

Learners and Oppressed Peoples of the World, Wikify! Wikiversity as a Global Critical Pedagogy

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"A good educational system should have three purposes: it should provide all who want to learn with access to available resources at any time in their lives; empower all who want to share what they know to find those who want to learn it from them; and, finally, furnish all who want to present an issue to the public with the opportunity to make their challenge known." – Ivan Illich

Introduction

Today the canvas of critical pedagogy is painted in many colors although North America is still the hegemonic center of the field. In Latin America there is, of course, the legacy of Paulo Freire, and many practical political solutions and social initiatives derive from Latin America. Britain and Germany have their own distinctive traditions and critical educational scholars who are not only interested in theory but also praxis and party politics. In other countries critical pedagogues are rather sparse as their activities are sporadic. There are groups in South Africa, Spain, Malta, Israel, Finland, among other countries, and Paulo Freire institutes around the world provide both symbolic and material resources and serve as an important intellectual network.

Most professors in our field work in the US and all the relevant publishers operate there: major textbooks, handbooks and readers are mainly published in the US largely by the local authors (see Kincheloe 2004, Fischman et al. 2005, McLaren & Kincheloe 2007, Apple et al. 2009).¹ Most of the journals are founded and published in the US or Canada except *Journal of Critical Educational Policy Studies*, an e-journal with an international editorial board and a global reach.

¹ Nowadays no matter which text on critical pedagogy I take and browse, it is almost always the same story: the text starts with the following statement, almost like an ingredients sticker in the sandwich package: critical pedagogy consists of the following core principles and goals (hope, ideology critique, struggle – you name it). Then, usually, come a section of key figures and needed Freire quotes: throw in some other strong names, some concepts – and the cake is ready to oven. But do not get me wrong: it goes without saying that our founding figures are necessary ingredients for all of us as next generation and beyond as academic guerillas, gate-openers, magician, visionaries and theoretical trendsetters.

By hegemony I do not refer to any particular personae, for hegemony is not a personal quality or intention but a complex power relation closely related to the language used in research communication. And in this respect there are two problems: hegemony can mean a sort of unintentional cultural imperialism as ready-made packages of ideas if taken for granted and not translated into a different language, that is, interpreted in a given political and cultural context. Without these translations and interpretations the hegemony might work like the invader who violently penetrates "the cultural context of another group" (Freire 1993, 152). Thus to overcome the hegemony we need to localize critical pedagogies along with other practices and discourses of resistance (see Viola 2009).

Hegemony can also refer to an exclusion of people to participate in collaboration and mutual sharing of ideas. Thus 21st century critical pedagogue cannot any longer be a solitary person who merely publishes but the one who acts in solidarity with the people online and offline. Hence a need to invent and use the tools of learning that allows collaborative knowledge work, and an urge to collective intelligences and global knowledge networking. Franz Fanon once said: "A community will evolve only when a people control their own communication" (cit. Best & Kellner 2003). This is why I promote Wikiversity as a powerful tool for global critical pedagogy. Wikiversity (<http://en.wikiversity.org>) is an open learning community in the Internet, and one of Wikipedia's sister projects. "Wikiversity is a Wikimedia Foundation project devoted to learning resources, learning projects, and research for use in all levels, types, and styles of education from pre-school to university, including professional training and informal learning" (*Wikiversity*: "Main Page"). In reality there is no single view of Wikiversity, but many. Wikiversity is a form of collective re-imagining and construction work and, as such, critical pedagogy. As an open and in principle inclusive educational platform it can actualize some of the not yet fully utilized potentials of our field.

Teaching Critical Minds – Yes, But How?

I claim that we cannot reach the full promise of critical pedagogy without going global, open and public. If we continue to turn inward, away from publics being too busy in securing our positions in universities – perhaps a withering organization in the plurality of learning opportunities – we will fail the global struggle for a just ecosocialist world. Turning away from the world was not our founding figures' intention. They neither fought for the universities as such nor selfishly defended narrow professionalism but lived for a cause. The current legitimization crises of higher education and useless struggles in campuses are unfortunate and weaken our chances in teaching and facilitating those in our lecture halls and seminar meetings who belong to the new not-so-book-oriented generations and use social media as integral part of their daily routines (see Ito 2009). As Dennis and Al-Obaidi (2010) put it: "From Facebook to Second Life, and SMSing to YouTube, the result is a generation that takes a whole set of communicative formats, strategies and artifacts (such as the über-multifunction cell phone) as the foundational ground for identity and communication, in ways that did not exist a few years earlier."

Even though traditional transmission models of knowledge die hard, they are nevertheless re-interpreted and remixed in a different audiovisual contexts and formats (ibid.).

In this chapter I imagine a new way of thinking critical pedagogy in the networked learning environments as “commons-based peer production” (Benkler 2006). This term refers to a new modality of organizing production and learning: “radically decentralized, collaborative, and nonproprietary; based on sharing resources and outputs among widely distributed, loosely connected individuals who cooperate with each other without relying on either market signals or managerial commands.” (Benkler 2006, 60.) In what follows I will study the possibility to open up critical pedagogy globally by utilizing Wikiversity's learning resources.

