts, and that they all have solutions, so long as they are shared rather than ignored. This makes the heroic, lonely struggle appear as the myth that it is.

People in groups have more power than individuals acting alone, so long as the individuals and the group find a way to support each other. This exercise works in a different way to having an individual lecture to a docile crowd.

I don't always trust groups. There is too much murk between people that I don't understand. Ideology can start to seep in and cover up the truth. That's why I write theatre. The theatre is for groups of people who are also individuals. To conclude, this is an exercise that says it's about doubts but is also about power – specifically, about social status and knowledge. My challenge is to learn how power works and how it passes between me and the others.

Practice

Let's cross over to our group now. They're a group of twenty young playwrights, and they've just put their doubts about their first drafts in the tin. Say hello.

Class: Hello!

Facilitator: Now. I'm going to spread all our doubts across the table. Come have a look. If you see someone else's and agree with it, just tick it, OK?

[The class spend a few minutes ticking the doubts. There is some laughter and murmurs of recognition].

Facilitator: Now, let's re-arrange them. Those with the most ticks up that end, those with the least down there. Gather round. Ok, so this is the most common doubt. Looks like all of us have marked it. [Reads]'My characters aren't strong enough.' Anyone want to start?

James: I think I'm not strong enough yet.

Facilitator: What, for your life or for your writing?

James: For my characters really. Like, to give them proper dialogue.

Facilitator: Anyone else feel that?

Sadiq: I dunno. Nah. I can make em talk. But they don't do anything. They just sit around the kitchen table.

Facilitator: Anybody else?

Estelle: What Sadiq just said, I think ... uh Sadiq.

Sadiq: Yeah.

Estelle: You said make, right? You said make my characters talk? Do you remember that thing about trusting the characters?

Sadiq: Yeah but you've got to have rules.

Facilitator: I think you're both right. What are you saying Estelle?

Estelle: When Caryl Churchill came in, she said that a story fails because the characters get oppressed by the writer. By a nervous writer.

Sadiq: I don't get what that means.

Daphne: I don't know what my characters want either.

Facilitator: Do you want to say more Daphne?

Daphne: I know that 'I am who I am cause of what I want'. But just because I know that, it doesn't make it easier to write dialogue!

Facilitator: Yep. You're right. Anyone?

James: Pinter used to write down the things people said on the bus.

Estelle: Yeah I do that on the 149.

Tor: You can tell a lot about what people want from how they talk on the bus.

Class: Yeah

Daphne: Do you know what your characters want?

Facilitator: Yeah, it takes me ages though. Normally I have to write a few drafts before I can see.

Tor: Do you know what we want?

Facilitator: I think we all spend too much time lying about it! Let's move on. We can spend time talking about characters again in the next session. The next doubt is [reads] 'The Ending'. So how do we get to the end? Anyone want to kick off this discussion?

DEMOCRACY IN SCHOOLS

History

Without dialogue there is no communication, and without communication there can be no true education.

Freire 1970 :74

In schools in the radical democratic tradition – such as Summerhill (UK), Leipzig Free School (Germany) and The Albany Free School (US) – school meetings, where the children and teachers come together on equal terms to discuss and decide how they organise as a school community, are a central component of their philosophy. Away from state control, these 'democratic schools' seek to support the children and young people in exercising greater autonomy over, and understanding of, their lives: to help them see the world not as something static, but as something they can interact with and change.

Radical educators have long been critical of the way traditional schooling limits the autonomy of the child in this sense. In the eighteenth century, William Godwin advocated the rights of children, speaking out about the coercion and deception that he viewed as characteristic of adult interactions with them. The anarchist educator Francisco Ferrer asserted that in traditional schooling, 'Children must be accustomed to obey, to think, according to the social dogmas which govern us'. (Smith 1983:89). Whilst in his critique, A. S. Neill told of the need for schools in producing a 'slave mentality' in order to reproduce the existing social system.

Practice

So what does it mean to be a democratic school? Although existing on the fringes, there are schools like this all over the world and how they interpret democracy can vary. In my own experience of working with children of primary age in a small democratic school, it translates into the children having much more freedom over what they do and how and when they do it. There's no national curriculum to adhere to, and no external motivations such as rewards or sanctions are used to make the children yield to the expectations of the adult.

Inevitably then there is a renegotiation of the teacher – pupil relationship, yet as Neill reminds us, freedom is not the same as giving licence. Treating freedom as synonymous with licence means we risk handing all the power to the children: a situation that benefits no-one. In considering the power dynamic between the adults and the children, Smith's description of the libertarian approach resonates with my experience,

> **…the abandonment of a fixed, one-style, managerial-type relationship between teacher and pupil loosens relationships generally and makes them more interactive. Relationships become a matter of individual negotiation within parameters set by the group. They become the expression of a group dynamic which itself is the product of a set of individual dynamics. Libertarians see this as a truer social base than one resulting from a teacher-imposed order.**
>
> **(1983: 98)**

In our school, in those situations where adults still play key roles, such as facilitating meetings and assisting in conflict resolution (due to the children all being lower/mid primary age), the general 'abandonment' of the traditional teacher-pupil role in the school allows greater opportunity for a two-way dialogue between adult and child.

School meetings attended by children and adults play a crucial role in building day-to-day cohesion and understanding between us as individuals; it is where agreements are made on how we share the space in a way that everyone feels safe. It is a forum for all those participating to: let others know what they plan to do that day; make any announcements they feel the school community needs to be made aware of; to make decisions about how we use the space; share news and bring up concerns, including issues that relate to existing school agreements or to individuals. Agreements change as circumstances change and people, be it child or adult, bring new perspectives to the issue. We have found many situations where fixed rules are unhelpful since they carry the threat of taking priority over human beings: ignoring the nuances of our interactions. With some natural interjection, children and adults speak in meetings in the order they raised their hands rather than being invited or given permission to by the teacher.

We work mainly by consensus, talking issues though until no one has any strong objections, rather than by majority voting. Though sometimes we will agree to have a vote on a particular issue. This often leaves me feeling uneasy as the children experience voting as a competition that often leaves the 'losers' feeling bitter and the 'winners' triumphant.

Discussions are stimulated by the experiences of those in the meeting. Heated debates about fairness crop up incessantly. The children listen to and learn from each other, they give advice and support to others who express difficulties. They begin to empathise and consider that there may be deeper causes to antagonistic behaviours. In one meeting, a 7-year old urged us all to consider that one of her peers may be going through a hard time and to bear this in mind when responding to his recent aggression towards both children and adults.

In meetings it is agreed that everyone can do things that don't distract others from the meeting. So whilst making funny noises is out, drawing is in. The quality of the artwork produced by the children, whilst still engaged in the discussion, makes me wonder about all the creativity that gets suppressed as children 'sit up nicely on the carpet, looking this way'.

That the children have more autonomy in deciding how to spend their time at school means they are encouraged to follow their interests and gives time to develop their passions. Again the mind turns to thinking about traditional schooling: alas, how many talents or natural abilities fall by the way side or are never discovered because they are not valued in the conventional classroom? An awful lot of time is spent there after all. Surely schools should be places where children and young people have time to explore and develop their passions, and where they feel supported in fulfilling their potential along these lines?

Reflection

Althusser (1971:7) identifies the education system as being part of the ideological state apparatus, which teaches knowledge and skills in a way that ensures subjection to the ruling ideology. This evokes a common criticism of alternative schools – 'Yes, it all sounds very nice, but how do they get on once they leave school?' In other words, how do young people 'get on' having not internalised the ruling ideology via the education system? Such schools don't exist in a vacuum and so to suggest that those who attend them escape the ruling ideology completely would be absurd. Though certainly to experience an education that goes against the grain in this way can bring with it the unsettling realisation that life is indeed not like that. But this negates the fact that alternative education seeks to be transformative.

Whilst the aims of democratic schools oppose what Smith (1983:108) calls the 'lesson in dependency' taught by social institutions, it remains that many schools that exist within this tradition are private. Thus, despite employing radical pedagogies they remain rooted in the undemocratic stratification of education. As democratic schools challenge society's norms, Alan Block argues that 'the system permits alternative schools to exist and minimises their effect by marginalising them' (1994: 67). This can mean they struggle financially and / or find themselves constantly having to defend their educational approach.

Many state schools now have some kind of student/school council, however the degree to which these give any real voice to the student body can be contested. There can be little doubt that the current neo-liberal plans for education will further seek to restrict opportunities for socially critical learning and democratisation within schools. Getting 'student voice' in order to tick boxes and decide the colour of the walls in the toilets is not the same as including students in any meaningful decision-making over their own lives: where young people can say what they really think rather than what school management expect them to say. Educators must be cautious against encouraging a false sense of empowerment. Colin Ward (1995: 131) recalls a BBC film on the financial crisis of the London Zoo, where a director, using what Ward called 'managementspeak' had this to say about the workforce" 'Once you've given them empowerment you've got them in the grinder'. In his lecture, Ward warned that governments apply similar 'managementspeak' to teachers. I suggest this same rhetoric is being used to pacify young people.

