

Learning to ‘un-divide’ the world: The legacy of colonialism and education in the 21st century

Nora McQuaid
Global Dimension in Schools, Northern Ireland.

In this article I argue that the legacy of colonialism remains in the education system and discuss some of the implications for the future of an education that does not teach learners to ‘divide the world’. Learning about the connections between power, knowledge and language is central to a new pedagogy that helps us understand how the media and the school curriculum perpetuate the construction of ourselves as separate from and/or superior to others, which prevents us from recognising the foreign or the ‘other’ within ourselves. I start this article with a very brief outline of the work of Willinsky, Hannaford and Gilbert to formulate an argument in favour of the exposure of the colonial legacy of our current education system. In the second part I draw on my experience as a classroom teacher using Willinsky’s and others’ recommendations to discuss some of the implications of exploring this colonial legacy in formal educational contexts, and to make a few practical suggestions for practitioners.

Constructs of ‘knowledge’ of different cultures, places and peoples in the past has left an indelible mark on our own perspective of how we see the world. Some ‘knowledges’ and histories have been obliterated from our modern perspectives, whilst the legacy of other histories and constructs of knowledge continue to greatly affect our present. One epoch in history that demonstrates this is that of 15th century Europe, which marked the beginning of an incredible drive to explore, conquest, rule and own different parts of the ‘unknown’ world. Willinsky (1998) claims that in the 15th century, Colon (or Columbus) laid the foundations of the ‘educational dynamic’ that Imperialism created, as well as treating the ‘natives’ as something to be studied, educated, governed and converted.

Willis also claims that the Western thirst for learning in that earlier era was supported by, where it was not simply an extension of, the desire for colonial acquisition and political domination exercised by the European powers. Imperialism, in turn, fostered a global market for its own educational resources, as it sought to make the world into a store house of knowledge (Willinsky, 1998). Willinsky argues that the legacy of colonialism and imperialism remains with us, inculcated through our education:

We are schooled in differences great and small, in borderlines and boundaries in historical struggles and exotic practices, all of which extend the meaning of difference. We are taught to discriminate in both the most innocent and fateful ways so that we can appreciate the differences between civilized and primitive, West and East, first and third worlds (1998, p. 1).

Gilbert (2005) suggests that in the post-industrial age, education systems that have been structured by 20th century needs (and arguably previous centuries’ influences) are no longer applicable to the needs of 21st century learners. She contends that in this ‘knowledge society’ age, how we view, think about, understand and teach knowledge - what it is and what it can do - needs to be relearned. In particular she notes that ‘...some of our most basic political concepts - democracy, equality, ethics, justice, and so on – are developing new meanings... (there is a focus on) language’s role in constructing, rather than simply representing, meaning’ (2005, p. 17).

One area where the colonial legacy is most explicit is that of intrinsically racialised thinking, which is generally accepted as standard in social discourse, politics and education practice and theory. Gilbert suggests that language has a role in constructing meaning rather than simply representing meaning; it could be argued that the term ‘race’ is an example of this. The meaning of the term ‘race’ has changed and taken a form of its own through the use of language. ‘Race’ no longer represents a meaning, no longer defines; it has very much become a meaning making construct that we have inherited and woven into our social fabric.

Both Hannaford (1996) and Malik (1996) argue that this notion of race is a fairly recent one; Hannaford proposes that the word 'race' first entered European languages from Arabic in Spain during the 1200-1500s and even then did not have the meaning we attach to it today. He argues that it was not until the Middle Ages that it was sometimes used to refer to lineage in royal or noble families and

[...] not until after the French and American revolutions and the social upheavals that followed that the idea of race was fully conceptualized and became deeply embedded in our understandings and explanations of the world. In other words, the dispositions and presuppositions of race and ethnicity were introduced - some would say 'invented' or 'fabricated' - in modern times and were the outcomes of a vast exorcism or recent thought on descent, generation and inheritance (Hannaford, 1996, p. 6).

Hannaford (1996) suggests the idea of 'race' is one which narrows our range of thinking and therefore of knowledge and understanding, not just of present society but also of the past. Malik (1996) argues that the lenses through which we view (and therefore construct) society are being increasingly distorted by notions of race, blocking out a wide range of thought on human experience and conduct.