In this task of linking the principles of critical pedagogy to the open access of the Internet the following words of Dion Dennis and Jabbar Al-Obaidi (2010) must be taken to the heart: “Engaged in a collective re-imagining of the present and future, creative collaboration is our best chance to leave a positive legacy. We cannot allow our children to live in the heavy detritus of outdated practices and platforms.” They also see that there is a role for colleges and universities “as official institutions of cultural production and reproduction”: they “could be part of the vanguard, watching, listening, recognizing, inventing, redeploying and extending new practices and platforms, all the ensembles that are so evident in the everyday communication practices of the young” (Dennis & Al-Obaidi 2010).

In recent years I have studied public sociology in my search for theoretical and practical alliances with critical pedagogy and learnt that it is a close relative to critical pedagogy. Some public sociologists are interested in pedagogy and teaching, some acknowledge and praise Paulo Freire. An education of a critical mind should be dialogical and democratic, says Ben Agger, a prominent public sociologist; it “should mobilize, energize and inspire.” It is young people who, equipped with critical concepts and radical insights, can change the world, he states. “Teaching should matter because students do. Students, like our own children, are prisms through which we understand ourselves better. They also model democracy and play in ways that most sociologists have forgotten. Children are utopian agents...” (Agger 2006, 212.)

If teaching really is as important as we critical pedagogues write and preach along with some public sociologists (see Agger 2006, Burawoy 2004, Feagin & Hernán 2008, DeCesare 2009, Persell 2009) claim, are we taking it seriously, or only acting as we were? What if our teaching of and studying in educational and social sciences are, at present, based on false assumptions – or “university contract” according to which teachers act as if they were teaching and students as if they were studying. And what if, even worse, teaching and studying in the university mere alienates and numbs the students inflicting individual, social and political hopelessness? What if we as academic scholars reproduce hopelessness and alienation in our arrogance towards teaching and learning, and our hunger for personal merits in the academic competition of recognition? David Graeber has stated as follows:

Hopelessness isn't natural. It needs to be produced. If we really want to understand this situation, we have to begin by understanding that the last thirty years have seen the construction of a vast bureaucratic apparatus for the creation and maintenance of hopelessness, a kind of giant machine that is designed, first and foremost, to destroy any sense of possible alternative futures. (Graeber 2008.)

Am I part of that “bureaucratic apparatus for the creation and maintenance of hopelessness” in my teaching (and in my research projects for that matter), or am I not? Am I part of the problem or part of the solution? I am afraid to say, but I fear that in my narrow-minded, often-faked professionalism I am more a problem than a solution by taking part to a giant diploma mill – a.k.a academic-industrial complex (McLaren et al. 2010, see also Giroux 2007) – that is not only destroying our possibilities for liberatory, critical learning but also possible alternative futures. Michael Burawoy, an acclaimed evangelist of public sociology (this is how he characterizes his own role in public sociology), emphasizes the role of teaching in public sociology, or more precisely, a certain relationship and communication between different publics by underscoring students' central role not only as sociology's first and captive audience but also as actors who own rich protosociological knowledge. As he states:

What does it mean to think of them as a potential public? It surely does not mean we should treat them as empty vessels into which we pour our mature wine, nor blank slates upon which we inscribe our profound knowledge. Rather we must think of them as carriers of a rich lived experience that we elaborate into a deeper self-understanding of the historical and social contexts that have made them who they are. With the aid of our grand traditions of sociology, we turn their private troubles into public issues. We do this by engaging their lives not suspending them; starting from where they are, not from where we are. Education becomes a series of dialogues on the terrain of sociology that we foster — a dialogue between ourselves and students, between students and their own experiences, among students themselves, and finally a dialogue of students with publics beyond the university. Service learning is the prototype: as they learn students become ambassadors of sociology to the wider world just as they bring back to the classroom their engagement with diverse publics. (Burawoy 2005, 9.)

Indeed, children are utopian agents, as are our students we meet in our lectures, seminar and offices. Or are they? Do we treat them as we so often say we do? As equals, as carriers of valuable experiences? Do we even try to act as if Freire had it right? That in order to get rid of the oppressive society, educational interaction should be turned from

hierarchical 'banking' into lively dialogues where people can communicate freely and create their social world as equal and meaningful (Freire 1993). For one, I do not – at least before Wikiversity.

Both Freire and Burawoy with others can be criticized on the basis of the following paradox: while they both seem to respect students' experiences and maintain a series of dialogues between them, they still – perhaps unintentionally – juxtapose their educational and sociological expertise (“With *the aid of our grand traditions* of sociology, we turn their private troubles...”) with students' novelty. Perhaps “our” grand sociological and pedagogical traditions do not hold anymore but are in need of serious rethinking and rewriting. Unfortunate authoritarianism is a genuine fear if critical pedagogy and public sociology are interpreted as emancipatory projects in which “emancipation is understood as something that is *done to somebody*” (Biesta 2010). This is, however, a contested interpretation for time and again it is maintained that dialogue really means not only reciprocal respect for others and their humanity but also respect for the cultural contexts.

