

Ivan Illich and Paulo Freire's Ideas and Influences on Education in the Last Fifty Years

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The ideas of Paulo Freire and Ivan Illich occupy their own recognizable space for the intellectual history of education. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and *Deschooling Society* are part of the canon of classic books on education from the second half of the 20th century. Even today their theses on education, social change and the role of educational institutions in society, serve as a starting point for seminars, international conferences, publications or teaching programs of the Faculties of Education and research groups still interested in the historical study of educational ideas.

This special issue is related to the symposium entitled «Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed and Ivan Illich's Deschooling Society Fifty Years Later», which took place virtually in the spring of 2021 to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (published in Portuguese in 1968, translated into English in 1970) and *Deschooling Society* (published in 1971 by Harper & Row). This academic event was funded by a Connection Grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)¹. The organizers, Rosa

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Bruno-Jofré, Jon Igelmo Zaldívar and Michael Attridge aimed to bring together members of four groups for research and reflection on educational issues: Theory and History of Education International Research Group (THEIRG; <https://educ.queensu.ca/their>), the Civic Culture and Educational Policies Research Team from the Universidad Complutense de Madrid (www.ucm.es/ccpe), the Institute for Research on the Second Vatican Council in Canada at the University of St. Michael's College (<http://dominicanatoronto.org/institute-research-vatican-iicanada/>) and members of the Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions/RNDM women religious (<http://www.rndmcanada.org/>).

The symposium generated a book with the papers discussed during the symposium and this special issue of the Spanish journal *Espacio, Tiempo y Educación*, which also includes special guest-contributors. Given the locality and readership of the journal, this editorial introduction pays attention to the early process of reception of Freire and Illich's ideas in Spain.

Illich's *Deschooling Society* reached Spain in the 1970s (Bruno-Jofré and Igelmo Zaldívar, 2019, p. 15). Editor Carlos Barral was key for Spanish readers to learn about the criticism of schools, modern means of transportation and institutionalized medicine that Illich was articulating from Mexico. In the collection entitled «Breve Biblioteca de Respuestas» (Brief Library of Responses) by Barral Editores, four books were published translated into Spanish: *La Sociedad Desescolarizada (Deschooling society)*, 1974, in volume 100; *La Convivencialidad (Tools for Conviviality)*, 1974, in volume 110; *Energía y Equidad (Energy and Equity)*, 1974, in volume 112; and *Nemesis Médica (Medical Nemesis)*, 1975, in volume 130.

Illich's ideas had a notable impact on critiques of education in Spain. The journal *Cuadernos de Pedagogía* opened the debate about educational institutions. The article entitled «The Movement of "Liberating Education"» published in 1975 by Estanislao Pastor and José María Román in *Cuadernos de Pedagogía* can be considered one of the first texts in Spain that addresses the new critical currents in education. For Pastor and Román, thinkers such as Illich represented a new critical approach, which from a historical perspective could be compared to the new education movement that had revolutionized the pedagogical landscape in the first decades of the 20th century. The critical activity that was happening at CIDOC (Centro Intercultural de Documentación) in Cuernavaca, as stated in this article, could also be compared to that which had been carried out since 1912 at the Jean-Jacques Rousseau Institute in Geneva.

Just a few months later, the same journal would dedicate a special issue to Illich's ideas. In 1975 Illich himself visited the editorial staff of the *Cuadernos de Pedagogía* in Barcelona. The result of this visit was the interview published in the monographic issue of July and August of that same year entitled «Dossier Freire/Illich». In this monograph, in addition to the interesting interview with Illich, Rosiska Darcy de Oliveira and Pierre Dominice published a paper entitled «Illich-Freire:

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pedagogía de los oprimidos. Opresión de la Pedagogía»². Here the authors offered Illich's critique of schooling together with his critique of the Church and Freire's theory, as one demasking the structures.

In relation to the intellectual presence of Paulo Freire in Spain, it is possible to identify two spaces of reference in the 1950s, 60s and 70s that have been studied by historians of education. Both converge in time, although they represent two partially differentiated spaces of reception. The first is made up of sectors of the Catholic Church that were committed to social, educational and pastoral work in the years after the Second Vatican Council and took Freire's ideas to implement projects of popular education, especially in urban contexts. The second space of reception is that of groups of teachers who already in the final years of Franco's dictatorship and in the years after the dictator's death in 1975, found in Freire's work a reference for a radical transformation of the education system (Groves, 2011).

Both reception spaces were ahead of the Spanish academic world of pedagogy, which until the late 1980s did not attend to the ideas of Paulo Freire. In the 1980s and 1990s, Freire traveled to Spain at the invitation of three higher education institutions: the Pontifical University of Salamanca (UPSA) in 1984, the University of Barcelona (UB) in 1988 and 1994, and the Complutense University of Madrid (UCM) in 1991. These four trips are historically relevant for they inspired the social turn in pedagogy in Spanish academia (Igelmo and Quiroga, 2021).