Sources / further reading

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Smith, M. (1983), *The Libertarians and Education*.

Freire, P. (1970), *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

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SELF ORGANISATION

FREE UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL

History

At the Free University of Liverpool we are convinced that education happens all the time, even during sleep. In this light we are drawn to contemporary examples listed below (by no means exhaustive).

The following links will get you to the 'intro' pages of each initiative.

http://www.platformlondon.org/bodypolitic.asp
http://www.edu-factory.org/wp/about/
http://reallyopenuniversity.wordpress.com/what-is-the-rou/www.copenhagenfreeuniversity.dk/
http://reallyfreeschool.org/
http://socialsciencecentre.org.uk/
http://www.ucloccupation.wordpress.com
http://universityforstrategicoptimism.wordpress.com/

We were also spooked to find out that an education alternative was set up in Liverpool by a married couple under the influence of Spanish radical Ferrer. Check out Nellie Dick, aged 96, recounting her experiences of setting up schools in the first decades of the 20th Century: http://www.educationrevolution.org/neldicandmod.html.

Christine Stansell's American Moderns also recounts, in lucid and readable detail, the politicised contexts within which alternative education strategies were being put into practice, with some significant beginnings in Liverpool: http://press.princeton.edu/titles/9024.html.

For a well informed article about Liverpool's special relationship with anarchist education, spanning most of the 20th Century (including Jim and Nellie Dick's International Modern School, The Scotland Road Free School and others), investigate http://www.afed.org.uk/org/issue63/learn.html.

What all of these examples have in common is the explicitly politicised nature of the education they offer. It seems that politicisation is the key to education. For us this means engaging in a praxis of critical self-reflexivity. It means always asking ourselves two key questions. What is political about what we are doing? And, much more importantly, what is political about HOW we are doing it?

Practice

This is one of the games we have played to try to bring these issues to the fore, especially during presentations with other people not familiar with The Free University of Liverpool. We did it once as follows and may repeat:

1 **Put the kettle on and make a cup of tea.**

2 **Whilst drinking the tea together brainstorm questions you think you might be asked by people who do not know what you are doing.**

3 **Write down those questions.**

4 **Do not answer them yet.**

5 **Double check them between yourselves making sure that they are questions you yourselves would like to know the answers to.**

6 **You may not necessarily know the answers.**

7 **Accept an invitation to present your project (in our case The Free University of Liverpool).**

8 **At the beginning of the presentation scatter the questions across the floor.**

9 **Sit back to back on chairs in the centre of the circle of people.**

10 **Put bags over your heads so nobody can see your face.**

11 **Tell people to pick a question up off the floor and ask it.**

12 **The audience member is asked to remove the bag from the head of the person they have chosen to answer the question.**

13 **You have no longer than one minute to answer the question.**

14 **Your colleague will count to 60 and say 'stop' when they get there.**

15 **When all the questions have been asked take the bags off your heads and engage normally with the other people in the room about some of the issues that came up.**

Reflection

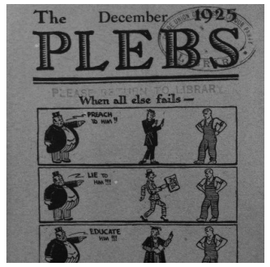
Higher Education is a right for all not a privilege for the few. It is on this basis that the Free University of Liverpool is committed to FREE education for any student who wants to study with us. At the Free University of Liverpool we believe that critical thought and action are at the heart of changing the world we live in. With this in mind we support, teach about and practice cultural activism. We believe in the strength of intervention, in the necessity of interruption and the efficacy of interference in the powers that seek to privatise and instrumentalise education. The current cuts the ConDems announced are promising to ruin civil society in the UK. This is the last straw! We will not sit here and take it any more. We will rise up and educate each other and ourselves to FIGHT BACK!

We are interested in those who wish the world were otherwise and are willing to take steps to make it otherwise. Students wishing to learn with us will take a Foundation Degree: a six month introduction course to changing the world or Bachelor of Arts in Cultural Praxis: a three-year course, taught on the ground in Liverpool by a dedicated team of cultural activists, educationalists and cultural workers with experience and formal qualifications. The first Foundation Course started in October 2011, with the BA in Cultural Praxis in October 2012. Lectures, seminars and workshops form the core activities of the university, with equal weight given to the power of words and the power of action. Praxis is our watchword.

Every meeting with other people is act of education. Either you learn or they do or both. Education as a term is a reactionary concept because it assumes that it only happens under certain conditions, and that those conditions can only be reproduced within an explicitly educational environment.

WORKER EDUCATION

Presented at the Radical Education Forum Workshop held at South London Gallery in December, 2010.



History

In October 1908 industrial workers, who were trade union-sponsored students at Ruskin College in Oxford, United Kingdom, founded what they called the League of the Plebs. Former students who had returned to their jobs as miners, railway-workers, textile workers and engineers, supported them. From January 1909 they began to organise socialist education in working-class areas of the country, and under the umbrella of the National Council of Labour Colleges (NCLC), there were, by 1926-27, 1,201 classes like this across Britain, with 31,635 students. Many classes that had begun in this way were still running in 1964. In February 1909 the students launched the monthly Plebs Magazine, which continued until 1970. Between the 26th of March and 6th of April they conducted the 'Ruskin College strike' (actually a boycott of lectures). In September of that year, with union and socialist support, which they had built, they opened the Central Labour College, which survived until 1929.

Working class political independence demanded that workers produce for themselves, from amongst their own ranks, thinkers and organisers who remain answerable to them. The Ruskin students and ex-students understood this and went a long way towards creating the mechanisms necessary for achieving it, seeing adult education as key to their success.

Due to the revolutions in 1789, 1830 and 1848, universities on the continent produced a thin layer of educated people who were prepared to throw in their lot with the working-class movement (examples include Marx, Plekhanov, Kautsky, Lenin and Luxemburg). However, in England the two main universities at Oxford and Cambridge – especially Oxford - reflected the compromise between the bourgeoisie and aristocracy at the end of the Civil War. They were dominated by the need to produce Anglican clergymen, civil servants and colonial administrators. If Oxford graduates became socialists at all, they became Christian socialists, not revolutionaries. Working class activists had to do most of their thinking in isolation from educated people, which forced them to rely on reading the main socialist texts for themselves. On top of this, many texts that we now think of as essential had not yet been translated into English.

During the 1870s, Cambridge, Oxford and London Universities all developed what they called 'extension networks'. These sent lecturers across the country, giving talks on topics of general interest, often to very large audiences. Although some working-class people did attend extension lectures, by about 1900 it was clear that working-class people in general, and union activists in particular, were rejecting them. It was equally clear that socialist ideas were gaining support amongst a growing minority of militants. This was a period when some workers would go without food to buy a second hand book, and risk the sack by reading it at work.

In 1899 two American socialists, Walter Vrooman and Charles Beard, funded by Vrooman's wife, tried to create a movement for working-class adult education in England. They were inspired by the ideas of the former Oxford university professor and art critic, John Ruskin. In addition to the residential Ruskin college in Oxford, they set up Ruskin 'halls' in several working class centres, a system of correspondence tuition and local discussion groups linked to it. At the start, the project was a mixture of utopian colony and labour college. But, within a decade, working-class activists, sponsored by union branches, came to form the overwhelming majority of its students.

The students who were at Ruskin in 1907, for example, had their own ideas about the type of education workers needed. They called this Independent Working-Class Education (IWCE). This was flatly opposed to the extension model as set out at Oxford. Instead of revering mainstream higher education, they saw it as 'orthodox', reflecting the class interests of the well-off and therefore necessarily mis-educating workers. They believed that the content of education for adult workers should be Marxist economics, industrial history and philosophy, which to them meant the capacity to reason things out for oneself. In this light, they emphasised the importance of participatory teaching and learning methods to support the needs of the proletariat.

In 1908, against an attempt by the Workers Education Association to seize control of the Ruskin School, the League of Plebs published a pamphlet, The Burning Question of Education. In this, they argued that Ruskin college should have 'a more satisfactory relation to the Labour Movement'. In January 1909, they began setting up local classes. The editorial in the first issue of The Plebs Magazine stated that the League of the Plebs 'endeavours to permeate the Labour Movement in all its ramifications with the desire for human liberation'.

Reflection

In our discussion, we were struck by the familiarity of the description of the 'Plebs' today. Universities in Britain continue to conduct a revised version of 'extension', called 'widening participation'. In the name of 'access', such well-meaning programmes actually disguise a hierarchical and highly classist approach. Rather than meeting the needs of locals, these programmes centralise the university and its ways of commodifying knowledge over informal and committed self-education. While universities must remain open and remove barriers to higher education, attention must also be paid to the kind of education that is put forward. The struggle against the cuts must fight not only for wider access to a university education, but also for a re-formulation of education to serve more than the interests of today's ruling classes: corporations needing workers, financial institutions seeking debt re-payment and urban developers requiring a 'creative' class. The Bologna Process and other Europe-wide reforms have already re-shaped the university to serve these interests.