Moreover it is emphasized that diverse uses of power evident in all human relations, implicitly or explicitly, needs to be problematized, debated and taken into account. However, it has been claimed that in emancipation done to someone – emancipation from above – there is “a fundamental *inequality* between the emancipator and the one to be emancipated” (*italics* in original). Thus a pedagogy “in which the teacher knows and students do not know *yet*; where it is the task of the teacher to explain the world to the students and where it is the task of the students to ultimately become as knowledgeable as the teacher” (Biesta 2010). This critique is of course contested, for in Freirean thinking dialogue is practice which starts from the peoples' lifeworld. But even so the critique contains relevant questions in terms of the role of dialogue in pedagogical process. For dialogue is always a relation and there are no relations without the question of power and equality, that is, the question of who has the final say.

A Gulf and A Distance

This is the point, where Jacques Rancière enter the stage, for he is the philosopher who, besides criticizing Pierre Bourdieu's sociological approach, has develop a radical learning theory, entitled emancipatory method. From the early 1970s Rancière has criticized Bourdieu's reproduction thesis and its application in educational policy making. In his opinion, Bourdieu has built an idea of the intellectual aristocracy, of “sociology kings,” who always know the people's matters and their life situations better than themselves. In its determinism Bourdieu's sociology of education thus presents ‘the philosophy of the police order’ serving the dominating power whose representatives do not even hear the ordinary people's voice but consider it as meaningless nonsense (Hewlett 2007, 90, 91–97) but on the other hand one can claim that Rancière has used Bourdieu as a stroll man in developing his own points of view. According to the criticism, Bourdieu assumes that people are more or less ignorant; especially people from the working-class will be excluded from the educational system just because they do not realize, or are not aware of the real reasons for the exclusion. This ignorance, in turn, is a structural consequence of

the apparently democratic capitalist system, which closes them out in the first place. In Bourdieu's thinking the system stays erect because people do not realize its proper functions and because it reproduces its own existence by staying unrecognized again and again within its own processes (Ross 1991, xi–xii). However, Rancière does not want to sign or accept this circle logic of reasoning but stresses that the matters are as they are, and remain unchanged, partly because of these so-called social facts.

In the following I read Rancière's explication of his radical learning theory from his *The Emancipated Spectator* (Rancière 2009) that sums up his earlier ideas (Rancière 1991). He starts with an idea that it is the very logic of almost any pedagogical relationship – actually it is the task assigned to the teacher (Rancière uses the word schoolmaster) – that the teacher abolishes the gulf between her knowledge (written in advance in different curricula and textbooks) and the ignorance of the ignoramus (pupil, student). Her lessons and exercises aim gradually, year after year, to reduce the gulf – whether in cognition, spirit, aesthetics, skills or manners – separating her and her students. But here lays the paradox: she can only narrow the gulf on the condition that she constantly re-creates and reproduces it. For “to replace ignorance by knowledge” she must be few steps ahead all the time, install new set of ignorances, new gulfs, between the pupil and herself. (Rancière 2009, 8.) In general Rancière opposes emancipatory interest consisting of a person (or a set of socio-political practices or decisions) who (or which) can emancipate someone else, usually those who are socially defined as marginalized or underrepresented. Rancière tends to think that this is a mistaken idea, which leads to unnecessary professocracy. This also a question of particular social and political circumstances, for there are places and times where such actions as 'positive discrimination,' 'affirmative action' and 'quotas' (or numerus clausus) are needed in assuring “equal opportunities for all” as it goes.

The reason for this is simple, says Rancière. “In pedagogical logic, the ignoramus is not simply one who does not yet know what the schoolmaster knows.” More than that, the student is the one who does not know what she or he does not know, or how to know it. This is the very logic of the schooling system: it sets students into a plank slate position in that the system has ready-made formulas for what to teach (school subjects and study contents), how to teach (teaching methods or didactics), and in what age to do what (grades from preschool to high school and beyond). In other words, “the schoolmaster is not only the one who possesses the knowledge unknown by the ignoramus,” but “also the one who knows how to make it an object of knowledge, at what point and in accordance with what protocol” (*ibid.*, 8.). And this is precisely the reason; why in the aim to create critical, even insurgent thinking *and* action it would be imperative to focus on creating suitable educational situations. Otherwise it is probable that we only serve to fulfill the wishes of bureaucratic machine maintaining hopelessness. In the context of critical pedagogy and public sociology it is necessary to acknowledge that the educational system leaves something out of its overdetermined calculations; it ignores students' agency, and her lifeworld:

For, in truth, there is no ignoramus who does not already know a mass of things, who has not learnt them by herself, by listening and looking around her, by

observation and repetition, by being mistaken and correcting her errors. But for the schoolmaster such knowledge is merely an *ignoramus's knowledge*, knowledge that cannot be ordered in accordance with the ascent from the simplest to the most complex. The ignoramus advances by comparing what she discovers with what she already knows, in line with random encounters but also according to the arithmetical rule, the democratic rule, that makes ignorance a lesser form of knowledge. She is concerned solely with knowing more, with knowing what she did not yet know. What she lacks, what the pupil will always lack, unless she becomes a schoolmistress herself, is *knowledge of ignorance* – a knowledge of the exact distance separating knowledge from ignorance. (Rancière 2009, 9, italics in original)

This is how Rancière further explicates his pedagogical thinking:

What the schoolmaster knows, what the protocol of knowledge transmission teaches the pupil in the first instance, is that ignorance is not a lesser form of knowledge, but the opposite of knowledge; that knowledge is not a collection of fragments of knowledge, but a position. The exact distance is the distance that no yardstick measures, the distance that is demonstrated solely by the interplay of positions occupied, which is enforced by the interminable practice of the 'step ahead' separating the schoolmaster from the one whom he is supposed to train to join him. It is the metaphor of the radical gulf separating the schoolmaster's manner from the ignoramus's, because it separates two intelligences: one that knows what ignorance consists in and one that does not. It is, in the first instance, the radical difference that ordered, progressive teaching teaches the pupil. The first thing it teaches her is her own inability. In its activity, it thereby constantly confirms its own presupposition: the inequality of intelligence. This endless confirmation is what Jacotot calls stultification.

Joseph Jacotot (1770-1840), mentioned in the quote, was a French autonomous thinker, and a leading figure in Rancière's book *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*. In that book Rancière described Jacotot's method of "intellectual emancipation" which Jacotot developed as a sort of alternative pedagogy in the spirit of revolutionary times in France in the late 18th and early 19th century. "Intellectual emancipation is the verification of the equality of intelligence. This does signify the equal value of all manifestations of intelligence, but the self-equality of intelligence in all its manifestations. There are not two sorts of intelligence separated by a gulf." (Rancière 2009, 10.) In other words, equality is a presumption of all emancipatory pedagogical interactions, and not their purpose or some distant goal as in stultifying pedagogical practices (see also Ruitenberg 2008). For Rancière the ultimate metaphor for emancipatory learning is the "poetic labour of translation." It "is at the heart of all learning" from the first trial and errors, observations, and comparisons of a child ("[T]he human animal learns everything in the same way as it initially learnt its mother tongue") to the works of a "scientist who constructs hypothesis." "The same intelligence is always at work – an intelligence that translates signs into other signs and proceeds by comparisons and illustrations in order to

communicate its intellectual adventures and understand what another intelligence is endeavouring to communicate to it." (Rancière 2009, 10.)

Thus, someone who wants to be part of actual emancipation by education, "an ignorant schoolmaster," neither knows, cares nor legitimizes the gulf to be bridged by an expert, between her teaching and her students. Quite reverse, it is her task to renounce the assumption of ignorance and the idea of two different intelligences, those of inferior and superior, and uncouple his mastery from his knowledge. However, this uncoupling is easier said than done in the hierarchical universities – still worthwhile to obtain. The ignorant schoolmaster, perhaps an ideal figure of a public sociologist and a critical educator, does not teach her students *her* knowledge, "but orders them to venture into forest of things and signs, to say what they have seen and what they think of what they have seen, to verify it and have it verified." (Rancière 2009, 10–11.) To act against this, is a guarantee for political amnesia, social hopelessness and stultified personae.

To say this is not to deny cognitive or any other distance between the teacher and the student, but to point to a difference between the concepts of gulf and distance. A gulf refers to an authoritarian mastery of a teacher by the educational system, whereas distance is something belonging to our being as human animals. As Rancière (ibid., 10) puts it, we "are distant animals who communicate through the forest of signs."

Every distance is a factual distance and each intellectual act is a path traced between a form of ignorance and a form of knowledge, a path that constantly abolishes any fixity and hierarchy of positions with their boundaries (Rancière 2009, 11).

There are always various distances in the lives of people as they use signs and symbols in communication, and there are distances in the more mundane sense that I, as a teacher with certain life experiences, have traveled my path in search of knowledge and understanding. But this path is among many, and not necessary the one used by others. Thus the difference between a *systemic* gulf of formal education and training, and an *organic* distance in the forest of signs (see Pictures 1 and 2).

These ideas get further support from the tradition of cultural psychology in which it is emphasized that teaching and learning situations are not only surrounded by sociopolitical and ideological factors but also create those factors as byproducts of sorts. Cultural psychologists stress that human communities are, above all, learning communities, or in Jerome Bruner's (1996) terms "mutual learning cultures." Bruner suggests that an ideal learning situation is not that which keeps students in isolation, in which they merely sit and listen, or read lecture notes in solitude, to him this is an alienated mode of learning. A more natural situation is that in which students can share their ideas and communicate with others in different ways.

This is not to say, however, that good quality revolutionary learning – sometimes referred to as deep approach to learning in contrast to surface approach – would always be about

communicating and keeping in touch; of course, at times, deep learning might require more consciousness retreat and loosening up than anything else. But it does say that in an ideal learning situation there are “mutual sharing of knowledge and ideas, mutual aid in mastering material, division of labor and exchange of roles, opportunity to reflect on the group’s activities” (Bruner 1996, xv). These connections are knotted between students, between students and their teachers, and between students and other people close and distant.