The ideas of Illich and Freire reached Spain in the 1970s and 1980s, but as it can be noted in this collection of articles, their work had a global reach. Their main books were translated into different languages, and an extensive bibliography was generated offering an analysis of their ideas and practices. The articles presented here provide the reader with contemporary understanding of Freire and Illich in light of emerging developments in terms of technologies, Indigenous approaches to education, political agendas, or renewed philosophical stands.

Ana Jofre, Kristina Boylan and Ibrahim Yucel authored «Desarrollo de herramientas de educación convivencial en el siglo XXI: una propuesta desde las ideas de Paulo Freire e Ivan Illich». The article references Illich's notion of «convivial tools», which are tools that foster individual creativity and are designed to adapt to the needs of individuals and their specific situations. The paper uses Illich, Freire, along with contemporary game theory, to delineate the design rationale of the interactive tool CITE (Collaborative Interactive Tabletop for Education), a tool developed by Ana Jofre and her team at SUNY Polytechnic, which allows users to interact with digital data visualizations using hand-held tabletop objects.

In «Paulo Freire and the Jesuit Educational and Intellectual World in Chile (1964-1969): a Collateral Relationship», Cristóbal Madero examines the relationship Freire had with the Society of Jesus and his participation in Jesuit apostolic works. Grounded in interviews as well as other sources, Madero concludes that the relationship was collateral.

John Baldacchino contributes «Separated by a Common Heterodoxy: Illich, Freire and the Perilous Spell of Radical Canonicity». In this article, Baldacchino underlines the powerful narratives present in the work of these two authors. Thus, as

² This article had been previously published in the INDAC Document no. 8 (Geneva, 1974) under the title: «Freire, Illich, The Pedagogy of the Oppressed, The Oppression of Pedagogy».

stated in the text: «Entering Pedagogy of the Oppressed and Deschooling Society we are bound to find ourselves questioning our own desired orthodoxies, our own sense of certainty by which we seem to have imbued Freire and Illich in one way or another». The two classic books of pedagogical criticism of the second half of the 20th century, in the words of Baldacchino «gained their beautiful influence not because they simply defied the conventions of their day (as some have wrongly argued) but because they sought to dislodge the certainties by which even those who were their likely allies, found themselves out of kilter with the claims made and suggested in these texts».

In the article entitled «A Shared Vision of Radical Education – Going Beyond Specific Differences in the Relation between Paulo Freire and Ivan Illich», Jones Irwin focuses on their shared vision of radical education. This vision included a critique of banking education and a reconceptualization of authority and teaching and the possibility of emancipatory education. One point to highlight in this paper is that the work of Illich and Freire is contextualized in the crisis of neoliberalism in the first two decades of the 21st century. Thus, as Irwin points out: «the current crisis of education under late capitalism (and subject to the conditions of the Covid pandemic) returns the powerful resources of Freire and Illich to center stage in education and politics».

Chris Beeman in his article «From Scarcity to Abundance: Illich’s Educational Critique and Indigenous Learning» distinguishes three phases in Illich’s conceptualization of schooling as education: de-mythologizing, radical scrutinizing, and re-tooling. In the latter phase, Illich and Reimer think of improving human interaction with the tool of education. The insight, Beeman writes, is discussed in *Tools for Conviviality*. In his work Beeman takes some stories of Indigenous Elders from Turtle Island (North America) with whom he has worked for several years, along with his reflection on education, to suggest an altogether different view of learning and education, one which takes place in a context of abundance. The article offers a reading of Illich’s ideas that entail the possibility of redefining the dimension of learning in the Western world:

What the stories of the Elders suggest is that there may be an alternative to attempting to transform education within its usual context. Scarcity certainly defines education’s relative unavailability for economically disadvantaged students. But the evidence above, of what learning in the context of a reciprocal relationship with the natural world could be, shows an alternative. These ideas broadly speak to Illich’s conundrum. To address it, what we think of as education may have to expand. Learning in contexts in which a new kind of thinking and being occurs, such as those noted above, is an alternative that could make education abundant.

The paper written by Darren Dias delves deeply into the concept of dialogue as expounded by Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and by Pope Francis in the Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*. Placing these two Latino Americans in conversation leads to an understanding of the centrality of dialogue in anti-colonial discourse and practice. His shared starting point is a conceptualization of human beings as a potential agent

of change that results from an inherent inclination to be in true relationship with others and with his own reality.

The thematic issue closes with «Bangladesh: An Analysis of BRAC's Shift from Freire's Critical «Conscientization» to a Neoliberal Self-Optimization Approach of Development by Mohammad Fateh. The author critically analyzes the shift operated by the Bangladeshi development NGO BRAC (Bangladesh Rehabilitation Assistance Committee) from Freire's «conscientizing» education to a market driven development strategy based on a hardcore facet of market capitalism. Special attention is paid to BRAC's founder, Fazle Hasan Abed, who from the 1980s onwards «adopted a neoliberal self- optimization approach of development abandoning Freirean philosophy rooted in Christian social movements influenced by Marxism that preached for social transformation, economic and distributive social justice over individual charity».

The seven articles that make up this special issue, based on original research, show both the persistence of the ideas of Illich and Freire in the 21st century and the need to delve into key aspects of their thought and intellectual trajectory from a historical and philosophical perspective. We invite the reader to enjoy this journey.

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