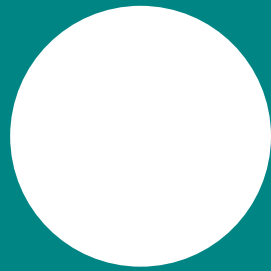
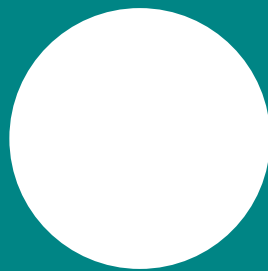
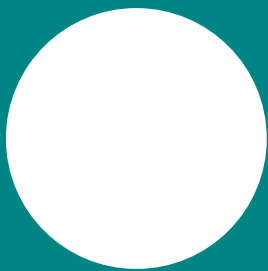


PODER

*Critical
intercultural guide,*
based on experience,
for a better world



PODER

Critical intercultural guide, based on experience, for a better world

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FOR A BETTER WORLD

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Getting started..

4

IF, IN AN ADULT EDUCATION CLASSROOM, EITHER AS AN EDUCATOR OR AS A LEARNER, YOU HAVE EVER FOUND IT CHALLENGING TO DEAL WITH DIVERSITY (I.E., DIFFERENT CULTURES) - FOR WHATEVER REASON...

IF YOU THINK THE BEST WAY TO DEAL WITH DIFFERENCE IS NOT TO PRETEND IT DOES NOT EXIST...

IF YOU WANT TO DEVELOP A CRITICAL VIEW OF REALITY, ASSUMING IT IS NOT A FATALITY BUT SOMETHING SOCIALLY CONSTRUCTED...

IF YOU BELIEVE THAT IT IS POSSIBLE TO MAKE A BETTER WORLD...

... THEN THIS GUIDE IS FOR YOU, AS IT IS FOR US.

This “Critical Intercultural Guide, Based on Experience, for a Better World” is the sixth and final outcome of the PODER Project. It is a guide that, in the wake of Paulo Freire, aims, through the assumption of liberating education, to promote awareness and, hopefully, the subsequent transformation of power relations in the lives of adult learners. This Critical Intercultural Guide aims at all interested people, especially adult educators-learners and adult learners-educators.

These designations, which may be strange, embody the affirmation of the dual role of learner and teacher of all the people participating in the relational pedagogical dyad.

In this Guide, we want to explore some aspects of our educator role. In particular, how can we make educational spaces free of obstacles to a liberating practice? How can we act as allies of transformation, liberate ourselves from oppressive situations and build a better world?

This guide is organised into three complementary parts to find ways of responding to the concerns and objectives outlined. In the first part, we present the constraints experienced by adult educators. In the second part, we suggest activities to work on the interculturality present (in a silent way) in some of the obstacles identified. In the third and final part, we propose a theorisation based on experience, i.e., a reflection based on critical and informed distancing that allows us, in a circular logic, almost to go back to the beginning. This means identifying obstacles and imagining suitable activities to overcome them, but now with a greater awareness of the blatant interculturality in all contexts that challenges us to think about and with it, and to take advantage of it, in order to improve learning-teaching-learning conditions and relationships...

PART 1:

On the obstacles experienced by adult educators...

In this section, as mentioned above, we report on the obstacles experienced by 54 adult educators throughout their professional lives. These obstacles were shared in eight focus groups and three individual interviews in the project's partner countries: France, Hungary, Italy, Portugal, and Spain.

The underlying logic is to explore the «limit-situation», as Freire (1972) described. The «limit-situation» is, in a word, an obstacle. This obstacle, according to Freire, can be perceived in two different ways: 1. as an insurmountable barrier, which makes the person very limited in the possibility of perceiving the «viable unprecedented»¹, the achievable utopia, but unprecedented, beyond this barrier; 2. as a brake: in this case, when there is awareness, the limit-situation is transformed into a «highlighted perception», a problem, a challenge... and tends to lead to action.

Several relevant factors play a role in the relationship between educator-learner and learner-educator: the space dynamics, the idea of hierarchy already fixed in our minds, the belief that only the educator holds and can transmit knowledge, and the disconnection between theory and practice. These and other examples presented here emerge from the data collected during the research-intervention carried out and which, among other outcomes, resulted in the writing of this Guide, in which we explore some of the various obstacles identified by the educators-learners.

For clarification and more accessible dialogue with the data collected, we use the typology proposed by Ruth Ekstrom (1972) and taken up by Patricia Cross (1981). This typology explores the «barriers» that interfere with the participation and success of adult education processes, especially the participation of women in higher education (in the case of the first author) and the different formats of adult education (in the case of the second). These authors identified three categories of «barriers» - dispositional, situational, and institutional - which «are not always independent of each other and often interact synergistically» (Ekstrom, 1972, p. 2). In adapting this typology to make it easier to read and organise the data collected through focus groups and individual interviews, we added two dimensions to the categorisation proposed by Ekstrom (1972): structural and anti-dialogical barriers. The latter is, in fact, a kind of summary of «*what to do*»², as Freire would say (Freire & Nogueira, 1993), in the educational spaces we occupy.

This adjustment allowed us to arrive at a more contextual approach, i.e., to understand the effects of the different structural locations of individuals, in their positions of greater or lesser power, on educational relations, shifting us away from individual responsibility/blame towards understanding subjects as members of specific social groups, in which power relations are multi-perspectival, multi-referential and at different levels.

¹ The original concept is "*inédito viável*". In the English version of the "Pedagogy of the oppressed" it is translated as "untested feasibility".

² "*Que fazer*", in the original.

1. Dispositional barriers

Within the framework and from the authors' perspective mentioned above, dispositional barriers are individual and affect relationships with oneself (educator-learner or learner-educator), between oneself and other people, and between oneself and the world. These barriers relate to situations such as why someone decides to enter training, their motivation or sense to attend, their potential fears associated with (in)success in training - possible feelings of inferiority and passivity - and their emotional management in stressful situations, among others. In the different countries, barriers of this type were found, especially difficulty in emotional management and the reluctance of some participants to attend the training, linked to apathy and lack of motivation.

From our perspective, however, these barriers are linked to more structural, and not only individual, factors.³ This also shows how difficult it is to define and understand the boundaries between the individual and the structural. Even so, the neoliberal discourse, which blames people for their «failures,» has become widespread. One often hears this same discourse among political decision-makers, those in charge of adult education institutions, educators... and even among learners.

In the Hungarian case, limit-situations of oppression were found, such as self-worth, difficulty in expressing oneself and believing in one's abilities, which led to apathy towards the possibilities of action and which proved to be linked to the lack of space for expression and listening and to the hostile and segregated environment in which they find themselves. In the Spanish normative case, difficulty in expressing oneself and listening wholeheartedly; embodied mainstream cultural norms leads to a lack of creating a collective good learning environment. In France, difficult situations shared by educators-learners were linked to managing emotions in an adult education context, for instance, how to find/construct the right places and moments to share them. These limit-situations happen mainly when talking about privilege and oppression. In the Portuguese case, the limit-situations are more associated with the obligation to take part in specific courses or training, which leads to a lack of motivation and consequent frustration on the part of the participants. This obligation is linked to situations of greater vulnerability, which involve «benefiting» from any social benefit (e.g. unemployment benefit, social insertion income...). If the «beneficiary» does not attend the training (regardless of whether it interests them), they will lose the benefit.

In the case of unemployment, for example, the lack of employment is justified by a supposed lack of individual skills on the part of the unemployed person. In this way, the institutions responsible for the education/training of adults also become fundamentally institutions of standardisation and surveillance.⁴ This obstacle intersects the more subjective side of individual motivation with systemic objective conditions, such as the lack of employment opportunities in cities and how educational institutions are «pushed» to deal with this fact, becoming an arm of state regulation.

COMPULSIVE PARTICIPATION, DEMOTIVATION AND SUBORDINATION

Sometimes, people are forced to participate in a training/course and are therefore not very involved or interested. This is a problem from different points of view because they may put themselves at the back of the class and be willing to do other things, or they may get angry with the trainer and feel that he/she has «power» over them because he/she is the person who can say yes or no to the fact that they have done an excellent job, or even the teacher is the person who collects signatures as proof of attendance. (Male educator, online focus group, March 2024, Italy)

³ See PODER's fourth outcome, "Integrating the intercultural approach in structural competency training. A guide for change."

⁴ For further information, see PODER's second outcome, "Identity, power, inequality: questioning group based exclusions in the context of adult education", Chapter 12 "Militarism and education".

According to Citton (2018), the overload of stimuli we now experience leads to poor attention, a state of amnesia, and anaesthesia that impacts our health, well-being, and individuality. In training contexts, it leads to the robotisation of the educational process. In this way, education neglects expression, creativity, making things new, and thinking for oneself and by oneself. This educational approach also tends to superpose the rational to the emotional layer. In this case, the arts have enormous potential (as we proposed in this project's fifth outcome, entitled «*Theatre-based training videos and manual*»).

[...] Normally, my first question in the debriefing is «how do you feel?»... I believe people learn from what they feel. However, one of the things I noticed with two or three students - and this is not a general case - was that they could not express their feelings... They held on... it was easier for them to hold on without expressing emotion for three or four months over successive debriefings than to share or try sharing. This is also symptomatic of something. [...] I would call it a kind of robotisation of the educational process» (Male educator, online focus group, February 2024, Portugal).