In response, we noted that the Ruskin School managed to incorporate both the inside (through a college at Oxford) and the outside (through hundreds of worker self-education groups). This is important, as many of our ideas in the education movement polarise self-education and university education. This position has left us very vulnerable to, for example, the current forces of a conservative government who suggest autonomous education or 'free schools' which further privatise public education. What the Ruskin teaches us is that it is not simply a choice between education that takes place in the university or in anarchist centres and squats, but rather a question of an open declaration of commitment between multiple parties, with the interests of the under-privileged at heart.

Practice

1. **Groups engage in close readings and small group discussions of classic socialist texts**
2. **Readings result in collectively articulated positions on the text**
3. **Activists then disseminate these positions or descriptions to others in their endeavor to further the class struggle, both to working class people and ruling class spokespersons.**

Context / history and practiceaken from Colin Waugh: *'Plebs' The Lost Legacy of Independent Working-Class Education*, A Post-16 Educator occasional publication. www.post-16educator.org.uk

SELF-RELIANCE
Discussion on the University of Islam

History

The University of Islam is a network of schools. Through donations made to the Nation of Islam, these schools manage to rent spaces, purchase new textbooks and employ trained teachers. The University of Islam does not receive state funding or any form of financial support from private corporations— its schools are the community's.

The first school was established in Detroit, Mi in 1932 out of necessity. It was during this time that Jim Crow America embodied a commitment to upholding an unequal distribution of power. As a result, the public school system was not a viable option for African American children. In response to this environment, the University of Islam schools have taught its students to rely on oneself; to be disciplined enough to create and sustain a life for a community; and to be able to survive without the support of American society.

The encouragement of self-reliance within this model is implemented in two steps at once. The first step is a series of courses that support self-employment (agricultural sciences and business classes for example). The second step is a consistent and strict call for self-discipline (this is exercised through mock military drills). It is through the insistence and practice of self-reliance, that the University of Islam schools offer an alternative model for education. We can learn from these schools. They offer a response to the exclusivity of comprehensive education. By stringing together a number of core features of the University of Islam schools, we can begin to draft at least three possible amendments to comprehensive education.

Possible Amendments:

1) The narrative constructed in history courses must be re-written from the position of the powerless.

In addition to a curriculum of core subjects, the University of Islam offers a revisionist history course titled 'Chronological History from 13,000bc'. By beginning with 13,000bc, this course contextualizes Western history as being part of a much longer history that includes a wider scope of protagonists. In doing so, students are encouraged to re-imagine historical narratives.

2) Discipline should be the responsibility of the parent, not the school.

In the early sixties, the Chicago school administered a radical disciplinary system where parents were disciplined for students' behavior. This ability to hold parents accountable was at least partially made possible by relationships formed with these parents in adult education courses also offered by the schools. In recent years, the Sacramento school has penalized parents for their child's tardiness by charging an additional fee.

3) In addition to core academic courses, all students must learn a vocational skill from reception.

Many University of Islam schools teach its students a trade in attempt to introduce the young students to skills that can provide lucrative options for self-employment. Teaching students from a young age suggests that vocational training is not simply an alternative plan for students who are unable enroll in higher education, but instead necessary skills that all students should master regardless of their academic ambitions.

Practice

Ideas for a history lesson on the Civil Rights Movement

1. **Organize each page of the newspaper so that the group can see the entire paper at once.**
2. **Review some of the headlines:**

   'Districts study "progressive" year round school'

   'Community control advocate, "saddened" at Black mis-education

   'Educational Self-determination'

   'Native Palestinian Arabic teacher a "blessing"'

   'Education or Mis-education of Black man?'
3. **Then review the adverts that sit along side the articles:**

   Guaranty Bank

   Salaam Restaurant

   Nation of Islam Information Centre

   Shabbazz Bakery

   'Your' Super Market
4. **What are the key principles of the U of I schools in 1970s America?**
5. **What do the images in the Muhammad Speaks Newspaper tell us about the University of Islam?**

Reflection

We noted the way that the articles on education were buttressed by examples of self-reliance thorough the adverts for Black owned businesses. Though we were sure to note that students need not be part of the Nation of Islam to enroll, we questioned the feasibility of this educational program working outside of a religious community. After reviewing the reference to 'self' in the paper we began to understand the self as not only the individual; but as the community, in this case the Nation of Islam. We do not want to opt out of public education. We instead wanted to bring some of the features of the schools into mainstream education.

OPEN ARCHIVE
56a Infoshop

History

Within the four walls of the small backroom that makes up 56a Infoshop in Walworth, South London, there is a large open-access archive of radical publications. Not only are there books, newspapers and pamphlets but there are much more emphemeral items such as leaflets, stickers and fly posters from hundreds of different social movements, tendencies, conspiracies, temporary alliances and individual human beings.

Begun in 1991 as a squatted anarchist Infoshop – quite literally a store for alternative and radical information that seeks to be free and circulate outwards to the places where it needs to go and where it needs to be – the Infoshop remains today a trusted site of commonist activity, conviviality, antagonism and the place to find info within the collection of tons of printed matter.

Practice

For example, over the years, by default, we have been collecting texts and images from various alternative education modes – from free skools, home school, school striking to f*cking school up. Or a different strand – from open university, working class univeristy, Plebs League to occupying the Edu-Factory. One leaflet describes the running amok of school kids in Sheffield town centre during a series of school strikes in 1985. Another text from Nantes, a beautiful relic these days with its fragile purple mimeographed pages, describes the struggles and debates around the clamorous period of May 1968 in France. It would be better to come and see what is there, than to read here a longer list that would only be frustrating to those who seek info, knowledge, shared learning, conversation and so on...

However, a mere fragment of what we have is acceptable:

- **The Pedagogy of Celestin Freinet**
- **On The Poverty of Student Life**
- **Vision Of The New University and a Brief List of Impossible Demands**
- **Nanterre, Here, Now – Jean-Francois Lyotard**
- **Occupation: A Do-It-Yourself Guide**
- **Communique From An Absent Future: On The Terminus of Student Life**
- **Proletarian Philosophy: A Version of Pastoral – Jonathon Ree**
- **The Pitfalls of National Consciousness – Franz Fanon**
- **The False Principal of Our Education or Humanism And Realism – Max Stirner**
- **Paulo Freire and the Poltiics of Postcolonialism – Henry A Giroux**
- **The Autodidacts and Their Literary Culture: Autobiographers in Nineteenth Century France – Martin Lyons**
- **Autodidacticism And Their Desire for Culture – Rosemary Chapman**
- **Beyond Zombie Politics**
- **Recomposing The University – Tiziana Terranova and Marc Bousquet**
- **All Power To The Copenhagen Free University – CFU**
- **Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom – Bell Hooks**
- **Key Terms and Concepts Related to Critical Pedagogy and Educational Theory and Practice**
- **Feminist Critical Pedagogy and Critical Theory Today – Ilan Gur-Ze'ev**
- **Towards Pedagogies of Freedom – Solange de Azambuja Lira and William T Stokes**
- **Deschooling, Conviviality and the Possibilities for Informal Educations and Lifelong Learning – Ivan Illich**
- **Towards a Non-Repressive Critical Pedagogy – Ilan Gur-Ze'ev**
- **Francisco Ferrer and The Modern School – Emma Goldman**

And many, many more...

The archive is fixed in one location in space but it demands of its archivists and readers to be moved. We call this archive movements. How does the archive move to where it's needed? How does the archive actually move you? In a collaboration between 56a Archive and Ultra-red, a large part of the radical education and pedagogy section was placed as a mini-archive in the ICA for the two-day events surrounding The Cardew Object (London, November 2009). A repeat performance of this was made for the Drawing Room exhibition Best Laid Plans (London, November 2010). It was through the latter that the Radical Education Forum began discussion and work on the very workbook that you hold in your hands.

Reflection

Once, we were working on our usual once-a-month Archive night where the volunteers who tend to the collection get together to file, sort, rethink, categorise and all that. There was a moment where a discussion of precarity and the rhythms of work in the modern age were present. One archivist autodidact got excited and pulled out the box file that contains the 1980's US journal Processed World. What could be made of this radical pre-history of the debates around precarity that only really came more into the movement psyche in 21st Century? Processed World was made by computer temps, short-term office workers, programmers and so on in the Bay Area. People who were insistent on the damage of computer terminals to the working body. People who dressed up as computer monitors or boxes of cornflakes and demonstrated in the streets against work itself. People who had read about the refusal of work in 70's Italy, digested it and brought it into their daily lives and struggles through humour, sabotage, sharp and fresh satire.

It was later in this moment of people digging into the copies of Processed World and making all these connections (some of a revelation too, it seemed, for some!) that an image jumped off the page. It was the picture of the aftermath of the police bombing of the MOVE house in Osage Avenue, Philadelphia on May 13, 1985. Some people did not know the story of how the police had fired 10,000 bullets into the home of the MOVE, a radical black organisation in an attempt to suppress the group. In the evening, a helicopter dropped a 4 pound bomb of explosives on the house resulting in a fire that killed 11 MOVE members and burned 65 houses in the neighbourhood. It is a horrific story.