From the 17th to the early 20th century scientific 'evidence' of different 'races' and in particular evidence of the inferiority of 'other races' to the 'white' race was accepted by large sections of academia and the public as a whole. The scientific stamp of approval gave this imagined term foundation and credence based on shoddy science that had a sinister hidden agenda. Hannaford (1996) argues that this misuse of knowledge, which has been disproved and rejected, continues to form a large part of our modern psyche and is still used in everyday language, the media, by politicians, and even by academics.

As Willinsky (1998) contends, it is precisely the construct of ideas such as race that have been carried through from colonial times, which most explicitly influences our tendency to divide the world and reinforce notions of Western superiority. This has had a profound influence on education past and present, and on the future for education systems.

Therefore, whilst education systems prepare young people for life in the present and future, it is crucial we understand that our probable and preferable views of the future are constructed from the 'knowledges' we have absorbed from the past. This acknowledgement should allow us to deconstruct these views in order to understand their origins: the 'past is the source of all our knowledge, including our knowledge of the future' (Cornish, cited in Hicks, 2006, p.14). Understanding the implications of a colonialist legacy on our education systems can facilitate learning from the past in order to guide the 'probable and preferable' futures towards congruency (ibid).

Deconstruction of the present education systems and how they have been influenced by past legacies will enable us to understand not just what is not wanted in the future, but predict what is wanted and will be needed; or at the very least, to prepare our students with the skills they need for a fast changing world. 'Unless we understand the future for which we are preparing we may do tragic damage to those we teach' (Toffler, cited in Hicks, 2006, p. 14). We may not be able to understand or predict the future, but we can strive to prepare students to be aware of the links between past and future; what shapes their views of the future; how to identify probable futures and how to work toward their preferable futures.

When examining education and the ways in which it perpetuates colonialist learning, Willinsky (1998) focuses on different subjects and how they have helped generation after generation 'divide the world'. He claims that the educational legacy remaining from colonization and imperialism must be challenged. In his view, our learnt ways of studying and dividing the world, and the concepts of knowledge promoted through different school subjects, may be used to 'legitimise political and cultural domination of imperialism' (1998,

p.3). The revision of this may help prevent further development of powerful ideas of race, culture and nation which form the basis of colonial thinking.

Implications for Education: Possible Ways Forward

Several educators and theorists (Willinsky, 1998; Jackson, 1989; Gilbert, 2005; Andreotti, 2006; Morgan & Lambert, 2003; Said, 1976; Massey, 1995) have provided suggestions for possible routes forward for teachers and curriculum developers. I will summarize some of their analyses and suggestions, primarily focusing on the subject areas of science, history, geography and citizenship. This will lead to an exploration of the presumptuous use of certain terminology and the use of media and images in education. I will conclude with the potential problems inherent in continuing to divide education into separate disciplines.

After the abolition of slavery, instead of the notion of equality meaning that all humans were treated equally, race science was used to prove the superiority of Europeans.

[...] with abolitionists finally winning the day on the fundamental human rights issue of slavery, it now fell to the natural sciences to re-establish the boundaries that demarcated the unequivocal superiority of the European races. One might then wonder if the science of race managed to reduce, in effect, the moral cost of imperial expansion and exploitation (Willinsky, 1998, p. 165).

The repercussions of this 'science' were exposed in the horrors of the Jewish Holocaust of World War II, leading UNESCO to produce an initial statement against racialised thinking in 1950: 'scientists have reached general agreement in recognizing that mankind is one: that all men belong to the same species: *Homo sapiens*' (Willinsky, 1998, p. 168). However, this statement fell short of what was really necessary:

Although these scientists wanted to curtail the damage done in the name of race, their failure to acknowledge that biological categories are the product of human interests let the felt reality of race stand as a way of understanding the world (Willinsky, 1998, p. 169).

Of course the biggest breakthrough that challenged any scientific basis for race came in the form of a new and arguably more objective kind of knowledge. In the early 1950s with the advent of genetic science and DNA examinations, the idea that humankind could be divided into races was called into question. However, despite the proof against a scientific basis for race, many of the stereotypes and racial discourses still remain today. Science, more than any other subject, has promulgated the idea of race.

...the presence of the scientific construction of race is both obscured and present (in today's biology classes). It is obscured by a curriculum that fails to acknowledge science's part in making race a fixed point of human difference, even as the weight of those distinctions to which science once lent such credence are still present in the lives of students (Willinsky, 1998, p. 164).

