

Editor's preface

... in ordinary life we see things, but rarely attend to *seeing* and its history; we speak without reflecting on the complexity of language and its rules, we think without 'thinking about thinking'; we appraise others without thematizing the criteria for valorization, we act without exploring the fabric of social interactions, we engage in social research without investigating the vocabularies of inquiry...(Sandywell, 1996:xiv)

The articles in this issue of CLTP highlight a distinction between reflection and reflexivity in critical literacy practices. Sandywell (1986) outlines the differences in terms of perceptions of reality:

While reflective orientations tend to adopt an empiricist orientation in their world domains and a pragmatic attitude toward their own authority, reflexive perspectives approach first-order reality work as a constructive process... reflection posits a neutral world of entities, reflexivity reminds reflection of the sociability of all world reference (xiv).

Therefore, critical literacy, as a reflexive practice, moves beyond common ideas of learning as reflection on individual experiences and acquisition of individual knowledge towards a conceptualization of learning and knowledge as socially, culturally and historically situated. From this perspective, knowledge is never only individual as it relies on collective referents (grounded in shared languages) for its very existence. This conceptualization of language, knowledge and learning emphasize the relationship between the production of knowledge, of material realities and of power itself. What would be the implications for educational policy, curriculum and pedagogy if these conceptualizations were taken seriously? All articles in this volume engage with this question in different ways.

Most articles make reference to the UK based international creative commons initiative 'Open Spaces for Dialogue and Enquiry' (OSDE). OSDE suggests guidelines and procedures for the creation of educational 'spaces of dissensus' where knowledge production is examined and relativized. The initiative started in 2002 hosted by the Centre for the Study of Social and Global Justice at the University of Nottingham, Global Education Derby, and the Development Education Research Centre at the Institute of Education, University of London. OSDE offers educators a set of principles and procedures for the creation of 'safe spaces of enquiry' that should work as accessible entry points for learners into issues of social and global justice and collective responsibilities. The initiative provides a set of learning activities focusing on questions related to North/South power relations, Western supremacy, epistemic privilege and violence, ideas about the origins and justifications of unequal distributions of resources and labour, ethnocentric benevolence/charity and issues of language, difference and participation. The design of the principles, procedures and learning activities was based on postcolonial theory. The process of facilitation of discussions is steered towards issues of power, representation and the connections between the cultural and material forces that shape subjectivities and worldviews.

The initiative proposes that tracing the origins and implications of ways of seeing and being is fundamental in preparing individuals and communities to work responsibly towards (contested) ideals of justice, peace and equality. Although OSDE proposes an ethical framework for engaging with difference within the safe space (a set of principles for engagement with knowledge production), it does not prescribe a moral framework for thinking and action outside the space (it does not tell

participants what they should think or do in their lives). In order to create an environment free from coercion where participants feel comfortable to experiment with different positionalities and to relate to each other beyond agreeing or disagreeing, participants are not encouraged to reach consensus. The openness of such spaces is based on a collective commitment of exploration of different forms of knowing and relating. Reflection (thinking about individual assumptions), self-reflexivity (thinking about the collective construction of such assumptions, as well as their implications) and an attitude of epistemic curiosity are the pillars of this learning process.

Douglas Bourn reviews emergent educational discourses that emphasise the need for 'global skills' as essential for life in global societies and productive participation in global economies. He analyses different ideological interpretations of 'global skills' and emphasises the possibilities opened by approaches that prioritize critical literacy and engagement with different perspectives. Andrew Robinson connects critical literacy with autonomous ethics and subjectivity. He uses Deleuze and Guattari's metaphor of arborescents and rhizomes to outline a critique of different conceptualizations of knowledge that promote epistemological privilege or pluralism.

In the Practitioners' Insights section, we have four articles related to engagements with OSDE in higher education. Clarissa Menezes Jordão reflects on the rationale for alternative practices in higher education in terms of societal changes and the need for multiple literacies. Timothy Murphy describes his use of OSDE to promote independent thinking skills. Telma Gimenez, Francisco Fogaça, and Miriam Metliss report on the use of OSDE in a course on English as a foreign language. Neda Forghani-Arani considers pedagogical principles in teacher education that could combine reflection and reflexivity and address the politics and sociology of language. Finally, Leticia Martins offers a critical account of her use of OSDE in a language course focusing on the authority of the teacher and power of articulate speech in dialogical spaces.

Vanessa de Oliveira (Andreotti)
University of Oulu, Finland

References

Sandywell, B. (1996). *Reflexivity and the crisis of western reason: Logological investigations* (Vol. 1). London: Routledge.