We were then able to pull from the Archive, a few books and some texts about MOVE and to read the story aloud. In this moment, feeling like we were on some kind of archival educational chain. What could we find in the story of the history of MOVE that then might take us somewhere else? Which section of the archive would we be pulled into next? It seemed like a real archive movement. Caught up in the social and collective effort of making the archive, we also fell deep within it, stirring both the papers that make up the collection and ourselves as we put some events and ideas together.

This is why the archive exists. To be a living collection that moves people to act, from reflection, from passion. Please come and use the archive to make things anew.

56a Infoshop
56 Crampton St, London, SE17 3AE

Wed 3-7, Thu 2-8, Fri 3-7, Sat 2-6pm

www.56a.org.uk
info@56a.org.uk

FUNDING

History

Between Radical Theory and Community Praxis: Reflections on Organizing and the Non-Profit Industrial Complex presents a case study of dilemmas based on the experiences of Sisters in Action for Power, a grassroots community organisation in need of addressing financial stability for survival. The contradictions played out through the case study highlight how the requirements and expectations to formalise as a not for profit organisation in order to access funding streams generates a number of compromises including over-commitment in workload, twisting of core organising values, and adopting new methods and strategies in community organising to fit with funding criteria.

The text goes on to detail a campaign set to challenge the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. While the Act declares itself as increasing freedom, choice, quality and achievement in education, Sisters in Action for Power critique the NCLB Act stating that it "discredits, defunds, and dismantles public education and teachers unions"1 as schools are closed for not meeting educational targets and pupils' are funnelled into a privatised education system.

Practice

This raises a number of key questions:

What are the guiding factors for aims and objectives of funding applications?

What stories are being told about how funding is used 'successfully'?

What kind of dependence / independence is created as a result of funding relationships?

Reflection

As a group we discussed the text and the relationship between funding and education, a summary of which is outlined below:

Funding comes with strings attached, and will be granted only if the aims and objectives outlined in the application are complimentary to the aims and objectives of the funder. This may mean for some organisations, shaping and moulding in order to fit with the requirements of the funder.

This impacts on what success story is being told, and not only what is recognised as good work, but also what is recognised as a good quantity of work and in what timeframe. While evaluation and reflection is an essential part of organising, when reporting back to funders this becomes about gathering evidence for how targets have been met, and doesn't create space for self critique, pressurising organisations to overextend in the reflective process in order to both meet the requirements and to carry out meaningful reviews.

When funding is associated with education, this becomes the product that is sold to the funder in exchange for the resources to carry out the educational promise. This transaction generates a very different kind of relationship, where the education of those in mind becomes part of an economy that needs to be predicted, measured and successful in relation to the funding aims.

The not for profit model borrows shape and structure from a business model. It has administrative responsibilities, corporate appearances and communication structures and desires to grow and expand. Yet administration is a costly commitment to upkeep, expansion is not always complimentary to the needs of the community and the skills of the organisers, and business models do not warn against burnout in the face of social and personal responsibility.

The relationship between organising and funding is not one that generates independence. If funding could facilitate financial and structural independence, the funder would render themselves irrelevant. The funder needs to be needed, and therefore it is not in the funders interests for independence to be fully achieved.

The relationship between education and funding, and in particular the relationship between funding as a reward for meeting formal educational targets in schools and colleges, can easily translate to penalising and excluding those experiencing poverty and those higher support needs.

The funding of education by private means is an open canvas for cooptation, selective teaching, funnelling workforces into particular industries with particular companies and interest groups.

1. Page 96, *Between radical theory and community praxis: Reflections on Organizing and the Non-Profit Industrial Complex*, Amara H. Perez, Sister in Action for Power, in The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the non-profit industrial complex, Edited by Incite! Women of Colour Against Violence, South End Press, 2007.

X:TALK

History

As workers in the sex industry we are often denied a voice, we are considered only passive victims, we are taught to be ashamed of our work, we are made invisible by discriminatory laws that illegalise our work and us, and we are spoken for and about but rarely are we allowed to speak for ourselves. As migrants even more so. Sometimes our voices are not heard even amongst each other because we don't speak the same languages.

The x:talk project is a sex worker-led workers' co-operative which approaches language teaching as knowledge sharing between equals and regards the ability to communicate as a fundamental tool for sex workers to work in safer conditions, to organise and to socialise with each other. The content of the x:talk English classes, the examples, language and words used are chosen with an understanding that language is a powerful tool in shaping the meaning of the way things are in the world. Language is a tool used to communicate, empower and also to oppress. If it matters what we say and how we say it, then it matters how we teach it.

We understand language to be a politically and socially charged instrument of power, which we aim to teach critically and thoughtfully. Our English classes are organized to create a space where sex work as work can be openly talked about and does not have to be concealed or hidden. Through providing such a space we aim to challenge the stigma and isolation attached to our profession while at the same time we guarantee confidentiality and respect for those involved. In addition to providing free English classes to migrant sex workers, we support critical interventions around issues of migration, race, gender, sexuality and labour, we participate in feminist and anti-racist campaigns and we are active in the struggle for the rights of sex workers in London, the UK and globally.

Practice

Confidentiality:

We consider confidentiality to be crucial for everyone involved in the x:talk project – including for students, teachers, teaching assistants and allies. We understand confidentiality to mean not only that all personal information about people involved in the project remains private but also that information is on a need to know basis. If students feel in a position to share personal information we welcome the exchange – however no one in the classes should ever be required to answer questions about who they are or what they do. As is usual in the sex industry – students are welcome to use their working names if necessary.

Identity:

Our project comes from our experiences as workers in the sex industry. x:talk is sex worker-led not because we think that being a 'sex worker' is a fixed identity, but because those who have experienced the material conditions of the sex industry are in the best position to know how to change it.

We do not wish to participate in a politics that creates individual 'celebrity' superstars. As a result we use the collective identity of Ava Caradonna (which roughly translates to 'Eve the Good Woman').

Ava Caradonna is a migrant, a sex worker, a student, a mother, a citizen, a transgender, a person of colour, a teacher, a lesbian and a militant.

She allows us to speak from different positions as sex workers and as allies, without the stigma of using our 'real' names and allows us to speak to the different realities in the sex industry and beyond.

Respect for a diversity of experiences:

We are interested in organizing to radically transform the sex industry so that sex workers have more control over their lives and work. We are not interested in passing judgement on what type of work people do. We recognize that many women, men and trans people have a diverse range of experiences in the sex industry – good, bad and ugly. Our project is open to people who sells sex or sexual services – including workers in brothels, escort agencies, outdoors, flats, independents, bars, on the phone or internet, strippers, dancers, models, porn stars and glamour models. We respect people's choices or circumstances about continuing to work in the sex industry or exiting the industry.

Combating the desire to help and save sex workers:

x:talk was born in a brothel in south London. The project grew out of the experiences of a prostitute called Alice who was working in a flat with many women from Thailand. They had paid £20,000 to come to the UK to work, they did not have their passports and they earned less money than Alice who was considered to be 'European'. One reason they did not earn as much money as Alice was because they couldn't negotiate with English speaking clients very easily. When Alice asked the women how she could help them – they expressed very clearly they did not want to be 'helped' but instead that they wanted to learn English. So began the first x:talk classes – in between clients and during the long hours of waiting. It was clear to Alice that we need to be able to speak together to be able to organise at work. x:talk is not about helping people, but about collective action and solidarity.

Reflection

In order to gain the trust of the people we are working with and teaching, we need to be clear about what the x:talk project can and cannot do – we teach English and offer a space for peer-to-peer networking, translation and information sharing. We are not lawyers, social workers, immigration agents or charity workers.

USING THE PEDAGOGIES OF THE OPPRESSED

POPULAR EDUCATION AND GUERILLA WAR (EL SALVADOR)

History

Based on over one hundred interviews with base teachers, trainers, and campesinos, sociologist John L. Hammond's *Fight To Learn: Popular Education and Guerilla War in El Salvador* provides a detailed survey of the role of popular education in liberation struggles of El Salvador through the 1970s and 1980s leading up to the peace settlement in 1992. Much of the practice of popular education during the civil war drew on the ideas of Paulo Freire.

However, the exigencies of rural poverty, mass displacement, genocide, and armed conflict had a specific impact on how those ideas were put into practice. Whereas Freire argued that critical literacy should occur in a pre-revolutionary moment, in El Salvador, popular education became synonymous with organizing communities in the midst of struggle. Popular education retained the pedagogical principles of universal access to learning, education as and towards service to one's community, and literacy as a tool for the poor in their struggle for liberation. The notion that popular education might serve as a practice of political organizing became a prevailing feature in El Salvador.

Practice

The struggle against illiteracy was seen as one front in the fight for justice. Hammond underscores the importance of the base or popular teachers in this context. These men and women were nearly entirely volunteers with little more formal education than the campesinos they taught. The popular teachers often spoke of their teaching as a modest contribution to the community. Typically, the popular teachers were recruited because they had had some prior formal schooling. That experience often amounted to a few years of elementary education. After very basic training (training that would continue on a weekly basis), the base teachers entered into the classroom, teaching children by day and adults by night. Regardless of age, the method of education was basically the same.