Cultural psychology of learning suggests participatory learning that is intrinsically motivated and connected to peoples’ interests, aims and passions. It is also social in nature in involving interactions, and sharing with others, and it occurs during organic activities which are not highly prescriptive. This is where Wikiversity can be beneficial and useful in allowing these organic connections and naturally evolving interactions. Cultural psychology provides basic understandings of the importance of mutual sharing and mutual aid in learning, actually echoing Marx’s maxim “from each according to his [and her] ability, to each according to his [and hers] needs” in his *Critique of the Gotha Program*, whereas emancipatory learning, as described by Rancière, presumes and underlines everyone’s chances to participate in learning, in the first instance, as *equals*. Says Rancière: “Equality is not a goal that governments and societies could succeed in reaching. To pose equality as a goal is to hand it over to the pedagogues of progress, who widen endlessly the distance they promise they will abolish. Equality is a presupposition, an initial axiom—or it is nothing.” (Rancière 2002, 223.)

Wikiversity as a Mutual Learning Community

Rancière has a strong view on the function of schooling as an ideological state apparatus. He believes that it has nothing to do with emancipation, and everything to do with pupils’ bureaucratic taming: “Equality turns into the opposite the moment it aspires to a place in the social or state organization. Intellectual emancipation accordingly cannot be institutionalized without becoming instruction of the people, in other words, a way of organizing the eternal minority” (Rancière 1999, 34.) Moreover, he is convinced that the order in society is the function of some people’s command and someone else’s obedience. But in order to submit to the order, two things are required: “you must understand the order and you must understand that you must obey. And to do that, you must already be the equal of the person who is ordering you. It is this equality that gnaws away at any natural order.” (Ibid., 16.)

Thus Rancière leaves the door open for doing and thinking schooling and education differently. In addition to affirm the fundamental equality between learners, it would take different epistemological stance and a fresh look on teaching practices. Some time ago I was in the meeting with teachers discussing with them about Wikiversity. After I had explained generally, how wiki works, and how it enables various collaboration between pupils and between teachers and pupils and so forth, one teacher asked: “But how then I can teach the same subject in different classes?” In other words, her worry was as

follows: How to teach the same subject with a new or parallel class if it is already “there” and done with another class? This is, precisely, the problem of today’s school knowledge and teaching philosophy behind recognized by Illich:

Schools are designed on the assumption that there is a secret to everything in life; that the quality of life depends on knowing that secret; that secrets can be known only in orderly successions; and that only teachers can properly reveal these secrets. An individual with a schooled mind conceives of the world as a pyramid of classified packages accessible only to those who carry the proper tags. New educational institutions would break apart this pyramid. Their purpose must be to facilitate access for the learner: to allow him to look into the windows of the control room or the parliament, if he cannot get in by the door. Moreover, such new institutions should be channels to which the learner would have access without credentials or pedigree – public spaces in which peers and elders outside his immediate horizon would become available. (Illich 1971, 76.)

How, then, can Rancière’s, Illich’s and others ideas on radical equality be actualized in critical pedagogy and public sociology? How to break apart the pyramids of classified packages of school knowledge? Can we teach without falling into the trap of training, or as Manchev (2010) asks, without “performing authority, imposing norms, surveying and punishing, and enjoying our power? How can we open up thinking without educating? Is it possible to mobilize a ‘common’ (or perhaps it is better to call it ‘friendly’) way of thinking? How would it be done?” Sapienti sat! Enough to the wise!

If we as critical pedagogues and public sociologists are concerned, following Feagin and Vera (2008), “with eliminating the chains of various social oppressions and with creating much more just and egalitarian societies,” then what sorts of teaching practices will help in advancing these aims in public sociology and critical pedagogy? To put it other ways, what does it mean, practically, to say that students are not empty vessels, but bring their own experiences and ideas to the learning situation? It is obvious that liberatory teaching cannot refer to the model where there is someone who knows and someone who does not know, not to an idea that there is – and must be – an unbridgeable gulf between an expert and a novice.

The key concepts and ideas of both critical pedagogy and public sociology, those of participation, collaboration, commitment, and solidarity, all point to a mode of learning and teaching that can be supported by the use Wikiversity (or other wikis). Wikiversity consist of three core principles. Firstly, there is no one who controls the learning contents (except the administrators and Wikipedians who fight vandalism), no Faculty deciding courses or granting diplomas. Secondly, Wikiversity is based on self-organization of users and editors known as Wikipedians, basically regardless of their age, social status, gender, ethnicity or religion. And thirdly, Wikiversity is all about mutual learning cultures, equal participation and collaborative editing. In enhancing this, the Wikipedians have found learning-by-doing model and ideas of participatory action research as useful. Based on these principles Wikiversity “is devoted to learning resources, learning projects and research for use in all levels, types, and styles of education” (Wikiversity:

“Wikiversity”). It can be seen as an ideological “text,” or practice, in that it has its own underpinnings, and it shares some of the core ideas of participation, collaboration, and sharing, all pointing to a fundamental leveling and democratization of learning and society. Wikiversity, like other wikis, has a profound difference compared to so-called traditional, broadcast media transmitting information and operating in the one-to-many model since Wikiversity utilizes easy-to-use wiki technology that in principle allows everyone’s participation and builds on many-to-many communication model.