2. Situational barriers

Within Ekstrom's (1972) framework, later developed by Cross (1981), situational barriers relate to the «here and now» circumstances that occur in the lives of learners-educators. They include personal, residential, family, financial, or sociological barriers, such as class or gender, that is to say, the structural barriers that we have added to the authors' proposal. Examples include the organisation of (scarce) time, parental or care responsibilities, the perceptions of other people (family and friends) about course attendance, and financial or transport difficulties, among others. Although the authors place sociological factors in this category, such as economic class or ethnicity, we felt it made sense to create a distinct «structural barriers» category to clarify the typology and highlight the more socially regulated dimension of positionality. Clearly showing the articulation between the boundary situations of oppression, situational barriers are linked to dispositional ones because they affect them, but they bring a social element (linked to the representations and expectations associated with gender, in the case we used as an example).

EXCEPTION TO THE RULE (HORIZONTALITY), BUT COMPLYING WITH ANOTHER RULE

«I remember a moment, more personal than the problems we had discussed here, when a student took over the power space. In other words, I also think that in adult education, it is perhaps 'easier' for it to happen when someone... well, with more personality, with more attitude takes that space and ends up oppressing, in this case, the educator or educators. And there is also the question of gender: as a woman being an educator... what obstacles are faced? And it was a problem that could not be resolved in the face of this emotional instability. In other words, how do you manage educators' emotions? Whether it is in the face of giving up, discouragement, or anxiety about talking to other team members, I think this emotional part is very precious. However, little has been worked on in the field of education. (Female educator, face-to-face focus group, February 2024, Portugal)

This difficulty in dealing with the facilitator's emotional implications during the educational process was mentioned recurrently in the different countries' focus groups. The link between gender and emotional pressure is present in facilitation environments and can be linked to a lack of emotional care for those facilitating educational processes. In fact, the gender and gender expression of those facilitating matters and may have differences in relation to the respect/recognition given to them in these environments. The more dissident identities a body occupies, the less power one can have within an oppressive system.

We use the term dissident identities to refer to the different factors of diversity that intersect in each person and that break with the pre-established normative rule in the social contexts in which the Subjects are inserted, causing exclusion, marginalisation, and a lack of power.

Why is it rare to see black women in leadership positions? Trans women as facilitators of educational processes? These bodies, and so many others, have been marginalised and rarely are in spaces of power. Our eyes must get used to seeing these bodies occupying leadership, command, and power spaces. Places where these people have a right. Why not? Why is it so rare to see other bodies in spaces and places of leadership and Power, other than those so-called «normal» bodies?

3. Institutional barriers

The third group of barriers identified by Ekstrom (1972) and Cross (1981) are institutional barriers, which refer to the practices and procedures of the institutions that make it difficult for them to welcome learners and educators. Examples include gaps in the curriculum, inflexible and sometimes incompatible timetables, lack of information and opportunities, (in) accessibility, and lack of practical help (such as financial help).

9

FROM THE CLOSED CONTENT MAP TO THE LIVING AND EMERGING PROGRAM, IN THE TENSION BETWEEN RIGIDITY AND FLEXIBILITY

In a session where the topic was gender identity, I was doing an introduction to the biggest acronym I've found on identities. I don't know... it must have been twenty letters long. In the third or fourth letter, a student asked me if that was on the syllabus, after I was doing an introduction to what an interperson is. In non-formal education, we learn how to do non-formal education, and we work on various topics, such as racism, for example. We work on identity, we work on various human rights issues. So I explained that not all the themes are in the program, because they also vary according to the needs encountered in the classes and so on, and so the programs are necessarily generic. But we were working on principles of non-formal education, so we were within the program. That would not be the case, but she said she wouldn't be obliged to be in that situation because what I was doing was gender ideology.» (Male educator, online focus group, February 2024, Portugal)

As Freire (1997/2007) said, there is no neutral education. The educator-learner educates according to their values, guided by institutional norms and possibilities. In the example above, the institutional constraint originates from a student who was not willing to work on a topic that, according to her, was not included in the curriculum. She accuses the professor of making ideology, without admitting that her position is equally ideological.

The curriculum can, therefore, be an emancipatory or conservative element used for the transformation and emancipation or maintaining the world as it “is being” (Freire, 1972, p. 144). The same program can also take on aspects of conservatism at times and transformation and emancipation at others, and it is essential to understand the weight of the ideology and underlying political choices of the facilitator, as well as how these are embodied in the pedagogical relationship.

SPACE AS AN OBSTACLE, AND ‘RUNNING AWAY’ FROM THE SUBJECT AS AN EVEN GREATER OBSTACLE

Then, I expected to encounter more obstacles on the institutional side, working at a university and wanting, for example, things as simple as having a classroom with the chairs permanently in a circle. Can I achieve that easily? Can I not? It was more challenging than I’d hoped, but I managed it much more easily than often promoting certain topics in the classroom. (Male educator, online focus group, February 2024, Portugal)

The dynamics and space change, particularly in formal education environments, are still problematic. Institutionally, it is often difficult to change the physical structure, such as tables and chairs, which define where each group of people - educators and learners - should sit. Because it is an architectural device, it is often taken as a fatality: «The rooms are already like this,» exclaimed the same educator. Recalling the analyses of Foucault (1975/1997) and what he called «power devices» - discourses, institutions, architectural organisations, laws, scientific statements, philosophical propositions, to give a few examples - we can see how Power is everywhere, pulverising all our relationships. Critical vigilance and constant attention are therefore required in order to detect it in our speech and (in)actions.

Proposing different dynamics in the space helps to overcome the verticality of the educator/learner. For example, changing the learning space to form a circle does not break hierarchies. However, it does help to establish greater horizontality, decentralise Power, and enable contact and a look between everyone present. The example above also reveals barriers at an architectural level - which, despite everything, were more accessible to overcome - and at a curricular level, which seems even more rigid.

4. Structural barriers

As one can see from what we’ve been saying, the transformation/overcoming of structural barriers (which we’ve added to the original typology) is more rigid, complex and slow. These barriers concern the systems in which we live and the three major axes that intersect and sustain them: racism, sexism, and capitalism. There are countless examples of structural barriers, such as the lack of autonomy in choosing our time and focus of attention, or the anaesthesia and apathy in relation to the world, given

5 Isn't it common to see people clinging to their cell phones instead of communicating with the person next to them? As if the relationship with the world could be made through such a small rectangle...

6 One example is the increase of far-right movements across Europe, despite what European countries have experienced under far-right dictatorships.

the excessive amount of stimuli we have today,⁵ amnesia about the collective processes we have already gone through,⁶ and the bureaucratic dimension, associated with the verticality and technicalisation of educational processes.

THE OPPRESSION OF «TIME»

From capitalism comes the system of commodification, which assigns a value to each person's working time, which is exchanged for wages. Time - and to whom it belongs - has been a problem raised by several authors (cf. Crary, 2018; Han, 2014). In addition to being co-opted by the economic system, time is lived with unprecedented urgency and speed, intertwining more internalised processes of self-demand and productivity with more societal processes that feed the former - expectation, surveillance, and control. This faceless oppression was highlighted in several of the discussions with educators-learners:

... people don't have time for meetings and courses, or have limited time to invest. This is related to personal reasons; a person may decide to invest time in other activities, but it is also related to professional obligations and demands. For example, those who are educators in the medical field often have fewer learners because of an emergency. So, there are many reasons for the lack of time, but that includes training a lot, because the group can change, you often have to repeat the same subject and see that people could do more but don't have the time. It's different when they decide to invest a limited amount of time, so it's important to know the expectations before you start. (Male educator, online focus group, March 2024, Italy)

Figure 1 - Time as oppression, illustration by Beatriz Villas-Bôas



It's interesting to reflect on how, in the training of adults, the timetable can dictate who can participate and who won't. It seems that we are increasingly conditioned to dedicate our time to work. There is little (or no) time left for leisure and reflection, even for everyday activities such as cooking, washing, and other reproductive work. This limits our daily lives, and often, this «lack» of time is associated with oppressed and intersected social identities. So it's not right to look at this obstacle as «someone's lack of time». No, the issue is not with the individual but with the systems that regulate their life, in this case, their time. In addition, each person's time is assigned different values, as is evident from the wage inequalities in different professions and, within the same profession, in terms of gender.

5. Anti-dialogical barriers

The anti-dialogical barriers we added to the original typology are a compass for what we want to bring with this Guide. They concern the difficulties encountered in any educational context (formal, non-formal, or informal) in achieving a more authentic dialogue. They stem mainly from the verticality between educator and learner found in training spaces, leading to - and embodying in themselves - communication problems between educators-learners and learners-educators, seen as opposite poles of the same axis; a lack of recognition and appreciation of the experiences of the participants, among others.

Examples of anti-dialogical barriers include the unequal distribution of discourse (when some can speak and others can only listen), inequality in the training context (as if some are worth more than others), the lack of (affective and experiential) connection with the topics covered, the lack of cooperative practice (instead of following those who have the power), difficulties in compromise, reluctance to express opinions and perspectives, and to discuss (let alone act), lack of belief in social change...

These are examples of how fundamental the path of liberating pedagogy advocated by Paulo Freire (1972) can be. Horizontality, a relationship with experience, commitment, and hope - in the direction of a viable unprecedented - are the foundations of the Pedagogy of the Oppressed.

The term «viable unprecedented» (Freire, 1972, p. 134) means what is beyond the limit-situations, although related to them, and is perceived as possible to achieve. It is unprecedented because it has never been attempted, but simultaneously viable because it is possible.