Teachers would begin with a word that had a particular relevance to the people -- ideally, a word that contained all five vowels. In settings monitored by the Salvadoran army, the base teachers had to carefully select words that could not be seen as a direct threat. Sometimes the teachers introduced the words through a drawing in a grammar book. Occasionally, the grammar book was itself the result of an extensive participatory process involving base teachers and communities. The participants would then discuss the relevance of the word for their lives. After extensive group dialogue, the teacher would then lead the pupils to recite all the phonetic possibilities building on the vowel sounds in the word - a practice developed from Freire's literacy method.

Reflection

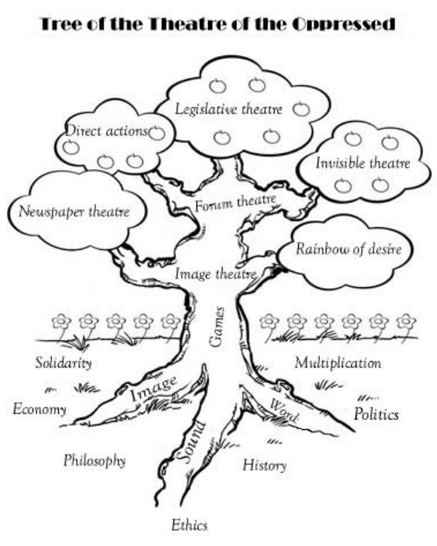
Hammond provides detailed description of the numerous situations where popular education occurred: Honduran refugee camps, internal displacement camps in the cities, re-populated areas, guerrilla units and in the prisons. He also discusses the role of popular education in the training and organization of community health programs. But in all instances, the use of popular education remained the practice of very poor, barely educated and volunteer campesinos. While situated within a larger revolutionary moment, the base teachers remained the backbone of the massive literacy campaign. Late in the book, Hammond makes a passing observation that while the NGOs, clergy, and cadres described popular education in abstract concepts like participation, the base teachers themselves spoke about its practical aspects. Thus, terms such as 'participation' marked one's distance from the concrete scene and experience of education in the base communities.

See John L Hammond, *Fight To Learn: Popular Education and Guerilla War in El Salvador* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998).

THE IMAGE

History

In the Theatre of the Oppressed created by Augusto Boal, The Image is a central tool. In the image, actors, those involved in collective acts of research, enquiry or learning about the world, construct a scenario from their lives that reflects an issue. The image is not simply symbolic or representative of that situation. It is a consolidation of meaning in which the lives of the performers are deeply implicated within the image that they produce. It is also a common object around which people can galvanise, by collectively unpacking and projecting the image through 'multiple mirrors of the gaze of others'. The importance of the image is to link the topic or thematic with the affective, bodily presence of those engaged in the act of making it. The playing of oneself or of a scenario that is familiar re-casts the process of signification: the signifier and signified are not caught up in a representational logic, they are one and the same. At the same time, the act of playing oneself for others has the same 'alienation effect' described by Brecht - the seeing of oneself in the acts to which one is intricately connected.[1]



Practice

Time: One afternoon, or one week.

1. **The group is engaged in the discussion of an issue. Notes are being taken.**
2. **At a critical moment it is revealed that the discussion of the issue has become detached from the way in which those engaged in its central question are implicated.**
3. **The group is asked to think of a scenario that relates to the terms of the conversation they have just had.**
4. **They discuss several scenarios but home in on one.**
5. **One or two people play the role of sculpting the image. They are instructed to use the bodies of the others to create this scenario, and to do so in the most exaggerated form possible.**
6. **Others in the group are enlisted to be sculpted into the image.**
7. **Two or more must stay behind to interpret the image (alternatively an image could be taken or members can alternate in and out).**
8. **The image is interpreted with the question, *what is happening in this image*? A discussion ensues regarding what the image reveals about the issue and in general, how it could be altered for accuracy or to reflect other experiences, and finally how the bodies might be organized otherwise, towards a different or more ideal scenario.**

Reflection

One of the most poignant moments in which I used the image was at a camp for young organisers in Eastern Europe. In the camp we worked in teams to introduce practices of anti-fascist, queer and labour-based organising to students. Many of the students were from anti-fascist social centres and squats from across the region. Others were students of International Development Studies at universities. In a discussion surrounding Roma people in Eastern Europe, the latter in the group (students of International Development) attempted to contend with a contradiction in their experience pointed out by the former (anti-fascist organisers). The contradiction was as follows: they felt they were there to 'help' the Roma but direct requests from Roma people made them feel uncomfortable. They preferred the bureaucratic language of 'solutions' because it was more 'neutral'. We learned of this contradiction through an activity in which everyone in the camp was asked to produce an image or gestural enactment of an issue they would like to work on using their bodies. The group of students decided this issue would be 'the Roma'. In their image they stood very high upon a table, each carrying a clipboard, looking down at another group. Other students were positioned below them, kneeling on the floor, in a begging pose. Those of us viewing the image were struck by this, thinking it a clear critique of the power relations between researcher and subject or the helper and the helped, but for the group performing, this power was important to maintain: they felt that their identities as helpers, differentitated them from groups they thought to be corrupt. The group spent the entire week returning to this image each evening, taking turns looking at it. Conversations revealed the deep investments that members had in the distancing of themselves from the 'subjects' of their research: that they were afraid of them, that they, also from Romania, had been associated with them in their travels and called 'Roma' during racist attacks. There were also economic factors: they would not have a job if they did not hold this perception of their power in relation to the Roma. If they could not help they had no hope of employment in an NGO or civil society organisations. These reasons become much more significant than the original pretexts of 'helping' or 'neutrality'. At the end of each conversation, we returned to the image and it began to change. We spoke about the possibilities of collaboration. Students from the anti-fascist organisations shared other ways of working from their experiences of collaboration with Roma organisers. Students who, in the context of language and discursive argument, refused to address the contradictions of charity came to another conclusion in the production of another image.

[1]More can be read in Augusto Boal, Games for Actors and Non-Actors. Second Edition. 2002: Routledge.

POWER / OCCUPATION

History

This workshop, based on the games of the Theatre of the Oppressed, was facilitated at the Camberwell College of Arts student occupation in London December 2010. During this period, students and professors across the United Kingdom were occupying universities against cuts to education resulting in increases in tuition fees of up to 300 per cent in a single year. Students and workers in colleges equally staged demonstrations against the withdrawal of the education maintenance allowance that enables students from poor backgrounds to attend further and higher education.

The Theatre of the Oppressed was initiated and developed by Augusto Boal. It originates from the time of dictatorship in Brazil in the 1960s. TOP emerges from the desire to make the communal moment that theatre offers into a moment of active reflection on current socio-political situations. It imagines the collective ownership of the space-time of performance as a 'rehearsal for change'. In opposition to Aristotle's idea that the purpose of theatre is for an audience to experience 'catharsis', i.e. to feel relieved from their own suffering through watching someone else's, this method is based on the active involvement of the audience-participant in reflecting upon and re-shaping their own conditions of oppression. The theatre becomes a space of resistance as people are asked to both collectively inhabit and detach themselves from their reality enough to imagine working against repressive forces in their lives. This theatre draws heavily from the work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire. Where, in Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed, it is the learning process that is described as a tool for the student's emancipation, in the Theatre of the Oppressed it is the theatre that provides a tool and a context for the audience's emancipation. This is seen most prominently in the way that Boal breaks down the spectator-actor division, by referring to the 'spect-actors', the audience and the performers who use the theatre to discuss relevant issues and experiences and to try out possible solutions. The arsenal of exercises and games of the Theatre of the Oppressed use the nature of playing as well as bodywork to set up spaces and situations for these discussions.

Practice

Preparation

Setting up a participatory space for learning: We start with the circle – the learning content consists of the groups expressions brought into the circle – but then the space will be shaped by our movements throughout. (Everyone asked to form a circle)

Warm up: prepare the body to communicate and to laugh.

Exercise:

i With one hand, draw your name into the air. Easy, right*?

ii Now, with the opposite foot, draw a circle into the air. Also potentially easy, right?

iii Now try both at the same time! … Not so easy?

iv Discuss: Even though there might not be a physical reason that would stop us from coordinating our hand and foot movement at the same time, we might not be used to do it, and therefore find it difficult… This might just be a matter of practicing, or 'rehearsing' it, for us to own this movement…..