Even though the importance of genetics and genetic engineering and the discovery of DNA is taught, we do NOT (in three curricula that I have taught) categorically teach that these findings totally once and for all disprove the science of race, that different races do not exist, that there is only one human race. '... science education has tended to step around its contribution to the construct of race, leaving the young to find themselves at the mercy of this powerful concept with little idea of how it has taken on such importance. They are left to imagine that race is, at some level, a natural division among humankind that has given rise, at times, to horrifying historical events' (Willinsky, 1998, p. 167).

I trialed this approach recently with a Year 12 (16 year olds) GCSE Double Award Science class whilst teaching Genetics and Variation. This discussion of the history of scientific racism unearthed underlying prejudice, stereotypes and absorbed misinformation that we were able to discuss and challenge in class. Myths were dispelled and students thought critically about the 'knowledge' they carried. In the open discussion, students were

encouraged to think about where their assumptions came from, what other perspectives there might be and what the implications might be if they decided to 'hold on' to the assumptions they had 'unpacked'.

This important learning would not have taken place had the present GCSE syllabus been followed. Willinsky notes that 'avoidance has long been the schools' response to controversy, and the result is that young minds are often forced to deal with heavily contested ideas exclusively on an extracurricular basis' (1998, p. 182). Science education must take responsibility for its role in forming a society obsessed with differences, the 'other' and 'race'.

Scientific knowledge cannot be considered to be objective; scientific work is greatly influenced by the subjectivity of the scientist carrying it out. In spite of this, science is widely regarded as the epitome of objective knowledge (Gilbert, 2005). Unlike Malik's defense of science's rationality (2008), Gilbert argues that no knowledge can be fully objective. Scientific knowledge continues to change so rapidly that much of the scientific theory that is still taught has been largely questioned or evolved or morphed into something else. Thus, the common complaint of many science students is that the theories taught in science curricula are inapplicable to every day life; certainly the type and origin of that knowledge should be critiqued. Gilbert proposes we provide a more realistic notion of scientific knowledge, exploring what it is, how it is developed, and how it is different from other kinds of knowledge.

She suggests we 'focus on science's impact on people (and people's impact on science), and the relationships between science, technology and society... [asking] questions like: 'How do scientists know what they know?' 'What are the limits of this knowledge?' 'What can science not tell us?' (Gilbert, 2005, pp. 209-210). Willinsky (1998) contends that the science of other civilizations has been obliterated by colonialists and proposes that development of programmes such as those of Bazin that introduces students to the 'science in every civilization which the colonists destroyed' (as cited in Willinsky, 1998, p. 185) could be used to redress this omission in science education.

Turning to history education, clearly it was not just the science of other civilizations that was destroyed but whole histories that were effectively eradicated by their screaming omission from school textbooks (Willinsky, 1998). Teachers should not only try to teach what has been left out, but also teach WHY something was left out in the first place: '...it also needs to be made apparent to students that such exclusion is not simply an oversight but a feature of how the disciplines of geography, history, science, language and literature (as well as the arts and mathematics) have gone about dividing the world since the age of empire' (Willinsky, 1998, p. 250).

Media and education are powerful tools which could easily be used to help dispel some stereotypical beliefs and prejudices by opening eyes to histories that have been intentionally omitted from mainstream education. Arguably many important developments in European history have been (and still are) deliberately shrouded because of their Arabic and Islamic roots. Are Europeans still afraid to admit that our culture has been positively influenced by Arabic, Muslim and Jewish learning? Or is it simply that for so many years the truth has been masked so deftly that it has just been forgotten?

I wish I could say...that general understanding of the Middle East, the Arabs and Islam...has improved somewhat, but alas, it really hasn't...the hardening of attitudes, the tightening of the grip of demeaning generalization and triumphantlist cliché, the dominance of crude power allied with simplistic contempt of dissenters and 'others', has found a fitting correlative in the looting, pillaging and destruction of Iraq's libraries and museums...history cannot be swept clean like a blackboard, clean so that 'we' might inscribe our own future there and impose our own forms of life for these lesser people to follow (Said, 2003, p. xiv).

Until structural change occurs, teachers may be able to use present day and old history books, and ask students to devise a research activity where they could study which periods of history have been included, 'whose' history is it, what assumptions have been made in those 'histories' and what those implications have been. Guided by the teacher, students could create a timeline and research the chunks of the timeline that have been left out from a range of different perspectives.