In this ideological, philosophical and methodological proposal, in the context of popular education, built with people, Freire (1972, p. 134) suggested looking for “generative themes”⁷ that would make educator-learners and learner-educators involved in producing culture inherent in the construction of knowledge. These themes refer, grosso modo, to a significant topic and are “generative because [...] they contain within themselves the possibility of unfolding into many other themes which, in turn, provoke new [understanding and action] tasks that must be accomplished.” (Freire, 1972, p. 134, our translation).

Also thinking about the Pedagogy of the Question (Freire & Faúndez, 1985/1998) and Freire's proposal to overcome the existing dichotomy between learner and educator and between teaching and learning - translated into the concept of «*dodiscência*»⁸ (Freire, 1997/2007, p. 28) - we exemplify below an occasion in which the facilitator, in an attempt to search for generative themes, proposes a theme of collective implication:

⁷ “*Temas geradores*”.

⁸ The concept is a mix of two words: “*docência*”, meaning teaching, in Portuguese, and “*discência*”, meaning “learning”.

I remember an example from a while ago. We were in computer class, and I'd been trying to deconstruct that a bit, but when I got to class, they wanted me to give them a lesson, teach them something, or set them a task. And I found that very difficult. First, I wanted to understand what they liked to learn, what they valued most, and what they liked to talk about. And it's been a big search and a big challenge to try and deconstruct this, because it's been many years of this practice, hasn't it? And now, we were talking about April 25th, and I sat down where they were all sitting and launched the topic and didn't talk the whole lesson... and it worked for the first time. (Female educator, face-to-face focus group, February 2024, Portugal)

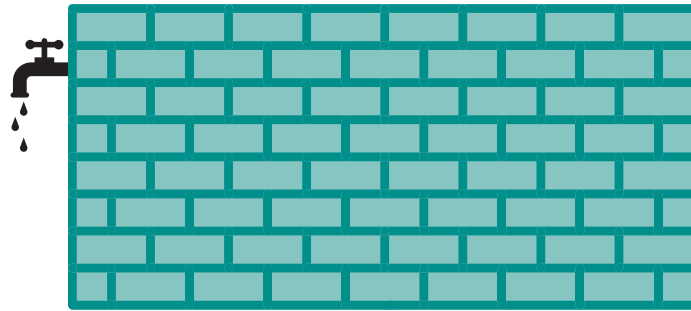
This passage reveals the difficulty of overcoming the educator/learner dichotomy and announces the possibility of overcoming it as a «viable unprecedented». The April 25, 1974, known as the Carnation Revolution, was an extremely important historical, social, and political event that ousted the authoritarian fascist regime and established democracy. The choice of this date as a theme - albeit at the suggestion of the facilitator - re-establishes the collective dimension of the participants' involvement. Also, the fact that the facilitator was born after April 25, while most of the participants were born before and experienced this historic day, puts the latter in a situation where, through experience, they have «knowledge» on their side. Being one of the most important dates in Portugal's history, everyone present would have heard of it and/or had some memory or experience related to it. The fact that a moment of rupture is suggested between a Portuguese dictatorial period and a democratic one opens up another opportunity: to talk about oppression, freedom, and transformation.

The adaptation of the educator-learner and the training content to the learner-educator's interests, desires, needs, and dreams, is something that can be at the heart of overcoming the various barriers we have listed here. The educational system, as it exists, clearly defines the two roles. The educator is the one who educates, dictates the rules, and actively educates. On the other hand, the learner plays the role of listening, hearing what someone has to say, and is placed in a passive state of learning.

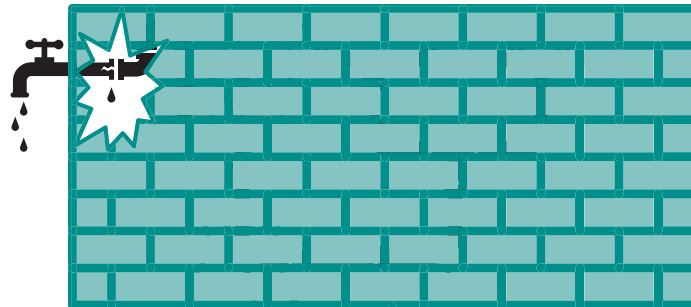
Interestingly, in Hungarian, the word for «university student» literally translates as listener. Along with this division also comes the hierarchisation of their roles. These roles have been constructed for too long and have been naturalised for too long. This is why various studies have examined this issue, particularly in education and sociology. In recent years, a movement has emerged that goes beyond unveiling 'realities' to take on a transformative intent. It is in this movement that we situate ourselves as *progressive educators*.

PLUMBING SYSTEM METAPHOR

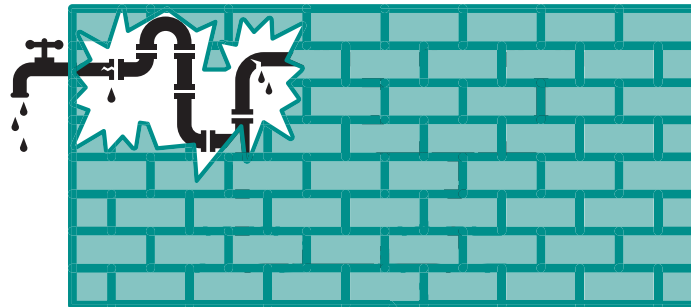
Dispositional
barriers



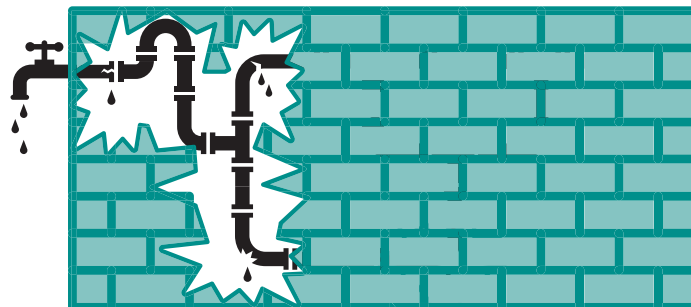
Situational
barriers



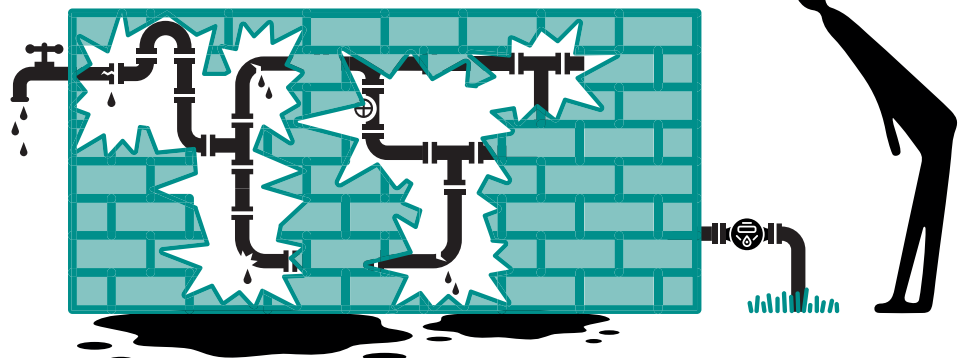
Institutional
barriers



Structural
barriers



Anti-dialogical
barriers



PART 2:

Suggested activities to promote interculturality and intersectionality

We now propose some activities that emerged from the thematic survey of «limit-situations» (Freire, 1972, p. 129) identified by adult educators. As a limitation of the data collection process, we could only address educators for doing this Guide. It would also be very interesting to carry out the same survey with learners. What are the «limit-situations» that constrain them? How do they perceive them? What «viable unprecedented» are they willing to act on?

From the outset, it's important to stress that these activities are not a recipe. Instead, they should be read in the light of a broader process, which is intended to be dialogical and political, contextual, in tension, involving Subjects who experience particular conditions of oppression and their intersection. This means these activities cannot and should not be disconnected from the theory that informs them (see Part 3). Nor should they just be applied or replicated but constantly adapted and recontextualised. They do not have to be used in their entirety. They can be carried out individually or in creative cross-references to the challenges the participants pose and the structural conditions surrounding them.

These activities are intended to contribute to getting to know the group of educators and to promote the active participation of everyone in the educational process, fostering communication and reflection. Interculturality is the main focus, and its underlying notion of culture is very broad, as Freire stressed: the human being «fills geographic and historical spaces with culture. Culture is everything that is created by [the human being]. Both a poem and a phrase of greeting. Culture consists of recreating and not repeating.» (Freire, 1979/2002, pp. 30-31). The promotion of interculturality must, therefore, take into account what we have in common and also our differences, for whatever reason: age, skin colour, social class, gender, sexual self-definition, functional diversity...

In these activities, the facilitator should introduce elements of complexification and politicisation, stimulating a rich, horizontal discussion that addresses the various layers of the problems identified: the structural roots, their impacts, and possible consequences on the people involved, individually and collectively.

This horizontality between learners and educator should always be maintained, namely throughout the conduction of the exercises herein proposed. In some activities the facilitator may decide to participate as “a participant” - and engage as any other participant. However, this must be a decision taken by the facilitators themselves, depending on the group of participants, the facilitators' multiple/other roles in the context, and the context itself.

Before starting any of these activities, identifying potential aspects of functional diversity in the group that need to be considered, such as physical space, individual space, or others, seems relevant. Communication agreements can also be established, such as asking for clarification when there is no complete understanding of what has been said, for example, or affirming the equal right to speak.⁹

⁹ See PODER's third outcome, “Creating brave and transformative learning spaces”.

