

ONE BOOK, ONE PEN,
ONE CHILD, AND ONE
TEACHER CAN CHANGE
THE WORLD.

MALALA YOUSAFZAI

OWITF Reflections

Reflection Letter 14, June 2017
Critical Pedagogy

As the Journeying Together project is developing, some people wonder if Brothers will become teachers into the future. It seems to some that community engagement discounts the importance of education, and gives the impression that teaching is excluded from Journeying Together. In reality, this is not the case. What community engagement aims to do is to discover the real needs of a community, and if education is what is needed, then we are challenged to see what sort of education is best suited to that community. It is likely in a marginalized community, that as well as mainstream school-based education, a variety of educational approaches are needed. Exactly what sorts of education are needed will not be known unless there is serious community engagement from the start. As Brothers increasingly work with people made poor, Critical Pedagogy is certainly a worthwhile approach to consider.

The major role of critical pedagogy is to emancipate and educate all people regardless of their gender, class and race. Freire distinguishes between banking education and problem-posing education. In The traditional view of education, teachers are pillars of knowledge; they know everything and students know nothing. Teachers deposit knowledge in students (“banking”) and seldom ask them to question that knowledge. Students are rarely asked to relate knowledge to the current problems and injustices in society with the aim of improving society.

As an alternative to the banking model, Freire proposed a problem-posing education which can lead to critical consciousness. This consciousness enables the students to take the necessary actions to improve their life conditions or those of people at the margins.

Edmund Rice can be considered a critical pedagogue. He looked out of his window and saw the injustice of young people being neglected and exploited. Through education he provided them with the means to rise above their situation of oppression.

Over the course of history as many Christian Brother schools have found themselves increasingly serving a better off sector of society, they have become less in touch with education that liberates the poor. Some schools have sadly become characterized by competitiveness and a result-focused approach more like the banking model of education, so much in demand from mainstream society.

Immersion projects are a refreshing development in many Edmund Rice schools which give students an experience of interacting with those at the margins of society. Students are invited to reflect on the injustice and inequality in society. Some critical consciousness often emerges.

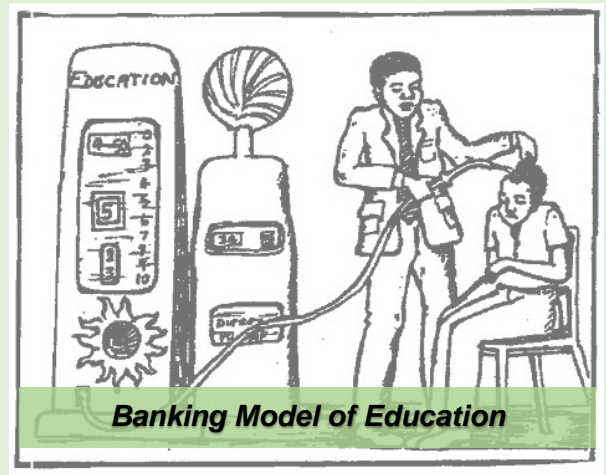
Another encouraging development is the establishment of “Edmund Rice Education Beyond Borders” (EREBB) that has emerged from Edmund Rice Education Australia and is connecting Edmund Rice schools throughout the world. The vision of EREBB is ‘Inspired by the teachings of Jesus, Gospel values and the spirit of Edmund Rice, we commit ourselves in global solidarity, to transformational education for justice and liberation’ (see website erebb.org).

EREBB is creating partnerships throughout the world which support quality and transformational education. Many involved in Christian Brother education have embraced the critical pedagogical approach that sees education as a liberating process especially for the most disadvantaged in our society.

The Journeying Together project with its three-fold focus on advocacy, education and community engagement embraces the critical pedagogical approach through presence, engagement, empowerment and transformation (see website journeying2gether.org for the strategy document Journeying Together).

The new clusters of communities are deliberately located in a marginalized community in the developing world. The Brothers spend the first months immersing themselves in the local scene and engaging with the local people, listening to the challenges that face them. In time, they move into mutual problem-solving as they together work out responses to situations of injustice and inequality. At this point strategies or “projects” are developed which will draw on the skills of the Brothers. Thus, their skills are made available to some of the poorest people on earth. They are now part of a process of social transformation that Edmund began.

As these new clusters of communities develop in coming years, the global Edmund Rice community is invited to explore what is going on in each Edmund Rice school to bring about a critical pedagogy that will be liberating especially for those at the margins of society. In this development, there is a new partnership to be forged for the sake of all.



Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.

-NELSON MANDELA