When considering geography education, Willinsky (1998) suggests that students could interview members of the community about their understanding of the changing meaning of culture. Morgan and Lambert (2003) suggest that Geography teachers use themes of 'migration' and 'diaspora' when addressing anti-racism in their curriculum. However they warn that in teaching the 'facts' needed to gain knowledge about migration (both emigration and immigration), students may end up with essentialist understandings of place and culture where language of 'migrants' 'majorities' and 'illegals' may cover up the details of a complex issue. They suggest that diaspora can be used to help students understand why some people have differing and complex senses of space, place and multiple belongings. An open view of place, they argue, is necessary for understanding the interconnected world we live in.

Massey (cited in Morgan and Lambert, 2003, p. 14) has argued for an alternative understanding of place 'as a meeting place, the location of intersections of particular bundles of activity space, of connections and inter-relations, of influences and movements'; in this version places are seen as 'open porous and the products of other places [that force] us to think about and understand the interconnections between people rather than the distinctions between them'.

Geography may be a natural subject for addressing how we view travel and tourism, which has not much changed its imperialist mindset from centuries ago. The 'Imperial Gaze' is arguably the way many of us still view other countries when we travel. Willinsky argues that this gaze 'is sustained in many tourist and educational enterprises, representing a certain domestication of imperialism while continuing its staking out of the world as a classroom of instruction and delight' (Willinsky, 1998, p. 254).

So how do we come to know and understand different places and cultures and people? Said is sceptical of this learning process:

it may seem exceptionally futile to ask whether, for members of one culture, knowledge of other cultures is really possible...human knowledge is only what human beings have made; external reality (Said, 1997, p. 136).

Bennet (1993) suggests that it may be only through residing within another culture that true intercultural empathy and pluralism may emerge. The argument is that through sustained engagement and communication between different groups an ethnorelative stage of 'adaption' will surface and it is only at this stage that people will be able to see the self in the other and the other in the self. Whilst educators may not want or be able to promote this immersed learning with students, it would certainly be within reach to apply critical literacy strategies to the notion of travel and tourism and discuss the assumptions, origins, different perspectives and implications involved in how we 'use' travel and tourism, and how or if its use contributes to intercultural learning. These approaches may provide opportunities for educators to encourage students to nurture skills that will allow them to examine assumptions, power relations and implications within these topics.

With respect to *citizenship education*, Andreotti (2006) argues that without careful analysis and a critical approach to citizenship education, there is a danger of perpetuating northern, western notions of superiority and actual supremacy, thus maintaining if not exacerbating the local and global problems that we want to help resolve. To avoid this it is crucial to deconstruct stereotypes, attitudes and assumptions of a 'poor' developing world that depend

on 'us' for 'help' and construct understanding of political reasons for injustices and inequalities.

Andreotti (2006) makes comparisons with 'soft' global citizenship education and possible approaches to a more 'critical' citizenship education. Perhaps most importantly, instead of a moral basis for action, she suggests an ethical, political basis that is focused on justice and a responsibility *towards* one another as opposed to responsibility *for* one another. This is applicable to global and local issues, where it could be argued that addressing the injustice of a racist or sectarian incident from an ethical point of view provides a more equitable manner of dealing with the issue, being less likely to victimise the 'recipient' than a moral reaction of pity, which 'recipients' nearly always resent.

Instead of students just 'supporting campaigns and donating resources', they should also 'analyse their own positions and participate in changing structures, assumptions and attitudes' (Andreotti, 2006, p. 47). Whilst of course it could be argued that this is already an aim of citizenship education, it is questionable whether these contexts have filtered through to students, especially considering the very limited time allocated to citizenship lessons at present and the knowledge base of teachers themselves. A critical literacy approach to these issues implies that, instead of assuming that globally everyone is equally interconnected and all striving toward the same goals, holding the same values and beliefs, we must critically assess our assumptions, addressing different perspectives, unequal power relations and injustices. This leads on to what Andreotti summarises as the goal of global citizenship: rather than individuals 'becoming active citizens according to what has been defined for them as an ideal world' they should be empowered to 'reflect critically on the legacies and processes of their cultures, to imagine different futures and to take responsibility for decisions and actions'. (Andreotti, 2006, p. 48). However, if teachers have not been exposed to these strategies in their schooling or teacher education, how are they going to develop the skills to be able to practice this in the classroom?

From a critical literacy perspective, *language (and terminology) construct reality* (rather than translate reality) (Andreotti, Barker & Newell-Jones, 2005). Understanding this statement about language is crucial for an awareness of how certain terminology could play a part in the perpetuation of an imperialist mindset and 'dividing the world'. Therefore, replacing language could be a strategy to critically reframe concepts such as race, ethnicity and tolerance, concepts that I explore in this section.