We propose six activities, with no concern for sequencing, for the above reasons: «My place!», «Yes and no», «Game about knowledges (according to Paulo Freire)», «Text in parts, a collective discussion», «This is not a plastic bag! Chain story», and «Where do I belong?»

“GAME ABOUT KNOWLEDGES (ACCORDING TO PAULO FREIRE)”

The «Game about knowledges (according to Paulo Freire)» aims to rethink the notion of culture, the moulds of the system in which we educate and are educated, and the verticality that has been the norm in training spaces. The idea is to put learners and educator back into a more horizontal relationship, in which dialogue is possible and all feel they know. Among others, dispositional barriers will hopefully be rethought collectively, especially those linked to feelings of inferiority and «self-devaluation» (Freire, 1972, p. 69). We suggest the following activity so that the dichotomy between learner and educator can be reflected on and reassessed in a training context.

- Objectives**
- The learner assumes themselves as being educated, i.e., recognising that, in relation to the educator, one is capable of knowing, considering oneself as a knowing Subject;
 - To counter the learners' hetero- and self-devaluation, as well as the idea that there is a hierarchy of knowledge in which “erudite” culture would occupy the top place;
 - To value experiential, practical, experience-based, not-systematised knowledge, usually undervalued;
 - To contribute to rejecting the dichotomy between intellectual and manual work.

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Type of activity Guided, verbal

Estimated Time needed About 1 hour (depending on number of participants).

Description Regarding a visit to a rural reform settlement in Chile, Paulo Freire describes the game about knowledges, which can be used when adults say something like «I don't know anything,» «you are the one who knows because you studied,»...

«I'm sorry, sir,» said one [of the peasants], «that we were talking. You could speak because you are the one who knows. We do not». [...]

«Very well,» I said, responding to the peasant's intervention. «I accept that I know and you don't know. In any case, I would like to propose a game that, to work well, requires absolute loyalty from us. I will divide the blackboard into two pieces, on which I will record, on my side and yours, the goals that I will score on you; you, on me. The game consists of each person asking the other something. If the person asked doesn't know how to answer, it's the questioner's goal. I will start the game by asking you a first question.»

At this point, precisely because I had assumed the «moment» of the group, the atmosphere was more lively than when we started before the silence.

First question:

– ***What does Socratic maieutic mean?***

There was general laughter, and I scored my first goal. «Now it's up to you to ask me the question,» I said.

Some were whispering, and one of them asked the question:

– ***What is a contour line?***

I didn't know how to respond. I registered 1-1.

– ***How important is Hegel in Marx's thought?***

2-1.

– ***What is the purpose of liming the soil?***

2-2.

– ***What is an intransitive verb?***

3-2.

– ***What relationship is there between contour lines and erosion?***

3-3.

– ***What does epistemology mean?***

4-3.

– ***What is green manure?***

4-4.

So, successively, until we reach ten to ten.

As I said goodbye to them, I made a suggestion: «Think about what happened here this afternoon. You started arguing very well with me. At a certain point, you were silent and said that only I could speak because I knew, and you didn't. We played a game about knowledge and tied ten to ten. I knew ten things you didn't know, and you knew ten things I didn't know. Think about this.» (Paulo Freire, 1992/1999, pp. 46-48, our translation)

The activity continues with people thinking and discussing what happened in the game about knowledges, considering, if relevant, the objectives proposed.

To know more...

What Paulo Freire says about the “introductory part” (Freire & Guimarães, 2010, p. 92) of his literacy experiences is worth reading. Freire used slides made from paintings by Francisco Brenand, seized during the 1964 Military Coup (Freire, 2000b, p. 97), and later remade by Vicente de Abreu, to dialogue and promote understanding of the concept of culture. In “Education as a Practice of Freedom”, Paulo Freire provides illustrations of these ten existential situations and a brief overview of each of them, explaining what is under analysis. Elsewhere in the same book, the author describes some examples that clearly show the scope of these discussions:

During debates on the situations from which they derive the anthropological concept of culture, many happily and self-confidently state that they are not being shown “anything new, but rather refreshing their memory.” “I make shoes,” said another, “and now I discover that I have the same value as the doctor who makes books.”

“Tomorrow,” a street sweeper from Brasília City Hall once said when discussing the concept of culture, “I’m going to go into my work head first.” It’s because he discovered the value of his person. He affirmed himself. “I know now that I am cultured,” said an elderly peasant emphatically. When asked why he now knew he was educated, he responded with the same emphasis: “Because I work, and by working, I transform the world.” (Freire, n.d., p. 110, our translation).

“MY PLACE!”

This activity allows participants to talk about themselves in the first person, in a non-intrusive way, letting people say only what they want. The aim is also to discover similarities, differences, encounters, and disagreements between the participants. The discussion and sharing begin with an unspecified stimulus. What commonalities do we have within our differences?

- Objectives**
- Presentation of participants;
 - Icebreaking;
 - Finding and exploring similarities and differences;
 - Emphasis on the value of affection.

Type of activity Guided, verbal

Estimated Time needed About 1 hour (depending on number of participants).

Description Participants sit in a circle.

Moment 1 - The facilitator asks the participants to think of one place... any place! - the explanation of the request should be vague enough to let people think freely about something meaningful to them. It can be a physical, symbolic, imagined place... Participants are asked to show that they have already thought of a place by raising their hand. When everybody has raised their hands, the facilitator initiates the second moment.

Moment 2 - The facilitator asks the participants to share 'their place' with the rest of the group, starting by saying their name and nothing else. Everybody is required to listen to everybody else.

The nomination of the place can be done simply one after the other in the circle or by chained nomination (one person speaks and nominates the next person to talk after them).

Moment 3 - The facilitator asks the participants to justify their choice of 'place' to the rest of the group. Everybody must listen to everybody else and try to make silent connections.

Moment 4 - Concluding... The facilitator questions the participants about what is common in their choices. People might find out that they all relate to places that bring them good memories or that relate to pleasure and well-being... afterwards, participants may be asked to discuss what is different in their choices...

Moment 5 - Guided dialogue, promoted by the facilitator, will support people in reflecting on what makes them closer and distances them from one another... a good starting point to present a discussion on interculturality.

Note: In this activity, the facilitator may want to have an active participation in the process and expose themselves just like the other participants. There are educative spaces where this is a possibility. In that case, the exposure attitude can facilitate the humanisation of the group and each participant, which is crucial to building a relationship.

“YES AND NO”

This activity, conceived for educators’ meetings, deals with dispositional barriers (engagement, motivation, reflection, individual meanings), involving the learner-educator in interaction with other types of barriers, for example, institutional and/or structural. The aim is to provide a group discussion so that there can be a collective understanding of the different dimensions that can affect success and well-being, as well as what may be oppressive in (formal or non-formal) training spaces.

Objectives

- Stimulate each participant’s self-perception;
- To localise the problems that learners and educators have in their professional lives;
- Valuing each person’s experiences in the learning process;
- Instigate self-knowledge and self-perception.

Type of activity

Guided, verbal

Estimated Time needed

About 1 hour (depending on number of participants).

Description

The facilitator says, «Let’s imagine there’s a line dividing this room. On my left is ‘yes’ and on my right is ‘no’. Now, I’m going to give you some affirmations, and you’re going to position yourself to my right or my left, depending on how you think about what’s being said».

Each person can have a piece of paper and a pen to write down where they stand so that at the end, we can reflect on what was discussed spatially.

SUGGESTED PHRASES:

1. Do you believe that lack of time is a problem for you and for those you work with in the educational process?
2. Do you believe that poor time management is a problem for you and those you work with in the educational process?
3. Do you think you have attitudes in the classroom that you don’t consider consistent with what you believe?
4. Do you believe there needs to be more commitment on the part of the people who participate in the processes?
5. Do you find it difficult to «give a voice» to shy or silent people in your practice?
6. Have you ever found it challenging to deal with sexist, xenophobic, racist or LGBTQI+phobic comments?
7. Do you think about accessibility issues when you think about and prepare an educational process?
8. Have you ever found being part of an educational process difficult because of some aspect of your identity?
9. During your education practice, have you ever found it challenging to capture the interest of the people you’ve worked with?
10. Do you believe you have ever had learning process difficulties because they are adults and already have many opinions on certain subjects?

Notes: If you need to adapt or change a phrase, please do so. In your local context, you will better understand the reality of learning processes in the place where this activity will take place.

“TEXT IN PARTS: A COLLECTIVE DISCUSSION”

Given the complexity and scope of the topics under discussion, the “Text in parts” relates to all types of barriers. Nonetheless, its focus may be on structural barriers and the collective reflection on them, inside and outside the training space. This activity aims to promote debate about racism, considering its intersectionality with other factors of discrimination: gender, social class, age, sexual self-definition, functional diversity, inter alia. It is also our intention to call for attention to important concepts in Paulo Freire’s theoretical proposal, such as “racism”, “classism”, and “sexism”, “unity in diversity”, “minority”, and “majority”. This activity is aimed at everyone interested in discussing these topics - and, in fact, everyone should have such an interest.

- Objectives**
- Debate racism and reflect on the intersectionality that underlies it;
 - Critically analyse ideas about different forms of discrimination and important social concepts such as “minority” and “majority”.

Type of activity Guided, verbal

Estimated Time needed Unpredictable

Description To address racism (but not only), the facilitator proposes the constitution of small groups to discuss phrases or excerpts from texts by Paulo Freire. Here, we add some questions that can be used throughout the discussion. The idea is to problematise the debate, feed the conversation, and not transform it into an inquiry. If the facilitator observes that something else could help to instigate and deepen the discussion, they should follow their intuition, being aware of the risk of manipulating the dialogue.

