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Editorial

Postcolonial social science education: Time to draw decolonial conclusions

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In recent years, a vibrant global discourse on postcolonialism has emerged in many subdisciplines of social sciences. While the collective memory of the colonial past and its legacy in today's global world is relatively well researched (e.g., in heritage education), issues concerning how the postcolonial condition and postcolonial perspectives affect social science education in a more narrow sense have received less attention. This issue, therefore, strives to investigate concrete instances of postcolonial encounters and experiences as well as decolonisation efforts in the present social science education.

In the call for papers, we asked for contributions regarding issues and problems that are discernable when studying social science education through the lens of postcolonial theory and practice. However, the authors responding to the call strikingly did not use the concept of postcolonialism but instead more specific and locally contextualising decolonial perspectives. We are pleased to present five special topic articles in this issue:

Malte Kleinschmidt's article *"Toward a decolonial shift in citizenship education: empirical insights into German classrooms"* explores the colonial dimension of citizenship education in Germany through interviews with 44 9th graders in German schools. Kleinschmidt's investigation of the students' ideas on globalisation shows that coloniality and decoloniality are already in the classroom, ready to be explored and addressed by the teacher because the students' ideas are shaped by it, and students experience and witness coloniality in their daily life (for the German-speaking discourse compare Kierot et al., 2024).

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Classroom observations on higher education courses have some tradition in the JSSE (e.g., reports on service learning projects: Garcia Moris et al., 2021[1]). The case study and thematic analysis by Khadija El Alaoui and Maura Pilotti, titled *"What's disturbing about power?"* reflects on teaching US-Arab encounters in a Levant university. The reading seminar in an undergraduate program reveals the dynamic flow of teaching and learning based on five key values of culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP). The reflections on pedagogy in action are based on carefully recorded recollections of a foreign-educated instructor of Arab descent. The seminar conforms to a US curriculum (with differing denominations, such as International Studies, American Studies, or Global Studies) and a student-centred model and deals with politics, culture, and the US in the Middle East and North Africa through historical lenses. Students were of diverse national backgrounds, including Lebanese, American, Palestinian, and Arab-American. The teacher described her experience teaching the seminar as rather quickly engulfing her in a bundle of severe and heartfelt cognitive dissonance, or "stepping into a battlefield", as a student said. At the end of their last seminar, her students' reluctance to leave suggests they were experiencing what it means to be part of a learning community.

Mariona Massip Sabater and Mariona Espinet's article "*Delearning capitalism: is degrowth a decolonial perspective in social science education"* raises the question of whether we can decolonise socio-historical points of view if the ideological, economic bases that structure colonial relations are not at all questioned. In the article, the authors discuss degrowth as a decolonial perspective in the teaching of economics. They argue for the importance of decolonising socio-economic imaginaries, particularly targeting notions of capitalism, growth, progress and development. Placing the teacher as the key agent for decolonisation in education, Sabater and Espinet investigate future teachers' notions of economic concepts, such as growth and degrowth, and whether the different notions of economic concepts affect curricular decisions.

In the article *"Decolonizing the social sciences at the limits of the archive: a response concerning "postcolonial" social science"*, Su-Ming Khoo writes about double translation, reverse tutelage and double repair as strategies for decolonising the social sciences. Khoo uses the example of curricular work on a university course on Social Theory in Ireland through the non-linear approach of sideways reading but also draws on discussions about decolonial repair in South Africa. In the article, academia's ability to pursue a decolonised curriculum is put into question.

Subin Nijhawan's article *"Decolonizing education for sustainable development (ESD): The case of the German conceptual framework for secondary schools"* documents the work of an expert group that was commissioned by the school administration in Germany to construct a nationwide framework and recommendation (*Orientierungsrahmen*) for the 16 independent federal states and their respective syllabi in the context of global education policies. The author, as a member of the expert group on social science education, enlists the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4, with a special focus on indicator 4.7, which targets sustainable development and global citizenship, to provide Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) with a broader and more global perspective. Yet, the finding is that despite its holistic and decolonising potential, ESD faces significant political and systemic constraints. The article shows that teaching and educational systems are still confined to the borders of nation-states, as well as the borders of separate school subjects, even as our problems have exceeded those borders for a long time.

[1] https://www.jsse.org/index.php/jsse/article/view/4440/4694

DOING COMPLICATED AND AMBIGUOUS EDUCATIONAL WORK

The articles of this special issue analyse decolonial efforts. In the articles, people trying to decolonise social science education are in trouble in different ways. We encounter educators who cannot only adopt a decolonial orientation: they have to be educators "who are specifically committed to working with the discomforts, challenges, and contradictions inherent in this type of pedagogical practice" (Stein et al., 2020, p. 45). In this special issue of the JSSE, we learn not only from the postcolonial issues and the analysis using decolonial perspectives but also from the struggles of people trying to decolonise social science education. They are staying with the trouble, which, according to Haraway (2016), requires "learning to be truly in the present" (p. 2). Decolonial education cannot reproduce banking education, which is a top-down lecture with critical analysis. It does not start in theory but in concrete instances in the teaching, which could be a pathway to "pedagogical rather than prescriptive strategies" (Stein et al., 2020). It takes into account that postcolonialism in its academic, political and educational dimensions is a contested issue and that a reflective approach to education should beware of the impression that it is about "implementing" certain "good", "right" or "important" ways of thinking and acting.