Willinsky (1998, p. 187) suggests that developing an understanding of science's link to race should not 'put an end to anyone's *racial* self-identification'. I would argue, however, that we should be able to say we are Irish, British, African, Black, White, Arabic, Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Chinese, Celtic, and so on without it having to refer to race. The term *racial* self-identification should not be used; self-identification itself can be made however and whenever one chooses, for example in terms of nationality, colour, language, tradition, religion, education, marital status.

It appears that the 'precision to the significance of difference, to the naming of the other' has only grown and multiplied, with governments, media and individuals no longer needing the scientific basis but continuing to 'name the other' for their own interests, either deliberately or otherwise (Willinsky, 1998, p. 247). Whilst it may be natural to make distinctions and be aware of difference, doing so according to race is a process that is false and learnt. 'The specific differences that we learn to attend to with acuity- such as those grouped under the heading 'race' – and the extremely consequential burden of meaning that we learn to assign to those differences are the result of a historical process that each of us is educated within' (Willinsky, 1998, p. 247).

While there are arguments that changing the terminology of racism will not prevent the problems from occurring, there is also no support for holding on to a label that has unhelpful connotations, that has the effect of maintaining ideas of difference, 'race' itself and ultimately superiority. If someone is being 'racist' they by definition believe they are superior to the

'other'. Using the term 'racism/racist' to castigate them, only reinforces that imagined superiority even whilst the act is being condemned. Rattansi (1992) explains that the anti-essentialist approach is to refuse to take 'race' as fact. The term 'racialization' however is used to explain how groups of people are identified by 'racial' categorization without suggesting that 'race' itself is a 'thing or essence' (Rattansi, 1992, p. 71).

Of course it is not intended to infer that discrimination and inequality do not occur on the basis of colour of skin, cultural heritage etc. However, my argument is that using the terms racism and anti-racism at the very least suggests an acceptance of the term 'race', helping to perpetuate belief in this disputed notion.

There is also a tendency to use the term 'ethnicity' instead of 'race' as it does not have the historical darkness attached to it that 'race' does. However it could be argued that this is just replacing one word for the other, and the term ethnicity has exactly the same dividing effect as 'race'. 'The phrase 'ethnic minority' is in widespread official use, referring to all people who are visibly different. Furthermore, there are many differences within the white population, including ethnic differences. The term 'ethnic' is frequently misused in the media and in everyday conversation as a synonym for 'not-white' or 'not-western', as in phrases such as 'ethnic clothes', 'ethnic restaurants', 'ethnic music'. There is often an implication of exotic, primitive, unusual, and non-standard. The adjective 'ethnic' is best avoided, except in its strict academic sense' (British Council website, 2008).

As a term, 'ethnicity' may best be avoided insofar as it implies minority status without recognizing the centrality of power to the social relations implied by such a status. The case for retiring the concept of ethnicity is even stronger when it is simply used as a polite synonym for 'race' (Jackson, 1989, p. 153).

'Tolerance' is a term which in recent times has fallen out of general usage. This is due to it having the connotation of 'putting up with something'. If one was to say that they 'tolerated' their neighbour, it would imply that relations were unsatisfactory, that the neighbour was not particularly liked, that another neighbour would be preferred. Obviously we hope to move much further than tolerance in our knowledge and understanding of other people and places. If we really know, understand and respect our neighbour's differences then we would never even consider just tolerating them. The EU's Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth expressed this as wanting 'to go beyond multi-cultural societies, where cultures and cultural groups simply coexist side by side: mere tolerance is not enough any more' (World Bulletin, 2008).

Using a critical perspective on the use of media and images, Morgan and Lambert (2003) suggest that subjects such as Geography, which may be taught with the intention of being apparently neutral, are in fact saturated with race thinking, as if 'the subject is presented to the imaginary 'white' reader'. After their study of geography textbooks, they say that many of the texts reinforce the idea that 'black' and 'Asian' occupy inner cities and are associated with 'problems', and this makes them then 'appear as a threat to the stability of the nation' (2003, p. 34). They suggest that for students to have a critical understanding of racialisation, the terms 'black, Asian and white' need to be 'unsettled', to show these accounts and terms are solely representations (Morgan & Lambert, 2003).