Wikiversity has several predecessors in the history of 20th century education. One obvious forerunner is free and liberal adult education in its diversity of curricula, voluntary participation, learner-based study methods and open-endedness, and the other being free school movement (Leinonen, Vadén & Suoranta 2009). Besides them public library, the free software movement and popular education stand as examples and bedrocks of Wikiversity (Friesen & Hopkins 2008). There have also been attempts to rethink universities as free spirited and accessible for the surrounding community. Ollman (1985) has argued that the university should primarily contribute to the community and stay true to its critical functions. In the context of the City University of New York (CUNY) he has stated: “Why should research be an individual and small group activity? Let 150,000 people take to their pencils and wits together about something worthwhile. Put mass scholarship into motion.” One curious example of the sources close to critical pedagogy’s history comes from the Free Jewish School in Frankfurt where Erich Fromm taught in the early 1920. Remarkably the school was called ‘free’ for “there were no restrictions on admission, and no other than the teachers and students was to have any influence on the teaching programme” (Wiggershaus 1995, 53). And, of course, one cannot forget Illich’s contribution (see Suoranta & Vadén 2010).

Yet another example of free learning: Rancière’s philosopher colleague and compatriot Michel Onfray left his job as teacher of philosophy and established a tuition-free “people’s university” (Université Populaire) in the town of Caen in order to fight against populist right-wing politics, to promote public intelligence and try to “analyze and understand how the world functions in order to put forward alternative solutions to the contemporary negativity.” The free folk university is open to anyone and prior education is not prerequisite. (Onfray 2004, Ireland 2006.)

Wikiversity is a new global and collaborative infrastructure for knowledge production and also a potentially revolutionary learning environment in that it gives the users a change for direct collaboration and sharing of their ideas and insights. It is by no means a homogeneous learning community in its currents goals and contents. And, of course, it should not be. People interpret its uses and purposes differently and discuss about those interpretations in its discussion pages. Even its mission statements have varied in time. In 2006 it was stated as follows:

Wikiversity is intended for the creation and use of free learning materials and activities. The mission of Wikiversity is to empower people to achieve their educational goals using resources produced by the free culture movement. The goal

is to create a community of people who support each other in their educational endeavors. (*Wikibooks*: “Wikiversity”)

Two years later the mission was set as follows:

Wikiversity is a centre for the creation and use of free learning materials and activities. Its primary priorities and goals are to create and host a range of free-content, multilingual learning materials/resources, for all age groups and learner levels and host learning and research projects and communities around existing and new materials. (*Wikiversity*: “Mission”)

If read with critical eye it can be seen that the terms like ‘empowering,’ ‘free culture movement’ and ‘community of people’ are erased from the recent mission statement. Perhaps Wikiversity is turning mainstream from its previous hacker image. At least it is more antiseptic and more neutral than the original one suggesting Wikipedia’s neutral point of view -policy: “Neutral point of view (NPOV) is a fundamental Wikimedia principle and a cornerstone of Wikipedia. All Wikipedia articles and other encyclopedic content must be written from a neutral point of view, representing fairly, proportionately, and as far as possible without bias, all *significant* views that have been published by reliable sources. This is non-negotiable and expected of all articles and all editors.” (*Wikipedia*: “NPOV”) In contrast to Wikipedia’s cornerstone, Wikiversity does not have NPOV, it is thus more than a free encyclopedia. In Wikiversity all the flowers of learning and original research may bloom (*Wikiversity*: “Original research”). Wikiversity’s potential in enhancing collaborative research projects and publisher-free peer reviewed publishing is enormous but yet to be seen.

The power of Wikiversity is precisely in its collaborative and public mode of communication if looked at from the teacher and student’s point of view. Wikiversity encourages people to participate in the public learning sphere, and to act as critical pedagogues and public sociologists by providing an uncensored and direct public arena to pedagogical and sociological communication to everyone whether inside the university or elsewhere. It can be argued that Wikiversity abolishes education as “an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor” (Freire 1993). Furthermore, it actually goes beyond dialogue model since there are not face-to-face interactions and in theory and practice everyone is equal regardless of age, gender, class, ethnicity and so forth.

However, Wikiversity assumes literacy, and, actually, critical media literacies, which “meet the dual challenges of teaching media literacy in a multicultural society and of sensitizing students and publics to the inequities and injustices of a society based on gender, race, and class inequalities and discrimination” (Kahn & Kellner 2005, 244). And although most of the students are not only media literate, but also savvy users of information technologies in their daily lives, they might still be cautious about wikis and the first edit, regardless of the simplicity in use. There are other obstacles too in the use of Wikiversity. The type of direct participatory communication typical in Wikiversity seems to be still rather rare in the university. “That is, the professor can be a ‘tiger in the

classroom' while being a 'pussycat in the Dean's office' and, too often, in the outside society" (Feagin & Vera 2008). This feature of learning together in public with others can be a barrier both to teachers and students, especially if they are accustomed to the idea that universities are isolated parts of society, like islands in the sea, or, at best, "laboratories of life" as John Dewey once hoped.