First discussion

when the small groups have been formed, the facilitator hands out the following extract from Paulo Freire’s text:

[...] anti-racists need to go beyond the limit of their racial core and fight for the radical transformation of the socioeconomic system that causes or intensifies racism. (Freire, 2000a, p. 68, our translation)

From there, people will discuss what they think of this phrase, whether they agree or disagree. If relevant and adequate, the facilitator may fuel the debate with the following questions: to what extent does capitalism cause or intensify racism? What examples of this causality or intensification can we learn from history itself?

Everyone can agree upon the duration of the discussion. Each group should have a pen and paper to write the relevant points. Another text part is distributed or presented when this first discussion is over.

Second discussion:

The perversity of racism is not part of the nature of human beings. We are not racist, we become racist as soon as we can stop being racist.

[...] It is not part of human nature to be racist or sexist, to be progressive or reactionary, it is part of the vocation to be more, which is incompatible with all forms of discrimination. (Freire, 2000a, p. 68, our translation)

For this second discussion, the following questions may be presented: if we are not born racist, can we learn to stop being racist? How can we promote anti-racist education?

After everyone agrees on the time for discussion and notes, the facilitator introduces the third text part.

Third discussion

The progressive educator is loyal to the human being's radical vocation for autonomy and is open and critical in understanding the importance of the position of class, sex, and race for the liberation struggle.

S/he does not reduce one position to another. S/he does not deny the weight of class, skin colour, or sex in the struggle. The progressive educator understands that any reductionism of class, sex, or race distorts the meaning of the fight and, even worse, reinforcing dominating power weakens the fight. That's why s/he defends the invention of unity in diversity.

It is evident, therefore, that the authoritarian educator, in the service not of the ontological radicality of human beings, but of the interests of the dominant class, even when thinking and saying in favour of the popular classes, works towards division and not towards unity in diversity. For the authoritarian educator, it is essential that the dominated majority does not recognise itself as a majority but dilutes itself into weakened minorities.

Even though, in this or that society, for historical, social, cultural, and economic reasons, the importance of race, class, and sex in the liberation struggle is visibly highlighted, we must avoid falling into the temptation of reducing the entire struggle to one of these fundamental aspects.

Sex alone doesn't explain everything. Not just race, either. The class alone, equally.

The daring and enterprising worker leader, fierce in the liberation struggle but who treats his partner as an object, is as incoherent as the white feminist leader who belittles the black peasant woman and as incoherent as the progressive intellectual who, speaking to workers, does not make any effort to talk with them. (Freire, 1997, pp. 94-95, our translation)

In this third part, the discussion may focus on intersectionality and Freire's concepts. Even if some people don't know much about this, it's important that they express their understanding of the concepts presented within each small group, without too much interference from the facilitator, who may add the following questions: are race (or ethnicity or skin colour), sex (or gender), and social class dimensions interconnected? How should discrimination be combated in relation to these factors: focusing on just one or considering them in their interrelationship, i.e., «intersectionality»

(as Kimberlé Crenshaw, 1989, called it)? Are there other factors of discrimination? Which? What does this Freirian concept of «unity in diversity» mean? To what extent is the idea of «minority» debatable? What is the true «minority» and the «majority»?

Since, in the previous excerpt, the meanings of “majority” and “minority” are only implicit, we suggest a...

Fourth discussion

I have no doubt [...] that one of the reasons why discriminatory practices persist in a society that thinks of itself and, in a certain sense, has progressive signs is the difficulty that the so-called minorities in these societies have in overcoming themselves, perceiving themselves as majorities. Perceive and behave like the majority.

It would be much less complicated for the so-called minorities to settle their differences in a daily political exercise and fight together than, weakened, each fighting for themselves to achieve their objectives.

It is part of the dream of liberation, the permanent search for freedom and life, and the procedural overcoming of all forms of discrimination. Critical, unmasking education plays an indisputable role in this process. And it will be all the more effective if, in the daily experience of society, the force of discriminatory processes decreases. We cannot expect an educational practice of a liberating nature from a reactionary educator, in the same way that actual democratic action has little effect if carried out in isolation in a heavily racist context.

The political practice carried out by mature women and men, who critically recognise the role and need for unity in diversity, in itself, a pedagogical practice as well, is indispensable to the fight against domination. (Freire, 1994/2015, pp. 277-278, our translation).

Possible questions: so what is the majority? And the true minority?

After this fourth discussion, the small groups come together as a large group and exchange their impressions and notes on the excerpts. If any doubts arise regarding a specific concept, the facilitator can intervene but always draw on the participants' knowledge about it. In other words, concepts can be presented as a dialogue.

To know more...

This activity presents a set of excerpts from Paulo Freire, with a view to fuelling discussions in small groups first and then in large groups. This is not an invitation to read only these excerpts as if the contexts in which they appear were irrelevant. In fact, in «Pedagogy of the Oppressed,» Paulo Freire himself condemns «bibliographical indications»: «There are teachers who, when indicating a bibliographical list, order the reading of a book from page 10 to page 15, and they do this to help the students...» (Freire, 1972, p. 91).

Our aim is precisely the opposite: to invite participants to read Freire's work, not least because there are concepts that appear in the extracts but are not explained, such as «being more» (“*ser mais*”, in the original), for example.

We also think it would be advisable to read Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1989) work on intersectionality, as well as the many texts and studies that have been written on the subject.¹⁰

¹⁰ See, for example, the second outcome of this project: “Identity, power, inequality: questioning group based exclusions in the context of adult education”.

“THIS IS NOT A PLASTIC BAG!”

CHAIN STORY

In this activity, we propose that, as a group, people create a story with characters, places, and events. From there, teamwork is encouraged, crossing the different visions of the group to form a single plot, exploring their interests, knowledge, and creativity in a process negotiated between peers and as democratically as possible. Can the various voices be heard in the collective story? How does the group make decisions? What is valued? These and other questions from those facilitating can be the impetus for the final discussion.

Creating a story has the potential to be expressive and creative, enhancing the imagination and ideas of each person involved. It can increase self-esteem, counteract feelings of inferiority, and boost dialogue and cooperation. In a collective creation, failure has no place because the space of emptiness (and freedom) is large enough not to be marked by right and wrong.

- Objectives**
- To create a relationship;
 - To explore the potential of creativity;
 - To promote collective creation;
 - To analyse the strength of personal voice in the collective construction.

Type of activity Guided, verbal

Estimated Time needed About 1 hour (depending on number of participants).

Description General description: To begin, the participants organise themselves into groups of 4 or 5 people and respond to a set of challenges proposed by the facilitator. Each small group occupies a different area of the room (e.g., one in each corner). The facilitator launches different challenges and each small group must make decisions and come back with answers to the big group. They carry out the task of constructing and dramatising a set of distinct stories, group by group, encouraging reflection.

1st challenge – The facilitator takes any object in the room or uses a plastic bag, stating: «This is not a plastic bag [or other object]. In your group, debate and decide what it is now. When you have chosen, return to the circle».

The group will debate and decide, return to the circle, and share with the large group what that object became.

2nd challenge – At the end of the sharing, the facilitator states: «This object/thing was lost. Who lost it?’ When you have discussed and decided, return to the circle.»

The group will decide, return, and share with the large group what their object is and who lost it.

3rd challenge – At the end of sharing, the facilitator states: «This object/ thing was lost. When?’ When you have decided, return to the circle.»

The group will decide, return, and share with the large group what their object is, who lost it, and when.

4th challenge – At the end of the sharing, the facilitator states: «This object/ thing was lost. Where? When you have decided, return to the circle.»

The group will decide, return, and share with the large group what their object is, who lost it, when, and where.

5th challenge – At the end of sharing, the facilitator states: «This object/ thing was found. Who found it?’ When you have decided, return to the circle.»

The group will decide, return, and share with the large group what their object is, who lost it, when, where, and who found it.

6th challenge – groups are challenged to prepare a dramatisation of their story - or they can also exchange stories (e.g., group 1 dramatises the story of 2 and vice versa), taking on characters, settings, other objects...

7th challenge – groups present their stories to each other.

8th challenge – back in the big circle, people talk about the experience, what they liked most, the challenges they faced, how they resolved them, and other aspects that may come up. The facilitator guides the dialogue and introduces questions in the most natural way possible, interspersing with the participants’ comments. These questions allow the game’s objectives to be focused.

For example:

1. Has playing this game interfered in any way with the way we relate to each other?
2. Regarding creativity, what did you feel in the face of collective exploration in the group?
3. Were you satisfied with your collective creation? If so, can you explain what you liked most?
4. With your dialogues, you managed to produce a joint story. To what extent do you see your voice reflected in the story? Do you want to explain better?

To know more...

Throughout the story’s construction, all the aspects already decided by the small groups are constantly revisited in a chain until the story is complete. The facilitator can add many other challenges and provoke the creation of a ‘great’ story or limit themselves to the challenges mentioned here (What was the weather like? Did anyone witness the events? If so, who?...). This depends on the facilitator and the group.

Some ideas from Freire can help us think...