All textbooks in education and the media use photographs and images, at the very least to make something seem more interesting, or more likely, to portray people or places in a certain way. Willinsky uses the example of the National Geographic which is regularly seen as an educational resource. He states that the photographs used reflect the 'imperial gaze', 'and compress the lives of others for, in this instance, educational needs' (1998, p. 50).

The power of images and the assumptions they can invoke was most apparent in a Citizenship class I taught in 2007 in Northern Ireland to a group of 30 year 9 students (12 year olds). The students had to place different photographs on a continuum of 'Wealthy to Poverty'. The majority of the students placed a group of well dressed middle class American

students very close to the Poverty end of the spectrum. When they were told where the photo was taken they were very surprised. After some exploration, the reason for their positioning of the photograph became clear: the students in the photograph were all black. This made evident not just the power of the photographs but how images can actually be used to unearth their powerful influence, the evocation of the 'imperial gaze' and how this can be utilised to challenge the projected imaginings of the world the images represent.

All subjects in education should explore the influence of images (whether they are in textbooks, news reports, travel brochures, or Aid agency appeals) and the ways in which they can never be neutral but always reflect the intention of those using them. It is important for students to be made aware of the representations of images which are used by educators in all disciplines. Indeed it is an element that is included in many of the recently revised curricula such as 'Media Awareness' in the Northern Ireland Curriculum (PMB, 2007).

Educators can promote the debate with students that any reading or watching of documentaries or news or listening to debates only provides us with images and/or words which are representations of those places, peoples or events, arranged and constructed by the authors, the documentary makers or the TV news channel. As Markus asserts 'those who control media are powerful because they control the construction of what is real' (Markus, 2005, p. 2). Any representation depends on the values, attitudes and models of the world that is built into the person or people creating the representation. Markus (2005) suggests that the world we 'know' is a construction which is based on the 'meaning-making' frameworks and models we have inherited, which function not only after we experience an event but even before it, so our expectations therefore help in creating the perceived reality; in seeing what you believe.

Willinsky (1998) reminds us of the colonial legacy and white superiority that is evident in seemingly innocent popular culture and media, aiding the perpetuation of racialised mindsets. '... the west has also been busy producing a colonial nostalgic that speaks to the lost style and seeming grace of those heady days....Disney's Aladdin perpetuates the charmingly despotic eastern other in a cartoonish Orientalism...' (Willinsky, 1998, p. 12).

Teachers may want to explore these issues by comparing reporting styles in some newspapers. Karpf (2002) compares modern reporting on refugees and asylum seekers to that of reporting in 1930s Britain regarding Jewish refugees (see below and reference for more examples). Teachers could use these examples to act as stimuli in order to 'unpack' the origins and assumptions of the reports, what other perspectives might be and what implications the reports might have.

There landed yesterday at Southampton from the transport Cheshire over 600 so-called refugees, their passages having been paid out of the Lord Mayor's Fund. There was scarce a hundred of them that had, by right, deserved such help, and these were the Englishmen of the party. The rest were Jews [...] They fought and jostled for the foremost places at the gangways [...] When the Relief Committee passed by they hid their gold and fawned and whined, and, in broken English, asked for money for their train fare (Daily Mail, February 3, 1900).

It was 8.10pm on Christmas Day when the first mob struck. There were around 150 of them, howling and yelling as they made their way to the French mouth of the Channel Tunnel (Daily Mail, December 27, 2001). The way stateless Jews from Germany are pouring in from every port of this country is becoming an outrage . . .' In these words, Mr Herbert Metcalfe, the Old Street magistrate, yesterday referred to the number of aliens entering the country through the 'back door' - a problem to which the Daily Mail has repeatedly pointed (Daily Mail, August 20, 1938).

Swamped immigration officials are kicking out just TWELVE new bogus asylum seekers a month out of 3,200 who should be sent packing (The Sun, February 14, 2001).

Said (2003) also warns of the influence of media and political rhetoric on our present 'knowledge and understanding' of others. He urges us to be aware (and teach others to be aware) of the type of knowledge we absorb and the representation of that knowledge. As with the media coverage and unhelpful political rhetoric used in immigration issues, no section of xenophobia is more evident at present and made worse by misrepresentation than that of Islamophobia:

Today, bookstores in the US are filled with shabby screeds bearing screaming headlines about Islam and terror, Islam exposed, the Arab threat and the Muslim menace, all of them written by political polemicists pretending to knowledge imparted to them and others by experts who have supposedly penetrated to the heart of these strange Oriental peoples over there who have been such a terrible thorn in 'our' flesh. Accompanying such warmongering expertise have been the omnipresent CNNs and Foxs of this world, plus myriad numbers of evangelical and right-wing radio hosts, plus innumerable tabloids and even middle-brow journalists, all of them re-cycling the same unverifiable fictions and vast generalizations so as to stir up 'America' against the foreign devil (Said, 2003, p. xvi).