COLONIALITY AND DECOLONIALITY AS PRESENT IN THE CLASSROOM

African American writer Richard Wright recounted that he was surprised when he read the headlines announcing a Conference that would gather 29 newly independent African and Asian nations in Bandung, Indonesia, in 1955 with the aim to oppose colonialism and form a global non-aligned movement in the context of the cold war. Wright's surprise at the subject and the predicate in that announcement betrayed a subscription to the master narratives that produced these communities' ways of life as lacking. His recognition, however, that the agenda and subject matter of that conference "had been written for centuries in the blood and bones of the participants" gestured towards a different text (Wright, 1956, p. 14). That agenda and subject matter were in him, too. Thus, he decided to attend that conference and write a report about it to the worldwide subjectivities of struggle thirsty for such writings. More than half a century later, we can see that particular text still operating in the manuscripts of the authors who responded to the call for papers: What was Black 9th grader Lara, attending a German school in Kleinschmidt's article, drawing on when she told her interviewer that "Because all think… there are no slaves… [and] no colonies anymore, everything's fine. But actually, that's not true." Or what was the undergraduate Palestinian student, sitting in a Levantine university in El Alaoui's and Pilotti's article, looking at when she stated that extermination is constitutive of the US imperial project?

Decoloniality is born out of the human spirit that refuses to submit to colonial injustices, be they material, ontological or epistemic. In Kleinschmidt's study, it is the adolescents with the Global-South background who do not and/or cannot buy into their epistemic erasure and are critical of European notions of borders, development, and progress. One wonders whether these young critics' graduation from such schools would translate into their unseeing the texts written in their bodies and emerging as native informants of the likes of Fouad Ajami, whose scholarly trajectory was still seductive to students hurt by his intellectual services to power in El Alaoui's and Pilotti's article.

Sabater's and Espinet's article articulates decolonial pedagogies through teaching degrowth to future teachers, who were then surveyed about their understanding of notions of economic concepts, such as growth, degrowth, progress, and prosperity. By seeking to find out whether exposure to critical views on growth and capitalism can affect curricular decisions, the authors make the

point that oppressive structures of academic institutions can become sites of contention and resistance. We read their study as hopeful for the students we encounter in the accounts of Kleinschmidt, El Alaoui and Pilotti, as it concludes that current and future teachers can also be agents for decolonisation in education.

ARE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS ABLE TO ALLOW COGNITIVE JUSTICE AND PLURIVERSITY?

Another salient point in all authors' writing is their questioning whether educational systems and institutions, mainly academia, are capable of sustaining emancipatory projects, such as decolonising social science education. Khoo delineates pedagogical strategies, such as double translation, reverse tutelage, and double repair, that can be enlisted to decolonise the social science "archive". Yet, as the author notes, the re-designed social theory course, as well as the entire interdisciplinary Master's Program, were discontinued in an Irish university due to neoliberal restructuring and academic managerialism. Khoo ends her account by calling for broader transformative educational practices and pinning some expectations on the UN's Sustainable Development Goal target for global education, especially SDG 4.7[2]. This connects to Nijhawan's article, which places SDG4 at the centre of analysis and pinpoints the holistic and decolonial condition of SDG 4.7.

Khoo raises the danger that decolonial efforts get stuck in negativity and hopelessness, to the point that the concept of decolonisation in itself signals absence and impossibility. We hope that reading the issue does not merely end in the thought, "this is difficult", but also the realisation, in line with El Alaoui and Pilotti, that immensely interesting things happen in the teaching situation, that we can listen to the students, walk with them, expose colonial patterns together, and learn from those who propose radical ways of liberation. Zooming in on classrooms as spaces of encounters between students with different backgrounds and teachers, we note that the authors of this special issue conceptualised the subject matter of global politics/global citizenship as a form of encounter that necessarily acknowledges the existence of different trajectories. Their decolonial pedagogies expose modernity's epistemic violence, what Naeem Inayatullah (2019) describes as "exclusive knowledge" that feeds the "impulse to teach" others, perceived as lacking, what they could and should become. The teachers' decolonial pedagogies enable students to experience and encounter world systems and learn to respond critically to them. Their critical stance, fraught with ambiguity and discomfort, reminds us of Andreotti et al.'s (2015) conclusive remark that serious critique of coloniality in the context of higher education "demands a kind of courage that is un-neurotic (not invested in self-affirmation): a kind of courage that helps us to look the bull in the eye, to recognise ourselves in the bull, and to see the bull as a teacher, precisely when it is trying to kill us" (p. 28). Such a defiant move recalls the wisdom that one cannot leap the abyss in two jumps. Only then can we draw decolonial conclusions.

[2] UN's Sustainable Development Goal 4 is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. The indicator 4.7 reads "By 2030 ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development".

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