I am loyal to the dream. My actions have been consistent with it. I consider ethics to have to do with the coherence with which we live in the world, coherence between what we say and what we do. (Freire, 2001, p. 144, our translation)

[...] to the extent that we become capable of transforming the world, of giving names to things, of perceiving, of understanding, of deciding, of choosing, of valuing, of, finally, ethicalising the world, our movement in it and History has necessarily involved dreams for the realisation of which we strive. Hence, our presence in the world, implying choice and decision, is not neutral. (Freire, 2000b, pp. 32-33, our translation)

If, in truth, I am not in the world to simply adapt to it, but to transform it; If it is not possible to change it without a certain dream or project for the world, I must use every possibility I have to not only talk about my utopia but to participate in practices consistent with it. (Freire, 2000b, p. 33, our translation)

The role of the social worker who opts for change, in a historical moment like this, is not exactly to create contrary myths, but to problematise reality for (...) [people], to provide the demystification of the mythologised reality. (Freire, 1979/2002, p. 54, our translation)

**Source/
Authorship**

Dramatic expression activity, original by Eunice Macedo

“WHAT IS MY PLACE?”

The activity presented here aims to provoke reflection on each person’s position in their life and/or professional contexts. It uses the space and the various places one can find in the room to promote reflection on the learning space, the relationship with other learners and the relationship with the educator. It also aims to contribute to increased reflexivity and an understanding of each person’s role and other people’s representations, which can interfere with how we think, feel, and behave.

- Objectives**
- Realise the relationship between spatial and social dynamics;
 - Stimulate awareness of what place one occupies.

Type of activity Guided, verbal

Estimated Time needed About 1 hour (depending on number of participants).

Description This activity aims to foster reflection about the different places we can occupy. These places concern our wants and desires, our responsibilities and duties, and other people’s expectations and what they expect from us. To begin this activity, make sure the group is already warmed up. The participants are asked to observe the space carefully. Then we move on to the first indication:

→ ***Which place do you most like to occupy?***

It is emphasised that they can direct themselves to that place without much thought, letting their body guide them to what they first feel like doing. Then, they are asked to take into account what they feel in that place, take a little time for self-observation, and then observe the rest of their colleagues.

They are again asked to walk around the space, to pay attention to what is around them, to that place, and a new question is asked:

→ ***Which place do you least like to occupy?***

They are asked to go to the first place they thought of to respect their body’s will and trust that first feeling. It is suggested that they self-perceive their body in this place and what they think, feel, and question themselves. They should keep internal notes regarding this for themselves and observe their colleagues.

They are asked to move around the room again, paying attention to the spaces around them, and the last question is asked:

→ ***Where do you belong?***

Again, people are asked to go to this place, reflect on their feelings, observe their bodies and minds, and then observe their colleagues. Still in this last position, a summary conversation takes place:

What do you feel in this place? Is anyone in the same place as you were in the first question? Why yes? Why not? What makes you like another seat better? Why do you feel that your favourite seat is different from this one? What observations do you make? Were there any surprises you had during the process? Have you ever occupied the place you like the least? Why is it the place you like the least?

These questions reveal experiences, stories, dissonances between desires and realities, oppressions faced along the way, etc. It becomes a sharing that accesses intimate places but respects what each person is willing to reveal without exposing them.

PART 3:

Theorising from experience

In this last part, we propose a theorisation based on the experience that we sought to bring in Parts 1 and 2, whether by bringing the voices of educators-learners or by presenting activities already carried out with different groups and in different countries, and which proved to have a liberating and emancipatory potential. The assumption is made of the importance of the relationship between action and reflection as inseparable elements in educational work. Starting from the unveiling of unequal realities in which the exercise of power is also unequal and is based on naturalised relations of domination and subordination¹¹, what is at stake here, and what we propose, is the construction of human relationships centred on mutual learning and supported by a perspective of recognition and care (for oneself and other people), for the construction of a more interdependent and less unequal *common ground*, in which diversity is valued.

Thus, we depart from Critical Theory, the basis of Paulo Freire's transformation proposal. This is the author on whom we based ourselves for the construction of this Guide, explaining the various axes of Freire's Critical Pedagogy and intertwining it with the feminist magnifying glass, which, also in a humanising line, emphasises the emergence of the individual Subject. We also enunciate possibilities for a liberating education, as Freire called it, returning to the need to make the movement of *ascesis*¹² to access the structural roots of "limit-situations" and then go in search of resolution with people, within the framework of social relations and through dialogical processes, such as those highlighted and proposed here.

With these concerns, in the following sections, we briefly reflect on Critical Theory and Critical Pedagogy, which emerges from it and embodies it, to begin presenting the central axes of Freire's pedagogy, in its dialogue with feminist perspectives and a liberating pedagogical framework. We then explore possible dialogues with the generative themes and how they can be identified, as well as the democratisation of the word and the possibilities of creating a dialogical relationship.

¹¹ See, for example, what Freire (1972) says about the process of the oppressed's adherence to the oppressor's consciousness. As such, the oppressed does not want to break with oppression, but rather to be like the oppressor.

¹² Augusto Boal, Brazilian playwright and creator of Theater of the Oppressed, proposes the existence, in the loom, of a maieutic process between audience and actors - mediated by the joker (facilitator) - through which both reveal the layers underlying the visible, finding the structural roots of the problem: "in a particular conflict, we must not go down to its singularities, conjunctural, but go up to the structural: from the phenomenon to the law that governs it - its causes - *Ascesis!*" (Boal, 2009, p.173)

CRITICAL THEORY AND CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

The origin of Critical Theory is linked to the existence of a school of thought led by some German philosophers, who initially worked in Frankfurt and who, with the emergence and dominance of Nazism, were forced to take refuge in the United States, only returning to Frankfurt at the end of the Second World War. Critical Theory, as said before, appears mainly with the work of some of these philosophers (for example, Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse), as if constituting a line of thought that represents an epistemological break with the Cartesian concept of "science". This concept was utterly dominant until then. It is, as stated, a line of thought that proposes considering the importance of the relationship between theory and practice, which defends a relationship between reality and the desire for emancipation, advocating that the action to be developed is liberating. Critical Theory, therefore, seeks to contribute to the emancipation of human beings, encouraging constant reflection on the characteristics of all events, decisions and practices.

The pedagogical work carried out within the framework of Critical Theory - therefore, Critical Pedagogy itself - rejects what it calls “fact fetishism”, pointing to the need for permanent reflective activity on all educational actions and decisions, on all social practices, especially those in which situations of exercise of power arise.

Critical Pedagogy is also described as a movement that aims to develop habits of thought, reading, writing and speaking that go beyond the uncritical acceptance of the superficial meaning of first impressions, dominant myths, official pronouncements, or even mere opinions, and which aims to identify the deep meaning, radical causes, social context, ideology and personal consequences of any action, event, object, processes, functioning of organisations, experiences.

The denunciation, made by Paulo Freire, throughout his work, of the political nature of any decision taken in the field of education, as well as the close relationship that he demonstrated to exist between knowledge, culture and the concept of awareness itself, which he worked so brilliantly since the “Pedagogy of the Oppressed”, make Freire an indisputable symbol of the work that can be developed in the field of Critical Pedagogy.

AXES IN FREIRIAN CRITICAL PEDAGOGY. IN LINE WITH FEMINIST PEDAGOGIES

In this framework of critical thinking, a set of guiding principles of Freirean pedagogy is evident, which also finds an echo in feminist pedagogies.

The reformulation of the relationship between educators and learners is one of the central principles of the pedagogy of the oppressed, which is very clear in the transition from banking education to liberating education. It implies a new vision about who has knowledge and what knowledge is valid, and it recognises both the knowledge and culture of learners and their crucial role as actors and authors in the formulation of knowledge.

The issue of **empowerment** is crucial in Freire’s praxis by revealing and refusing the role of education in reproducing the status quo and resorting to *conscientização* through dialogicity¹³. It is based on ethics, respect for the dignity and autonomy of learners and, thus, leads to their construction as socio-historical and cultural Subjects inserted in a group (Freire, 1997).

Community construction is particularly important in Freire’s pedagogy, clearly embodied in “culture circles”, as a mode of educational work that bases and stimulates the collective construction of meanings based on the dialogical confrontation of individual realities.

The cultural dimension and the valorisation of the voice, as a resource and effect of *conscientização* and transformative action, are evident in both approaches (Freirian and feminist). Freire denounces the silencing of voices in education and states the need to take into account “the culture of the oppressed, their language, their efficient way of doing maths, their fragmentary knowledge of the world from which they would ultimately transition to the more systematised knowledge, which belongs to school work” (Freire, 1974, p. 35, our translation).

Freire, as well as feminist pedagogical views, announces the valorisation of diversity inherent to literacy - as a project and political action - centred on the detection of generative themes and the exploration of generative words, relating to the specific experience of literacy learners, and their vocabulary universe. These constitute a process, root and stem of the establishment of consciousness through dialogicity, giving each oppressed person a place to express themselves, appropriate their history and create culture through the objectification of the world, as Freire (1972) emphasises.

¹³ According to Freire (1972), dialogicity and antialogicity are matrices of antagonistic theories of cultural action: the first serves liberation, the second oppression.

The challenge to conventional pedagogy emanates from the place of the Subjects, implying questioning of the status quo and of knowledge itself. Thus, both pedagogies recognise the existence of different forms of oppression, which require this action for liberating social transformation (Crabtree, Sapp & Licona, 2009). It is therefore emphasised, as mentioned above, that education is not neutral but ideologically, historically and culturally (in)formed. To this extent, and as a cultural action of intervention in the world, it can make a difference.