***Here the proposed tasks should not be difficult for the group, the individual tasks of this game can also be replaced by something that is in fact easier for the participants in order to achieve the same narrative outcome.**

Pratice

a Group / Expression / Trust

i The space we create right now: In a circle: Catch eye contact across the circle, introduce your name and cross the circle to the person you looked at. Before you arrive at that person, s/he has to make eye-contact with the next person and move towards them etc. – play it faster and various players at the same time.

ii Now lets perform to each other, free our bodies, and find interest in each other: 123: in pairs, standing opposite, holding eye contact: count from 1-3, alternating and in a loop. Step by step replace each number with a sound and a gesture that forces you to move unhabitually and bigger than normal.

iii Trust and sensibilisation: sound and blind: form pairs. One player closes their eyes, the other guides them through the room by making a previously agreed upon sound. At a certain point, ask them to switch.

b Great Game of Power

i Begins with a question: what is power? – terms (definition through inclusion and collective brainstorming)

ii The exercise: the group forms a circle around 3 chairs and an empty water bottle: they are asked to build a sculpture from these 4 objects that represents power. How many different ideas do we have (one proposal by one)? What do we see in the proposed sculptures? Agree on one sculpture that represents our understanding of power here, in this room, today. Agree on one sculpture that respresents our understanding of the demonstrations we have been on.

c Machine of an Occupation: The group is asked to make a machine. Each person is to form a part of the machine by making a repetitive sound and gesture, in response to the term 'occupation'. All parts of the machine have to link to the others. The machine is built as each person moves into the circle to add one 'part' or function of the machine, after the other.

d The closure / beginning: in a circle, holding hands, eyes closed: pass the squeeze, (here, the idea is always leave with open questions)

Reflection

The workshop took place at the moment of student occupations from The Slade, Camberwell, Goldsmiths and UCL. This context gave us an experience of shared reflection on the moment we were in, and the ways in which we were embodying and performing relations of power. Many of us had just participated in a major student demonstration in which the police had been particularly brutal, the first of many in which thousands of people were kettled (surrounded by the police) in the cold for many hours. The images of power created in the above activity reflected images of power that were extremely polarised: where there were clearly those in power (more chairs) and those without (less chairs). This began a discussion about the discrepancy between what we knew about power (that it is negotiated between people, dispersed and not stable) and how we felt in that moment, as though power was fixed and held by those in authority. In reflecting on why we had made such an easy formulation of power, we began to complicate our understanding again. Student occupiers had learned about the power of very few students to close buildings and stage a critique, yet also felt this power to be extremely precarious without the support of the student body overall.

In the final exercise: the 'occupation machine' we were able to visualize what we had been through in the past weeks: a spontaneous eruption, a series of skills developed on the fly, the experience of developing a bodily vocabulary of being together in occupations and demonstrations. In the machine some people made things, some people slept, others made the affirmative hand gestures that we had all learned for consensus decision-making, others made a barricade. We thought about how different this image of a practised occupation was from the political texts we had written, which spoke about everything we did not want to happen and very infrequently about what we wanted to build.

The warm up and trust exercises gave space for people to relate to each other in a playful way, which introduced a needed break from the everyday challenges of running an occupation and patterns of (power) relations that form within that but also to reflect, re-group, and work across experiences to think about our next steps.

A FREIREIAN PEDAGOGY FOR THE ESOL CLASSROOM

This is a great discovery, education is politics! When a teacher discovers that he or she is a politician, too, the teacher has to ask, What kind of politics am I am doing in the classroom? That is, in favour of whom am I being a teacher? The teacher works in favour of something and against something.

Paulo Freire, A Pedagogy for Liberation

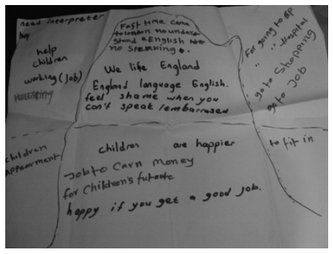
History

Paulo Freire (1921-1997) was a Brazilian educator, initially working in secondary education teaching Portuguese, then going on to work with adults, with whom he developed a pedagogy which fused literacy development with the building of critical consciousness.

The post-colonial period saw the oppression of the Brazilian people by an elite who reflected the dominant values of a non-Brazilian culture, producing what Freire termed the 'culture of silence of the dispossessed'. Many of the 'dispossessed' were not considered 'literate' (a category whose boundaries are determined by the elite). In mid-century Brazil, as now, literacy was a political issue. Only those who were deemed literate could vote in presidential elections.

Freire developed a particular methodology for the teaching of literacy. But this methodology was not, and indeed could not be, limited to the development of a set of technical skills. For Freire, education is never a neutral process. It is either designed to facilitate freedom or it is 'education for domestication', that is an essentially conservative process designed to facilitate the continuation of the status quo. In the latter process, people are prevented from seeing the world as something which can be changed.

Freire's 'pedagogy of the oppressed' aims to develop consciousness and lead to action to create change, through a process of dialogue and reflection. It is a pedagogy which must be forged with, and not for the oppressed. People do not go through the process of developing consciousness ('conscientization') by having things explained to them, but rather by engaging in dialogue about their lives and the lives of others. Learners are not receptacles to be filled, nor is knowledge a gift from those who have lots, to those who have none. Liberatory education consists in acts of cognition, rather than transference of information. In this process, the teacher-student relationship needs to be re-conceptualised. As Freire wrote, 'I cannot proclaim my liberating dream and in the next day be authoritarian in my relationship with the students.'



Practice

In many cases the very existence of educational provision for certain groups is itself contested. This was the case with Freire's work in developing literacy in Brazil, as it is in the UK today with English for Speakers of Other Languages or ESOL provision - that is English language classes for migrants ESOL is under threat as the result of severe government cuts, while existing provision is ever-increasingly affected by the demand that students pass exams. However, whilst we are so often hemmed in by institutional constraints, as ESOL teachers we still have scope to make choices about what is taught in our classrooms, how it is taught and who decides what is taught. These are political choices, and need to be recognised as such. Yet the idea that ESOL teaching is not political, that it can be neutral, is prevalent, and re-enforced by many teacher-training programmes.

Freire's work was very much a product of the particular historical circumstances in which he was teaching and writing, and his methods for literacy development were based on the particular linguistic features of Portuguese. Freire's work has to be reinvented, rather than transposed, for different contexts. Here is one way in which this has been done for working with adult ESOL learners:

1 **Listening: It is really important to allow sufficient time for the group to get to know each other. This is essential in order to build the familiarity and trust necessary for a sense of a 'class community', and to allow themes to arise from the group. This could take days, weeks or months. Activities in class should provide opportunities for students to share their experiences, ideas and opinions alongside developing their language skills. But listening is not restricted to class time itself, but is something that can happen before and after class, and in the break.**

2 **Exploring the issue, developing language and literacy: An issue that has come up during the listening stage is selected for further work in the classroom. In small groups, students discuss the issue, and work collectively towards producing a visual representation of it. Visual tools, developed through the Reflect project, can be used to explore issues in different ways:**

The Iceberg – what is visible about a problem and what is less visible (or hidden)

The River – collective timelines, showing key events and feelings

The Tree – causes and effects, and possible solutions

This visual representation is a form of what Freire terms a 'code', defined by Nina Wallerstein as 'a concrete physical representation of a particular critical issue that has come up in the listening stage'. Other possible codes include a role play scene, an image, an object or a text. The code is used to prompt deeper analysis of the issue, whilst also being the starting point for language and literacy development. The language and literacy development is focused on the language that the students need to express their ideas and opinions on the issue, or to take action on the issue.

3 **Action: Action on the issue is taken individually or by the group as a whole. This may be inside or outside of the classroom. The action might be something that is trying to affect change in society, for example organising a demonstration against cuts or re-writing a doctor's surgery notice so it is more accessible to people who don't have English as a first language. However, it might also be more personal changes, the students and/or teacher shifting ideas about an issue, or changes occurring in the way that people interact, for example, students asking questions of each other more, rather than seeing the teacher as the one with all the knowledge. This action is then evaluated by the group.**

Reflection

I have been using these techniques in my classes over the past two years. Over the last few months, I have been part of a practitioner-research group set up as part of the Reflect ESOL project. I have worked with a number of different groups in different institutions throughout this period, with considerable diversity between and within the groups.

Over the past two terms, the issue of the government's cuts to ESOL provision has been a dominant one for ESOL teachers. Students were, and continue to be, incredibly worried about the uncertain future of their classes, and this was an obvious issue to use a Freireian approach to explore. With other colleagues, I shared the conviction that for students to play a key role in the struggle against the cuts, time in the classroom needed to be set aside. The issue was one that covered several lessons, and re-arose at various other points throughout the term, but some key events are described and reflected upon here.

Once we had shared information about the cuts and discussed them as a whole group, students used a visual tool as a way of sharing their ideas and experiences about ESOL and the cuts. In one class the tree was used as a way in to exploring the causes and effects of cuts to ESOL provision. In another the iceberg was used as part of an examination of the obvious and less obvious reasons why ESOL is important. In both cases the tools allowed for a very thorough discussion of the issue, and as a space for learners to articulate their opinions and in one group in particular, to debate the reasons behind the cuts.

