



Education and Social Justice Across Borders: Celebrating 100 Years of Paulo Freire

In celebration of the centenary of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (19 September 1921 – 2 May 1997), one of the most important thinkers of the twentieth century, we have the honour of convening a conference to discuss the theme of “education and social justice across borders”. The conference is hosted by the Centre for Research in Educational and Social Inclusion (CRESI), University of South Australia, in partnership with the Postgraduate Program in Language Studies, Fluminense Federal University, Brazil, and the English Postgraduate Program, University of São Paulo, Brazil.

The sessions will engage with the interface between school and society, building on Freire’s legacy, and looking at present-day approaches to collaborative, multi-disciplinary and community-oriented curriculum and pedagogy. The panels will use quotes from Freire as provocations for their contributions.

The format of the event is centred on round-table debates, with the aim of generating a dialogical space. As Freire argues, “in the dialogical theory of action, subjects come together to transform the world collaboratively”. Topics covered will include current approaches to social justice in schools and communities, democratising the curriculum, activism, boundary-crossing, and critical literacy and language education.

We build on Freire’s famous critique of what he called the banking model of education:

Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiques and 'makes deposits' which the students patiently receive, memorise, and repeat. This is the 'banking' concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing deposits. ... knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those they consider to know nothing (Freire, 1972, p. 46).

This model flourishes when the purposes of education and the types of knowledge valued are narrow:

We have been allowed to know only one definition of rigour, the authoritarian, traditional one, which mechanically structures education, and discourages us from the responsibility of recreating ourselves in society. (Shor and Freire, 1987, p. 77)

In light of the persistence of narrow models of education, we bring to our meeting the conviction that, more than ever, “we need critical hope the way a fish needs unpolluted water” (1992/2004, p. 2). Freire offers some directions for building this hope in the form of an education which emphasises:

the problematisation of the world of work, products, ideas, convictions, aspirations, myths, art, science, the world in short of culture and history which is the result of the relations between human beings and the world. To present this human world as a problem for human beings is to propose that they 'enter into' it critically, taking the operation as a whole, their action, and that of others in it. It means 're-entering into' the world through the 'entering into' of the previous understandings which may have been arrived at naively because reality was not examined as a whole. (1973, p. 155)

Each round-table will have six discussants and a chair, who will respond to a provocation from Freire, before discussion is opened to all present (online and face-to-face).

References

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- Freire, P. (1973/2021). *Education for critical consciousness*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Freire, P. (1972). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. (1968. Trans. Myra Bergman Ramos). Herder.

The Centre for Research in Educational and Social Inclusion

The Centre for Educational and Social Inclusion (CESI) is based at the University of South Australia. Educational inclusion is a global issue. The impact of social circumstances on access to education and quality of education is profound. The Centre for Educational and Social Inclusion undertakes research to advance an understanding of the barriers and enablers to successful educational inclusion. For further information please see the CESI [website](#).