Between the potentialities and limits of education, a pedagogical thought arises that leads the educator to engage socially and politically, to perceive the possibilities of cultural and social action in the struggle for the transformation of oppressive structures into a society of equals and the role of education – conscientização – in this process of change. (Freire, 1997, p. 10, our translation)

It is, therefore, worth emphasising that both feminist pedagogy and Freirean pedagogy are based on visions of **social transformation** (...), which are underlying (...) common assumptions regarding **oppression, consciousness** and **historical change**. Both (...) affirm ‘oppression in the material conditions of people’s existence’ and are based on **awareness** processes, such as ‘critical capacity that goes beyond dominant discourses’. In these pedagogies, strongly committed ‘to justice and a vision of a better world and the potential for liberation’, **human beings** are seen ‘as **Subjects and actors of history**’ (Weiler, 2004, p. 92, our translation)

Both use **strategies to empower** learners in the **dual role** of educators and learners; encourage **each** participant in the relational pedagogical relationship to contribute their **culture and voice** to the construction of knowledge and **dialogue** with other cultures and voices in the appropriation of **new knowledge**; promote the articulation between knowledge and power, leading to transformative action; they are pedagogies committed to social justice, **human rights** and a **vision of the possibility** of building a better world, through liberation (Macedo, 2021). Carlos Nuñez (1998) describes popular education based on the particularities of the Latin American context, stating that this

combines and relates ethical commitment of a substantive nature with a position and political commitment at the service of the great majority to face the resolution of their problems and – as a third element of this triangle – the fundamental theme of coherence between saying and doing [...] its methodological proposal. (Nuñez, 1998, p. 30, our translation)

GENERATING DIALOGUES WITH GENERATIVE THEMES

The coherence between saying and doing, which is the basis of Freire’s (1972) proposal, was a relevant theme in the dialogues we had with educators during the last phase of the PODER Project. This search for coherence seems to be present in the people who facilitate the education processes of adults, with the former pointing out difficulties in managing institutional expectations, resources and objectives, as well as the expectations, needs and objectives of people with whom they work.

The lack of relationship between the quantitative evaluation of the results of educational projects or programs and their relational dimension tends to translate into a lack of autonomy of the educators, who are the object of a quantified evaluation, a lack of voice in the fundamental decisions of projects – such as the distribution or allocation of funding – and the lack

of consideration of the non-numerical, or rather emotional, impact, which is the basis of educational processes, and which often only reveals itself in the long or medium term.

This emotional dimension, which cannot be dissociated from the rational, co-constructs the dialogical relationship between the learner-educator and the educator-learner. As hooks (2013) highlights, it is in love that there is the driving force that moves the desire for change and converts it into action. It is the lack of love that makes creation and recreation impossible. The exchange, the encounter with the other, is the possible dialogue for transformation. Dialogical Subjects, according to Freire (1972), are necessary for the liberation of human beings, since violence and domination are the result of perversions of love, the “pathology of love”, as the author explains:

[...] sadism in those who dominate; masochism in the dominated. Love, no, because it is an act of courage, never of fear, love is commitment to men [sic]. Wherever these oppressed people are, the act of love is to commit to their cause. The cause of their release. But this commitment, because it is loving, is dialogical. (Freire, 1972, pp. 114-115, our translation).

According to Freire, oppressed people will express this love in the fight for their liberation. Will these be able to “restore[r] the humanity that [the oppressors] had lost through the use of oppression (...) only the oppressed by freeing themselves can free the oppressors. As a class that oppresses, these neither liberate nor liberate themselves” (Freire, 1979/2002, p. 46). This dialogical process is, however, surrounded by barriers, due to the difficulty of transformation that lies in the desire of certain groups to maintain the status quo, maintain their privileges, and use legitimising myths.

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How can I dialogue if I feel like I am participating in a “ghetto” of pure men [sic], owners of truth and knowledge, for whom all those outside are “those people”, or are “inferior natives”?

How can I dialogue if I assume that the pronunciation of the world is the task of select men and that the presence of the masses in history is a sign of its deterioration that I must avoid?

How can I dialogue if I close myself off from the contributions of others, which I never recognise, and even feel offended by? (Freire, 1972, pp. 115-116, our translation)

THE DEMOCRATISATION OF THE WORD AND THE POSSIBILITIES OF CREATING A DIALOGICAL RELATIONSHIP

For Freire (1972), the word should not be a privilege for some people but rather a right that all people have or should have. Therefore, for him, it makes no sense for us to say the “true word” - of transformation - to other people, in a prescriptive way. Thus, he states:

This is the reason why dialogue between those who want the world’s pronunciation and those who do not want it is not possible; between those who deny others the right to speak and those who feel denied this right. It is first necessary that those who find themselves denied the primordial right to speak their words regain that right, prohibiting this dehumanising assault from continuing. (Freire, 1972, p. 113, our translation).

It is in this framework and with these concerns that, when we talk about interculturality, we talk about changes in habits, thinking, and coexistence. We must be able to dialogue among people of equal value, respect the multiple cultures that inhabit the same space, and understand and realise there is space to exercise this enriching multiplicity. It is, therefore, essential that the educator-learner is constantly adapting and updating: what is being debated on a specific topic? Who are the references, local and national, on this topic? Which points of view make sense to me? Where are the cultural manifestations of the city I live in? Which groups are present in these demonstrations? What do people think and feel about these issues? These and other questions can be asked to allow self-reflection, allowing work aligned with Freire's thought of emancipation and freedom in education.

Contrary to this liberating and emancipatory mandate, which we demand, banking education offers us several little boxes of thought and forces us to fit into one of them. When we think about the method, about ourselves, and we in relation to the method, we are in the process of de-mechanising (Boal, 2005) thought - the practice of thinking about practice, as Freire tells us. Thinking about ourselves, our social position in the world, and ourselves in relation to another person can be revolutionary. As an educator in Italy said:

A good trainer or an experienced trainer is not someone who has worked for many years but someone who frequently questions themselves about what they are doing, who reflects on methods and so on. Working for many years does not make a good and experienced professional. (Educator, online focus groups, March 2024, Italy)

As educators, we must “find small solutions that will make a difference” (male educator, Portugal).

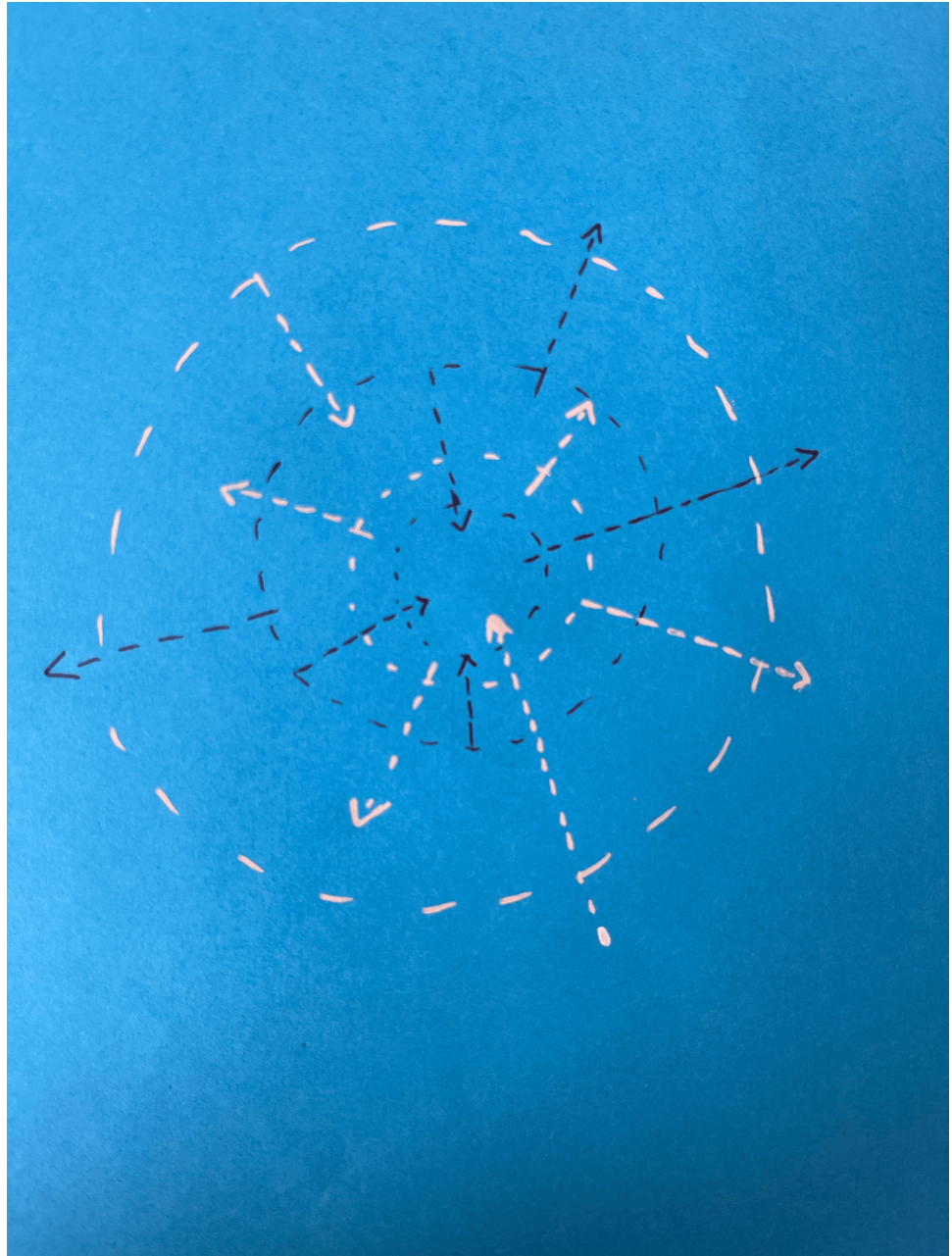
Aiming for a local, small-scale impact is understanding the importance of believing in a domino effect. Always relating the local to a global sphere, that is, what is systemic is reflected in that local context and what are the specificities of that context. Small-scale and long-term attitudes. (Male educator, online focus group, Portugal)

We need to **slow down** in relation to our contexts and listen - really listen - to the people we work with, identifying with them the «limit-situations» we face, one and the other.