At this stage, language development focused on the language which learners had been trying to use in expressing their ideas. Discussion on action was the logical next step, and we shared ideas on what we could do against the cuts, with petitions, letters to MPs, protests and marches all being raised by the students. In the classroom, students worked on letters to local MPs, a process which involved developing personal testimonies of the importance of ESOL. This was also an opportunity for further language and literacy work, and a discussion on the use of formal language when writing texts such as these. In one class, learners chose to write a collaborative text. I suggested that as everyone fed in their ideas, one of the more confident writers scribed the text. After a few minutes, however, it became clear that this was not working effectively: she felt that she couldn't share her ideas, the process was slow as she couldn't write as quickly as they were speaking, and she had to keep re-reading what she had written in order to recap. At this point, the student scribing asked me 'Could you help us?', and they asked if I (who had until now stepped back) could scribe on the board so they could do it quicker and see what they had written and change things as they wished. This was an important moment in the process, as instead of being the teacher, I was being used by the learners as a tool in their own self-directed writing process.

Without a doubt, the lessons on ESOL cuts were very engaging for the learners, and at times during the process the classroom was really an exciting place to be. However, despite the letter writing, the petitions and the learners' active participation in a local ESOL protest, I felt there to be distance between the learners' action and the wider ESOL campaign in which I was active. Or rather, the learners' actions fitted neatly into the teacher-led campaign: the students had been involved in 'action', but this was piecemeal rather than strategic. When I use the techniques, I consistently find the 'action' stage the most challenging. The first two phases flow into one another, but I have not found that action arises very smoothly from the process. On reflecting, it is important for me to remember that Freireian pedagogy is not a blueprint, not a set of instructions that can be followed with guaranteed success in every context. In the process of remaking a Freireian pedagogy for our particular context, we cannot escape the need to remain in dialogue with students and colleagues, and on the necessity of genuine ongoing critical reflection on our pedagogical practice.

Further reading

Elsa Auerbach, *Making Meaning, Making Change* (1997)

Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970)

Paulo Freire and Ira Shor, *A Pedagogy for Liberation* (1987)

Paulo Freire and Donaldo Macedo, *Literacy: Reading the Word and the World* (1987)

Rebecca Galbraith, 'Act now for ESOL!' *Post-16 Educator 62* (March–April 2011)

Nina Wallerstein, 'Problem-Posing Education: Freire's Method for Transformation', in Ira Shor (ed.), *Freire for the Classroom: A Sourcebook for Liberatory Teaching* (1987)

Reflect ESOL: www.reflect-action.org/reflectesol

Action for ESOL: www.actionforesol.org

BODY PEDAGOGY

Using popular education methodologies to bring elements of collaboration and collective performance making into the classrooms.

History

Citizenship is the term we use to talk about the social organisation of human beings living together. How do we relate to each other respecting our rights and responsibilities? How can we talk through our bodies about ourselves and the differences of others? It is quite easy to forget the body when we theorise about the skills necessary to form social relationships. Our approach breaks the traditional way to develop skills, where the mind is split from the body, the individual removed from its surroundings. The games are invitations to play in a group, sharing experiences of collaboration, trust and responsibility.

Built on combining popular education methods from Brasil based on relational skills and collaborative games:

Theatre of the Oppressed: is the game of dialogue: we play and learn together to rehearse social change (see workbook entries above).

Soma: created in Brazil in the late 1960's as an anarchist therapy to help people fighting against the military dictatorship. Soma seeks to challenge the regulation of life shaped by hierarchical rules and social conventions with playfulness and cooperative games (see http://somaexperiments.wordpress.com/soma/)

Capoeira: is a dance game, a body conversation (see http://somaexperiments.wordpress.com/capoeira)

After working with Soma and Theatre of the Oppressed with adults for many years, we would like to get them back to their roots: to be used as tools for social change, rather than in therapeutic or corporative settings. Further to bring the nature of play, i.e. energetic and explorative approaches to learning into a school setting means facilitating a space for young people to embody their own life experience and expertise, and value them. 'Play is a way to rediscover the body as collaboration does with relationships.'

Practice

Learning stage 1: games

Ex 1:

The balance exercise is a sequence of movements and games embodying a personal search for body balance, and investiges issues of risk, pleasure, safety, trust, confidence, fear; all of which can arise when we research the limits of body locomotion in space.

First, participants are invited to discover the maximum locomotion they are able to achieve, without losing their balance, without losing an erect body position. Moving forwards and backwards, left and right, until the limit of their balance.

This body movement in the upright position is the maximum point of freedom in the space of our body, without walking and without losing balance. After a while, participants are invited to go beyond their balance limit to the point of almost falling.

To enlarge these limits, for our bigger freedom and pleasure, you must take risks. We can only take this risk, we can only enlarge our freedom, if we look for association with other people, who will help us do this while also assuring mutual safety. The session continues, expanding the numbers of participants involved in the movements, with more possibilities of body locomotion in space. With 3 participants, one stands in the middle and can literally fall forwards and backwards because of the other two partners' support.

In all these phases, the participants are challenged to work in self-organisation, taking responsibility for the safety and risk-taking of everybody, making clear that is the association/collaboration that brings more freedom and pleasure.

Learning stage 2: reflecting/ talking /writing

After the games, a process of reflection, talking and writing will unpack the group's perceptions and behaviour when playing together.

How did you feel when playing the games? (possibility of making a word map of feelings).

You know who you are – but do you know your body? What do you know about your body?

Comfort/ uncomfort – confidence/ able/unable/ disorientation? How does your body react?

Learning stage 3: framing the experience

We finish a session with the 'image'; producing a theatrical freeze frame, whereby we are using our bodies to portray the shared experience of the session. We make a statue or body-machine representing the different elements that came up through the exercises. The 'image' helps to reflect creatively on what we have learnt, to be able to express our thoughts through our body as well as to physically look at them.

Learning stage 4: sharing the learning through a performative intervention

As a final performance we transport the freeze frames to a public space to share what we have learned about what it means to be a human.

Reflection

Fun, catching, responsibility / care for another, trust

Am I too heavy? Am I giving too much for them? Wanting to relate to others

Fun, team, commitment, progress, consideration towards the physical weakness of the other person

Silly, curious, confused, uncoordinated, afraid, thrilled, open, amused, boxed, trusting

Mind based, security, coordination, awareness, trust, memory, scary, limits

When facilitating these exercises to radical educators, the question came up how to combine these radical pedagogies with the strict and outcome driven set-up within the school curriculum. In order to fit with a school environment we would have to announce the concrete outcomes of the session, what the student is expected to have learned by the end, preferably how to monitor the learning through an exam situation, and how this will fit the citizenship curriculum.

However, if we follow the essence of these radical pedagogies, it is essential to leave the ending, as well as the general interpretation of the exercises entirely up to the group, so the workshop can be owned by the group, and the methods become actual tools for reflection and exploration. As a facilitator, this demands complete trust in the learning process as a whole, as well as in the group's contribution to the shared learning.

READING LIST

Smith, M. (1983)
The Libertarians and Education

A general overview of anarchists and education. Smith makes the distinction in his book between the liberal/progressive educators and the libertarian/anarchist ones.

Fielding, M and Moss, P. (2011)
Radical Education and the Common School

Fielding and Moss contest the current mainstream dominated by markets and competition, standardisation, etc. They argue for democratic radical education to be practiced in human scale common schools and explore how this democratic common school might come about.

Ward, C. (1995)
Talking Schools

A collection of Ward's lectures. The first being a brief overview of anarchists and schools. Other topics include schooling and the city child and a discussion of how to use the environment in teaching.

Gatto, J. T. (2009)
Weapons of Mass Instruction: A Schoolteacher's Journey Through the Dark World of Compulsory Schooling

Gatto reveals the real function of pedagogy is to render the common population manageable. Escaping this trap requires a different way of growing up, one Gatto calls 'open source learning'.

Tolstoy, L (trans. Wiener, L) (1968)
On Education

Tolstoy is described in the introduction of this book as a precursor to A.S. Neill, who later came to similar conclusions about education. The latter part of this book is Tolstoy's account of Yasnaya Polyana: the school that he established for peasants' children in nineteenth century Russia.

Boggs, G.L (2011)
'A Paradigm Shift in Our Concept of Education' in *The next American Revolution: Sustainable Activism for the Twenty-first Century*. Ed. Scott Kurashige

Boggs underscores our need for a collective re-imagining of education. She advocates for a type of ongoing education that prepares us to live in a sustainable, community centred and environmentally wealthy world.

Dewey, J. (1956)
The Child and the Curriculum, and The School and Society.

These two influential books represent the earliest authoritative statement of Dewey's revolutionary emphasis on education as an experimental, child-centered process. He declares that we must make schools an embryonic community life and stresses the importance of the curriculum as a means of determining the environment of the child.

Ed. Nesbit, T (2005)
'Learning, Literacy, and Identity' in *Class Concerns: Adult Education and Social Class*

This book contains articles by progressive adult educators which explore how class, gender and race affect different aspects of adult education practice and discourse. It highlights the links between adult education, the material and social conditions of daily and working lives, and the economic and political systems that underpin them.

Beckmann, A & Cooper, C (2004)
'Globalisation', the New Managerialism and Education: Rethinking the Purpose of Education in Britain, in *The Journal of Critical Education Policy Studies* Vol 2 No. 2

'Globalisation' arguably represents the imposition of neo-liberal ideology on a transnational scale, a consequence of which has been 'liberalisation' and the rise of the 'new managerialism' in British welfare. This article focuses on the particular implications of these changes on the British education system.