Thus it must do more with 'right' attitude, or mind set, than technological skill. And it is certainly linked to students' learning histories, with their identities as learners (as subordinates or rebels), as well as university teacher's learning and teaching histories (as tigers or pussycats). When I have discussed with my students they have brought out that the first edit is difficult because they do not feel at ease in "touching," that is, editing, their friends' and peer students' texts. On the other hand it has been reported that users have a sense of pride and ownership of the pages they have created and edited. In addition there is "a sense of adventure to open content development that an author working alone in a private setting would not likely encounter" (Friesen & Hopkins 2008). Furthermore, Wikiversity seems to encourage a sense of belonging in contrast to some other online communities. In their ethnographic study on a course delivered via Wikiversity Norm Friesen and Janet Hopkins found out that the course self-organized into various overlapping groups:

In each group setting, there seems to be significant emphasis on collaboration and mutual assistance in integrating newcomers, and helping them with new tasks and challenges. Collaboration, in other words, here serves as a mode of acculturation and induction into the Wikiversity culture and community in general. This is in rather sharp contrast to the approach taken in online hacker communities (to provide just one salient comparison). (Friesen & Hopkins 2008.)

Hacker community's code of conduct is more RTFM ("Read The F***ing Manual") than perhaps anything else. If these obstacles have to do with individual learning styles and histories along with group dynamics and social relations in an online community, there are other obstacles related to institutional actors and factors:

First, institutional actors may be risk-averse. New technologies create new risks. Secondly, key institutional actors may value institutional consensus over innovation, particularly during turbulent times, where tamping down anxieties is often paramount. Third, it may well be difficult to incorporate new modes of teaching and learning with existing social and bureaucratic roles and work flows. Fourth, deterred by the learning curve involved with new technologies, novel pedagogical practices are often embraced slowly, retrospectively and to limited effect. Finally, immature technologies may be inappropriately adopted, and the requisite training may be lacking. Overall, these factors retard innovation. Frequently, the result is that engagements with emerging and often novel technological assemblages are opportunities lost. (Dennis & Al-Obaidi 2010.)

Yet another blockading factor in the school world as well as in the university settings is the fact that knowledge is usually taken as 'frozen', and it is hard to liberate oneself from

the fixed ideas about 'the way things are.' It can be as difficult to get rid of the conception that knowledge is not a cumulative and closed but an open and changeable entity as it is seen in Wikiversity (and other editable wikis) as global learning communities and distributed information networks. The same seem to hold true in other fields such as global development, especially in North-South power relations which are traditionally built on the premise that "the poor countries of the developing world have a child-like features and that therefore they need to be educated, and led, by the developed countries, the adults" (Teivainen 2009, 163). Drawing from the Freirean legacy Teivainen has suggested a model where global development and democracy could be seen as mutual dialogues, or learning together. This idea could also benefit from the core idea of wiki-ideology: participation of equals (see also Noveck 2009).

For development co-operation it would create a situation where not only experts from the North would be teaching the South, but reverse would also be true. ... Peruvians could teach Europeans about the informal sector or about cultural hybridisation. Brazilians could teach Europeans about participatory budget planning and the indigenous people living in the Amazon region could teach is more sustainable ways of connecting with nature. This would also, then, call into question the pedagogical justifications for maintaining the non-democratic North-South power relations in many global institutions. (Teivainen 2009, 175.)

When it comes to teaching even some anarchist scholars, who, on one hand, participate in anarchist movement and write defiant text (see e.g. Graeber 2009) still teach traditionally. A case in point is David Graeber, an anarchist scholar dismissed from Yale (according to rumors for his anarchism and support for the students organization). In replying the questions, what do you do to create horizontal relationships? Have you practiced consensus decision-making in the classroom? Graeber said: "To be honest, in teaching I'm rather traditional. Well, I lecture." And here is the paradox: How to teach anarchism by lecturing?² Of course, the same paradox goes with critical pedagogy and public sociology: How to teach critical pedagogy and public sociology without being true to the maxim: "teach what you preach." In his seminars Graeber says he is more free-form than in the lectures, though, "probably too free-form" and makes the following apt remark:

[F]reedom is infinitely diverse. There is no one "anarchist" way to do something. As soon as we start thinking that way, we open the door to every sort of hidebound

² As learning theory anarchism consist of rejection of rigid structures and programmes as well as majority rule (democracy) and management by consensus, and is highly suspicious of constitutions and blueprints in its belief in small communities and social justice and socio-economic equality. Anarchistic education systemically promotes co-operation, solidarity and mutual aid and thus furthers social and ecological revolution, de-growth, and conviviality (see Suissa 2001; Suissa 2006). With these definitions anarchistic pedagogy comes close to critical pedagogy and public sociology and it would have been expected that an anthology entitled *Contemporary Anarchist Studies* (Amster et al. 2009) would have included a strong section on pedagogy, but that is not the case, it hardly mentions critical pedagogy or liberation sociology.

sectarianism. Obviously, there are certain ways of behaving that are clearly *not* anarchist, that are impossible to square with the idea of a free society. And, in a deeply hierarchical society such as our own, some of that will inevitably creep into anything we do. Sometimes the worst thing you can do is pretend you are in an equal situation when you're not - i.e., walk into the room and say, "hi, let's just sit and rap," when in fact, you have to write up a grade for these people. Of course, you can also just give everyone an "A", but then you get in trouble with the hierarchy. (Actually, that was one of the complaints against me at Yale - that I was too easy a grader on the graduate students. Because I figured grad students, after all, they're here because they really want to be. If they don't want to do the work they're not hurting anyone but themselves. They at least should be able to experience an environment where they can say whatever they like and not have to be looking over their shoulder every minute. But as I say, even that small gesture was enough to get me in big trouble at a place like Yale.) (In Kuebrich N/A.)