SEARCH FOR GENERATIVE THEMES: CODING AND DECODING

Investigating and understanding the thematic universe of a given population is important to weaving and/or understanding the generative themes. As the figure shows, “the ‘generative themes’ can be located in concentric circles, ranging from the most general to the most particular.” (Freire, 1972, p. 135, our translation). This search for generative themes includes the coding process, through which people bring topic situations that are part of their environment and are, for them, important (in a movement from concrete to abstraction). As in a back-and-forth movement, “from the abstract to the concrete” (Freire, 1972, p. 139, our translation), coded situations are analysed (something concrete that is imbued with codes and symbols) and, again, the signs are taken to an abstract sphere: “What do they mean?” “What other meanings can they have?” Then, it is brought back to the concrete several times in a row. This process makes up the decoding phase.

Figure 2 - Compression/extension circles of the decoding process, illustration by Beatriz Villas-Bôas



Faced with a codified existential situation, people tend to carry out a kind of «splitting» of the situation presented to them. «This ‘splitting’, in the practice of decoding, corresponds to the stage that we call ‘description of the situation’. Splitting the figurative situation makes it possible to discover the interaction between the parts of the split whole” (Freire, 1972, p. 139, our translation). Decoding can be done through questions, respecting the Pedagogy of Questions (Freire & Faundez, 1985/1998) that emphasises the importance of dialogue (questions and answers, even if incomplete and partial, even if formulated as new questions) in the pedagogical process of knowledge construction and social transformation. Henrique Longo also observes the importance of questions in pedagogical practice, stating that:

They [the questions] will help in this decoding process until a satisfactory conclusion can be reached. The class must be understood as a dialectical process. Liberating education based on dialogue and problematisation can effectively contribute to consciousness becoming critical.” (Longo, 2000, p. 3, our translation).

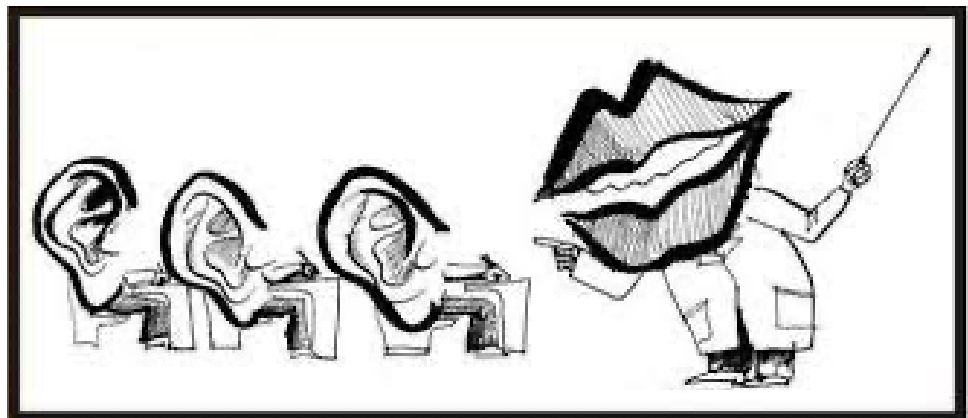
Seeming to expand and update Freire's proposal regarding the process of literacy and *conscientização*, the author suggests a possibility of decoding, in this case, for a photograph:

- What is the photo showing?
- What are its main characteristics?
- Who took the photo? In what way?
- Where was the photo taken? When?
- How is the photo? Are all the details clear?
- Is the photo part of a publication?
- Is it possible to guarantee the authenticity of the photo?
- Why was the photo taken?
- Can the photo be considered representative of a real context? What did the photographer want to show when taking the photo?
- What does the viewer feel when seeing the photo?
- What does this photo mean in the context in which they find themselves?
- (idem, p. 5, our translation).

FINAL REMARKS: WHAT POSSIBILITIES?

Adult educators-learners made this guide. The main participants in the focus groups and individual interviews were also educators-learners. It would have been very interesting, we insist, to have had the possibility of also consulting learners-educators. We do not make a division between educators and learners, which led us to use the expressions educator-learner and learner-educator, in the wake of Paulo Freire, for whom we are all educators and learners. However, it must be recognised that each person's roles in the educational space differ, particularly in terms of power.

Figure 3 - Source: IDAC (1990, p. 48)



As such, we also include activities with a reflective dimension, in which the places and roles of the educator are discussed. This reflection must go beyond a cognitivist and rational approach and start from the body, so often silenced and inert in these spaces, or transformed into a "docile body", as Foucault (1975/1997) envisioned. This fundamental and noticeable difference in the roles of bodies is evident in the image above - the speaker is standing, with the possibility of articulation and movement, and the listener is sitting, almost motionless - which suggests the fundamental division in the educational field.

It is often evident in training spaces who has the power to speak and who has the duty to listen. Those who are sitting only see part of the entire space - the educator/facilitator, who is in front of them, and the backs of fellow learners. It is difficult to escape this system, so we must maintain a critical vigilance attitude. The fact that we collected “limit-situations” experienced by educators, and not by learners, is a limitation of our work, and gives us information about the difficulty of leaving a system that privileges the voice of educators to the detriment of that of learners, despite our concern central to promoting conditions for the expression of their voice. In the same way,

trainers often think that their obstacles are personal problems, even if the cause is clearly systemic (due to a capitalist and patriarchal society, corruption, nepotism) (Female educator, focus group, March 2024, Hungary)

It, therefore, becomes necessary to reinforce the political dimension of education - its politicality, politicising everyone’s issues and, as Benjamin Constant stated as the meaning of Political Revolution: “the moment when no statesman can tell a citizen, ‘mind your own business,’ because all matters became those of all” (p. 94, In Boal & Soeiro, 2019).

The barriers that we have enumerated, and the difficulties they cause for the dialogical process, can be overcome when we “place ourselves in the perspective of the oppressed [and] develop the pedagogical process from the act of learning, and not from teaching” (Romão, 2004, p. 30, our translation). Even because “the point of observation of the oppressed gives him [sic] some epistemological advantages and feeds him with the drive to achieve initiatives that could elevate him, and with him, a large part, if not all of humanity” (Romão, 2004, p. 27, our translation).

Let us then return to the field of possibilities and the basis of Paulo Freire’s work: dialogue. The dialogical process is carried out with at least two people, mediated by the world. If each person has their own experience of the world - they experience and think about the world in their own way - a first recognition is to accept this uniqueness of each person as a virtue and a sum, or even a multiplication, given that the exchange of knowledge generates new and unexpected knowledge. This recognition is the basis of the entire dialogical process, which is based on active listening, respect, and trust to form a more horizontal relationship that values knowledge in presence. The dialogical process, therefore, requires the exercise of trust. How can we instigate this?

A first (and second and third...) step has to do with sharing power: one of the decisions that can be shared in a pedagogical process is the content of the dialogue. Choosing, together with the people we work with, the content that will be discussed in a given pedagogical situation, is what Freire called choosing the thematic universe. The educator-learner can do daily and prolonged work of deepening - investigating and understanding - the cultures of the people with whom they work. This immersion in the thematic and cultural universe of the other, understanding “their physical, organic conditions, acceptance or resistance to the proposal that is going to be made”, is one of the pillars of Freirian Pedagogy:

[...] the need that the educator, the politician, without intending to separate them, have to, in a certain sense, let themselves be completely wet by the “cultural waters” of the popular masses, in order to be able to feel and understand them. Apart from this, what they can obtain, almost always, is a defective understanding of the real, of the concrete, which lacks, for this very reason, a fundamental dimension, which is how

the popular masses react and see themselves in their relationship with the context. (Freire & Faundez, 1985/1998, p. 109, our translation)

In the absence of prior and concomitant ethnographic work, the educator-learner may assume only their culture and, mistakenly, the idea that “national culture is what is part of their class universe - their ideas, their beliefs, their taste”, which would reduce the serious possibility of opening space to “critically reinvent culture, reinvent language, once again, the issue of reinventing power” (Freire & Faundez, 1985/1998, p. 95, our translation).

Freire, therefore, proposes a pedagogy of the question - discussed previously - based on the exchange of questions that, even without having an answer, can always be in dialogue. Educators can prioritise activities that stimulate and address intersectional themes, that is, taking into account the different identity layers of individuals and, thus, the various lenses through which each person reads and understands the world, what other authors have called ‘voice’ (Arnot, 2006; Macedo, 2017). It is this search, based on questions, that Freire describes as the practice of freedom. Thus, we, educators participating in a liberating practice, have the responsibility to open paths and possibilities through questioning.

After denouncing existing barriers in educational spaces, we enunciate and announce suggestions for collective and reflective practices, summarising some possibilities for creating new presents and futures. We hope that something inspires you in this Guide (it certainly inspired us) and that new Guides, with new possibilities for action, are added to this one to reverse the speed of a hegemonic/dominating advance that has not taken us all into account.

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Power dynamics
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