I. Shor (ed.) (1987)
Freire for the Classroom: A Sourcebook for Liberatory Teaching

A collection of articles by teachers who have used Freireian-inspired pedagogy in their classroom. A valuable practical guide to adapting Freire's ideas for use outside of their original context. Topics covered include teacher education, ESOL teaching and using Freire's ideas in mathematics teaching.

London-Edinburgh Weekend *In and Against the State*
Return Group (1979)

A1979 pamphlet (later a book) written by the 'London Edinburgh Weekend Return Group', a group of socialist public sector workers who sought to understand how they could overcome the contradiction of being full-time state workers and part-time revolutionaries. Seeking to move beyond being public service workers working within the traditional state/individual client relationship by day and organising to 'smash the state' by night, they explore ways that as 'employees' and 'clients' we can collectivise rather than prevent dissent. Socialist teachers are one of the case studies which appear in the first chapter. The text is available electronically at http://libcom.org/library/against-state-1979

Wright, N (1989)
Free School: The White Lion Experience

A pamphlet describing and critically assessing White Lion Street Free School, a free school of the kind before the term was appropriated by Cameron and Gove, written by one of the teachers. The Islington school, which operated from 1972-1990, was funded by the Inner London Education Authority for some of this period, and was the only state-funded free school in England.

Ward, C and Fryson, A
Streetwork: The Exploding School

The result of Ward and Fryson's research for the UK's Town and Country Planning Associations Education Service on the environmental education of the non-academic urban child. As Ward writes in the introduction, it is "a book about ideas: ideas of the environment as the educational resource, ideas of the enquiring school, the school without walls..."

Melissa Benn
'On Dreams and Dilemmas, Class and Cities: Some Thoughts on the Modern Politics of Comprehensives', in *A Tribute to Caroline Benn: Education and Democracy.* Ed. M. Benn

Tackles the question of why there was never a truly comprehensive education system in the UK. A useful background to current struggles against academies. Part of a collection of essays published in memory of Caroline Benn, the co-founder of the Campaign for Comprehensive Education.

Freire, P (1970)
Pedagogy of the Oppressed

This book is considered one of the foundational texts of critical pedagogy. Dedicated to what is called "the oppressed" and based on his own experience helping Brazilian adults to read and write, Freire includes a detailed Marxist class analysis in his exploration of the relationship between what he calls 'the colonizer and the colonized'.

In the book Freire refers to traditional pedagogy as 'the banking model' because it treats the student as an empty vessel to be filled with knowledge, like a piggybank. However, he argues for pedagogy to treat the learner as a co-creator of knowledge.

Neill, A.S. (1962)
Summerhill

Summerhill presents radical educational theorist A. S. Neill, looking back in 1971 on fifty years of running his pioneering self-governing free school in Suffolk, in a narrative that details the progressive school's struggles. As an octogenarian, Neill (1884–1973) recalls his advocacy of a then new psychological approach that pointed to emotions, not intellect, as the primary forces shaping a child's growth. At Summerhill, now run by Neill's daughter, Zoe Readhead, "kids grow up in their own way and at their own speed" in a self-governing, sympathetic environment. Generous in acknowledging his debt to others, including his mentor, psychologist Wilhelm Reich, Neill here freshly details his belief in children's ability to be self-regulating.

Alexander, T and Potter J (2004)
Education for A Change

This book starts from the premise that our present education system is ill equipped to serve students and society in the twenty-first century. With contributions from a range of leading commentators including Tim Brighouse, Jonathan Poritt, Anita Roddick, Charles Handy and Jonathan Sacks, this is a must-read for school leaders, teachers, policy-makers, parents and all education professionals.

READING LIST

Continued

Pykett, J (2007)
'Making Citizens Governable: The Crick report as governmental technology', *Journal of Education Policy* 22:3

This paper considers the recent introduction of Citizenship Education in England from a governmental perspective, drawing on the later work of Foucault to offer a detailed account of the political rationalities, technologies and subjectivities implicated in contemporary education policy in the formation and governance of citizen subjects.

Vasquez, A & Oury, P (1969)
'The Educational Techniques of Freinet', *Prospects in Education 1*

Freinet is an educational concept that was devised by French educationalist Celestin Freinet (1896-1966). He felt that students learned better by directly experiencing ideas within a context and with a set purpose. This text outlines his methodology, drawing on collaboration, assertiveness and the creation of publications and journals by students.

Hooks, Bell
Teaching to Transgress

Influenced by Freire, Hooks writes about Education as the Practice of Freedom. Teaching students to "transgress" against racial, sexual, and class boundaries in order to achieve the gift of freedom is, for Hooks, the teacher's most important goal.

Boal, A
Games for Actors and Non-Actors

Games for Actors and Non-Actors is the classic and best selling book by the founder of Theatre of the Oppressed, Augusto Boal. It sets out the principles and practice of Boal's revolutionary Method, showing how theatre can be used to transform and liberate everyone – actors and non-actors alike.

Incite! Women of Color Against Violence – The Revolution Will Not be Funded

A massive and largely unregulated industry, the US nonprofit sector is the world's seventh largest economy. From art museums and university hospitals to think tanks and church charities, over 1.5 million organizations of staggering diversity share the tax-exempt 501(c)(3) designation, if little else. Many social justice organizations have joined this world, often blunting political goals to satisfy government and foundation mandates. But even as funding shrinks and government surveillance rises, many activists often find it difficult to imagine movement-building outside the nonprofit model. Urgent and visionary, The Revolution Will Not Be Funded is an unbeholden exposé of the "nonprofit industrial complex" and its quietly devastating role in managing dissent.

J. Ranciere
The Ignorant Schoolmaster (1995)

A book based on the experiences of Joseph Jacotot. Having elaborated a method to teach students who could not speak his language, Jacotot in 1818 announced that all people are equally intelligent. From this postulate, Jacotot devised a philosophy and a method for what he called 'intellectual emancipation' - a method that would allow, for instance, illiterate parents to themselves teach their children how to read. The greater part of the book is devoted to a description and analysis of Jacotot's method, its premises, and its implications for understanding both the learning process and the emancipation that results when that most subtle of hierarchies, intelligence, is overturned.

E. Auerbach
Making Meaning, Making Change (1997)

Rather than presenting adult language students with synthetic materials developed outside the classroom, Auerbach advocates that teachers combine "conscious listening," namely a sympathetic awareness of what students' real concerns are, with "catalyst" activities, i.e. language activities that get students to open up and express their real thoughts and feelings. Making Meaning contains an impressive inventory of such activities, which can include what are often called "icebreakers" to get students talking, class newspapers, picture albums, class rituals, or student-produced graphics.

P. Freire and I. Shor
A Pedagogy for Liberation

Two world renowned educators, Paulo Freire and Ira Shor, speak passionately about the role of education in various cultural and political arenas. They demonstrate the effectiveness of dialogue in action as a practical means by which teachers and students can become active participants in the learning process. Shor and Freire describe their own experiences in liberating the classroom from its traditional constraints. They demonstrate how vital the teacher's role is in empowering students to think critically about themselves and their relation, not only to the classroom, but to society.

P. Freire and D. Macedo
Literacy: Reading the Word and the World

Paulo Preire and Donaldo Macedo invite us to re-examine the literacy crisis. They see literacy not merely as a technical skill to be acquired but as a form of cultural politics. Literacy is viewed as a set of practices that either empowers or disempowers people, and is analysed according to whether it serves to reproduce existing social formations or serves as a set of cultural practices promoting democratic change.

J. Freeman and C. Levine
Untying the Knot: Feminism, Anarchism and Organisation (1994)

This text investigates the relationship between feminism and anarchist principles of organisation.

C. Waugh
Plebs: The Lost Legacy of Independent Working-Class Education

http://www.ifyoucan.org.uk/PSE/Home_files/PSE%20Plebs%20pamphlet.pdf

John L. Hammond
Fight to Learn: Popular Education and Guerilla War in El Salvador (1998)

Popular education played a vital role in the twelve-year guerrilla war against the Salvadoran government. This book is a study of the period's pedagogy and politics. Hammond interviewed more than 100 Salvadoran students and teachers for this book, recounting their experiences in their own words, and vividly conveying how they coped with the hardships of war to educate civilian communities. Fighting to Learn tells how poorly educated peasants overcame their sense of inferiority to discover that they could teach each other and work together in a common struggle.

N. Beattie
The Freinet Movements of France, Italy, Germany and Spain 1920–2000 (2002)

'In an age where there is increasingly explicit concern with citizenship and values, as well as literacy and numeracy, and at a time when lifelong learning is high on the political agenda, this book offers a powerful new vision of the educational enterprise. The book is a tour de force. It breaks new historical ground in documenting almost for the first time, the life and work of one of the greatest educational thinkers. It also provides a powerful new vision for education in the twenty-first century.' – Comparative Education, Vol. 39, No. 3, August 2003