Indeed Massey (1995) suggests that images in education and footage and explanations of places in the world that form 'geographical imagination' are used deliberately to create a certain interpretation that is an important aspect of politics itself. Any news reports, travel writings or brochures or maps are all 'geographical imagination' which will reflect the power and viewpoint of those that made them. Use of media may be an important aspect of how educators from any discipline can promote critical literacy skills among their students. The examples given above provide opportunities for educators to incorporate real life examples of how their subject is portrayed in the media and explore how that may reinforce assumptions or prejudices.

While it is clear that we have learned to divide the world through the colonialist legacy of racialised mindsets, it is important to explore how even the learning itself has been divided. With the many recently revised curricula we are encouraged to de-compartmentalize learning and allow students to see a 'big picture', to identify it for themselves, not from a learned source telling them who they are. The obsession with putting things into boxes', separating subjects, dividing learning, has only helped develop the mentality that 'divides the world'. Therefore, rather than focusing on separate subject disciplines, it has been argued by Willinsky (1998), Gilbert (2005) and others that a Freirean, collaborative or thematic open approach will help to create minds that do not compartmentalize information and knowledge, so also reducing the tendency to do the same with people and places.

[...] we should be presenting knowledge to students not as something monolithic, fixed and finished, but as something organic, something that is always developing and always in process. Instead of viewing it as a set of discrete disciplines, we should be presenting it as a series of systems that have particular ways of doing things (and particular strengths and weaknesses). Reframing our approach to knowledge in this way will allow us to work with students to develop the systems-level understanding, the big picture, connected ways of thinking they will need to function effectively in the knowledge society (Gilbert, 2005, p. 175).

This active learning approach to education takes the emphasis away from academic storing of information and allows students of all abilities to develop their awareness and become informed decision makers (Freire, 1972). Barone (2001, p. 3) argues that projects where different teachers and students collaborate will see 'real learning arising out of one central project'. The themes that Willinsky suggests could be used in an active learning, integrated environment, so the knowledge is internalized, allowing students to relate to it personally and socially, thus transcending 'artificial divisions of knowledge' (ibid).

It could be argued that before knowing and understanding others it is necessary to explore our sense of self: who are we and what is it that defines us? Students could be encouraged to challenge social identities that define them, and then realise that the identity of 'others'

should similarly be critiqued. It is possible to relearn and remould these learned perceptions of difference. In refusing to be pigeon holed, labelled and 'put into boxes' we can learn to refuse to do the same to others (Barone, 2001).

This is the 'social constructionist' position: supposed 'natural' categories such as 'black' and 'white' are not in fact 'natural' but are ideas and places that have been 'invented through interpretations based on racial difference' and can change with time and space (Morgan & Lambert, 2003). However it may be necessary to go beyond a social reconstruction focus and adopt a 'difference focus' where origins and implications of ideas are critically examined (Andreotti & Souza, 2008). Gilbert (2005) contends that the structures and constructs in which those of us who were educated in the 20th Century have been brought up cannot serve as an example for those in the 21st Century if social cohesion, acceptance and understanding of other knowledges are to be promoted. Our structures of separate subjects, pigeonholing, emphasis on academic success and other 'dividing' mechanisms, only reinforces the necessity to think in social divisions. Gilbert states there are two main changes in the thinking of the future of education: one is the change in knowledge's meaning and the other is 'new ways in thinking about individuality, identity and equality' (2005, p. 187).

In post modern thought, a new idea of individuality is emerging... Personhood is seen, not as something involving individuating and separating, but as an ongoing process that takes place in the context of relationships and connections. There is no end point- no stage when on is considered 'finished'. Moreover, because the process involves an infinite number of ways of getting there, it is not one we can standardize. The view of personhood is linked with new ways of thinking about equality and social justice, ways that don't require everyone to be the same but allow different ways of being (Gilbert, 2005, p. 189).