The whole idea of grades is, of course, at odds with Wikiversity, in fact it is against the fundamental ideas of Wikiversity, those of collaboration and sharing. And here Wikiversity is in a collapse course with formal schooling and training. Without diplomas and grades the market for learners would be more various and less restrictive.

Conclusion

"The academic has often considerable teaching and service commitments within the university and/or specific criteria for promotion and tenure that require academic publications in mainstream journals, all of which can be at odds with the deep engagement with local struggles," says Burawoy (2007, 132). The world of academic sociology and critical education indeed demand peer-reviewed publishing, but not community involvement, scientific peer communications, but not nourishing dialogues with community activists, or the general public. Wikiversity is a way for an academic to be involved and public, and most certainly it is a global way to be in touch with the students and others, but, of course, digital divides and severe inequalities must be remembered and taken into account.

Collaborative and solidary thinking in both critical pedagogy and public sociology dovetail with the leveling effects of Wikiversity. Self-organization and collaboration inherent in Wikiversity can enhance the aims of critical pedagogy as well as public sociology to further peoples' possibilities for lifelong learning and their critical consciousness, and create a more democratic future. Educational processes, how and in what ways we learn, are significant ingredients in reaching these aims.

Wikiworld is about creating knowledge; it is about negotiating it and creating it together. It is less about mastering knowledge instantaneously than engaging in the process of collaborative writing and editing, interpreting and analyzing. In Kincheloe's (2008, 206) words, in the Wikiworld "we create interpretations and ways of analyzing the forces of

the production of cyber-knowledges as we encounter them on the Internet and other media." This is what Joe Kincheloe calls as "cyber-literacy of power." This can be referred to as strong digital literacy including the questions of ownership and authorship as opposed to weak digital literacy referring only to various skills of analyzing and interpreting the media: thus a need for the radical critique of political economy (Suoranta & Vadén 2010). I cannot agree more with Richard Kahn who states as follows:

The emergent cybercultures can be seen as a discursive and political location in which students, teachers, and citizens can all intervene, engaging in discussion groups and collaborative research projects, creating websites, producing culture-jamming multimedia for cultural dissemination, and cultivating novel modes of social interaction and learning that can increase community in an often isolating world. Computers can thereby enable people to actively participate in the production of culture. (Kahn 2010, 74).

The radical uses of Wikiversity are counteracts against corporatization and commodification of knowledge in the universities and across the schooling system funded and governed by the academic-industrial nexus. Wikiversity is an important addition in the toolbox of public sociology and critical pedagogy in that it shares with them a common aim of border crossing, dialogue, and outreach. It is based on the idea of reflective practices toward social change, as are public sociology and critical pedagogy. What is crucial in all of them, in the light of their objectives, is their emphasis on collective, collaborative and open approach to learning along with the belief and respect in commons, that is to "the commons of culture, the immediately socialized forms of 'cognitive' capital, primarily language, our means of communication and education" (Žižek 2009, 91).

Given the imminent institutional and individual obstacles Wikiversity can prove to be a necessary (but by no means sufficient) tool for sociological and educational defiance as it opens up possibilities for peoples' knowledge, for collective defiance and popular insurgency through common knowledge building, and, for that matter, learning different positions and argumentation. It goes without saying that I am not envisioning that all pedagogical processes in the university should model Wikiversity's collective collaboration and openness for all, but perhaps only for the sake of balance and alternative, it might be a good idea to variate the broadcasting mode of teaching and learning in which one talks while others listen and memorize. What I do believe, and would like to promote, is that Wikiversity can make us more equal than we were in the era of exams and diplomas issued by a university. We could be, again, critical pedagogues and public sociologists *sans papiers*.

Thus I would like to think Wikiversity as a mode of "counter-democracy," but interpret the idea more positively than Rosanvallon (2008); whereas he sees counter-democracy as peoples' possibility to monitor parliamentary democratic practices, I suggest that counter-democracy would refer to as many forms of collective meaning-making as possible to exceed the system logic of authoritarian schooling and diminishing parliamentary democracies.

The late Joe Kincheloe to whose memory this text is dedicated once observed: “When critical scholars establish an exclusive ‘critical elite,’ they have fallen prey to the same power inequalities that motivated the foundation of critical pedagogy in the first place” (Kincheloe 2004, 127). This is among the prime reasons to take Wikiversity seriously in developing critical pedagogy’s public responsibility and global outreach. If we are interested in developing together our conscientização, our critical consciousness, as I believe we should, then I think it is necessary to focus on our teaching critical pedagogy, or more precisely, on how we can encourage and inspire our students to learn, and learning how to learn, and how they can inspire us. For, the question of how we interact with each other in lecture halls, seminar rooms, and other sites of learning as Wikiversity, is always related to a question of the state of the world we are living in. Thus it is time to expand our take on critical pedagogy and teaching by imagining our relations with the networked world anew in terms of economy, ecology, culture, social relations and pedagogy. If there really is a new generation of scholars in critical pedagogy, as has been asserted, then it is time to begin to expand the scope and horizon of critical pedagogy by creating ways for global learning communications. — Learners and Oppressed Peoples of the World, Wikify!

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