Gilbert makes a number of suggestions to help address these issues in education systems including school activities structured as research groups and schools as knowledge producing rather than knowledge consuming entities; teachers working in teams to plan cross curricular units of work timetabled for the teams to teach together; heightening real world research projects already carried out to become more central to classes; developing databases of community contacts. Gilbert (2005) and Andreotti (2006) champion the use of critical literacy. Using critical literacy enables the unknown problems in the future to be addressed, by promoting an understanding of self, the ability to adapt to work in different contexts with diverse range of people and tools, providing a means to work with different knowledges, and 'different ways of knowing and different ways of being' (Gilbert, 2005, p. 203). That is not to say that knowledge from past forms of traditional education and education currently provided should be dispensed with, but following these suggestions will necessitate an exploration of how the knowledge we have received was procured and the ramifications this has.

We have to work with this knowledge of the world - for this knowledge is all that many of us have of the world - by understanding the cost at which it was achieved and the ends to which it was exhibited ...To catch sight of our education working on us in this way is to begin to change it, disabling some of the read assumptions that form our idea of the world. If we cannot go back, perhaps we can go forward (Willinsky, 1998, p. 87).

Conclusions

It is clear that there are wide ranging implications for education systems if they are to apply these ideas. One obvious implication involves that of teacher training; without ensuring clear training with regard to attitudes, the education system could paradoxically exacerbate the problem that this type of education is trying to address, despite sincere intentions from all involved. Andreotti (2006) argues that in the global perspective, it is desirable for education to address the roots of inequalities in power and wealth otherwise 'we may end up promoting a new 'civilising mission' as the slogan for a generation who take up the 'burden' of saving/educating/civilising the world. This generation, encouraged and motivated to 'make a difference', will then project their beliefs and myths as universal and reproduce power relations and violence similar to those in colonial times' (Andreotti, 2006, p. 41).

What is proposed is a challenge to policy makers and teachers alike. The development of critical literacy skills amongst educators and learners is one approach in which to address those challenges. Critical literacy, it is argued, will equip educators and students to make sense of the world through 'unpacking' language constructs, assumptions and their implications. The critical literacy style questions will allow both educators and their students to explore where ideas and perspectives 'come from', what the assumptions are behind them and how they were constructed, identifying both external and internal influences that have contributed towards their construction. Learners are encouraged to explore the implications of those perspectives, their limitations, who benefits from them and who loses. Following this, learners are encouraged to 'think otherwise'; how is this knowledge or perspective interpreted or seen through other 'lenses'? (Andreotti, Barker & Newell-Jones, 2005). Educators must be 'critically literate' if they are to engage with assumptions and implications/limitations of their approaches; without this 'they run the risk of (indirectly and unintentionally) reproducing the systems of belief and practices that harm those they want to support' (Andreotti, 2006, p. 49).

Critical literacy may help educators deconstruct what Willinsky claims are the 'consequences of imperialism's will to knowledge'.

We need to learn to read again the exhibition of the world, to see the display of the civilized and the primitive as the history of an idea attuned to the benefit of a few. We need to think about how people have been trained to view the gulf between West and East. How has a public been educated in the value of Western hegemony as an expression of civilization? (Willinsky, 1998, p. 86).

What we are is only what we have 'learned to call ourselves'. Kristeva (cited in Willinsky, 1998, p. 76) asks 'how are we to overcome the foreignness that we have so often made of the other, if not by first finding it in ourselves.' The challenge for us as educators is to facilitate our students' learning to deal effectively and ethically with life in the rapidly changing, globalised, unequally interdependent, post industrialised world. A world where the dividing of people, knowledge, education and thinking can no longer be effectively applied, requiring a new pedagogy in order to assist us to 'undivide, 'unseparate', 'unsuperiorise' 'uninferiorize' 'unlabel' and make connections between power, knowledge and language. That pedagogy must include a refreshed understanding and deconstruction of the colonialist legacy and its effect on education and society. It must address the tendency to divide knowledges and value some knowledges more than others; and the corresponding tendency to divide and separate people.

Perhaps most significantly, the possible result of this shift in how knowledge is conceived within education is the effect on the personal identity of educator and learner alike, a 'new way of thinking of individuality, identity and equality' as proposed by Gilbert (2005). Perhaps the suggestions in this paper will enable learners to know other cultures and places by understanding why they appear 'foreign' in the first place; to acknowledge the named identity that we ourselves and others have been labelled with and the reasons for those labels. If we understand that those labels and categories are not natural but deliberately and forcibly produced in order to create difference rather than engage with complexity, we may also be able to understand and recognise the 'foreign' within ourselves.

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Vol 3, No 1 (2009) > McQuaid

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