

Call for Papers: Special Issue of *Management Learning*

One hundred years of Paulo Freire: Rethinking critical pedagogy, management learning and education

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Guest Editors:

Amon Barros, FGV Sao Paulo School of Business administration (FGV EAESP), Brazil

Alexandra Bristow, The Open University, UK

Alessia Contu, University of Massachusetts Boston, US

Ajnesh Prasad, Tecnologico de Monterrey, Mexico, and Royal Roads University, Canada

Sergio Wanderley, Unigranrio, Brazil

September 19, 2021 marks the 100th anniversary of the birth of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire. Two years ago, the golden jubilee of his masterpiece, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (*PO*; Freire, 1968), was commemorated in Brazil and elsewhere (e.g., Abott & Badley, 2020; Celebi, 2018; Souza e Mendonça, 2018). This special issue revisits Freire’s legacy in the context of contemporary management learning and education. Freire figures prominently among the most important critical thinkers for the Global South and is acknowledged worldwide and across disciplines, sometimes at the same level as “John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, Jean Piaget, William James, Carl Jung, Carl Rogers” (Kolb & Kolb 2005: 194). Notwithstanding the significance of his writing, Freire’s radical pedagogy has yet to be explored fully in management learning and education.

Whilst Freire has been generally referenced in management and organization studies broadly, and in management education journals specifically, with this special issue we aim to move from cursory attributions to sustained engagements with Freire’s thinking. In doing so, we hope to unearth the opportunities the corpus of his writings offers to contemporary management education (Dal Magro, et al. 2020; Dehler, 2009; Grey and Mitev, 1995; Perriton and Reynolds, 2018; Trott, 2012). Our aim is not the production of eulogistic readings of Freire’s work, but its problematization vis a vis the grand challenges humanity is currently facing—e.g., the multiple impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, climate emergency, widening socio-economic inequalities, polarization, systemic racism, misogyny, gender inequality and violence, erosion of democratic values and institutions, commodification and marketization of education and social life – and its investigation through the concerns and practices of management education and learning.

Freire’s life and work were rife with political crises and upheaval, infusing his educational thinking with political and ethical awareness. After he was sent into exile, Freire analyzed the ousting of Brazilian president Joao Goulart by a military coup (Freire, [1967]1973), writing *PO* (Brazil’s “unintended gift to the world” [Shor, 2018]) in Chile. Freire’s development of anti-oppressive and liberating practices through education was antithetical to Brazilian dictators’ technocratic view of education of the period (1964-1985). Freire’s educational method is “eminently political, ethical, humanistic and democratic” (Freire, 2017: 282), rooted in the “everydayness” (“*cotidianeidade*”; Freire, 2017: 285). It considers the material conditions of those who engage in the learning process as well as accounts for the historical processes that shape the present (Freire, 1973). Freire’s view of learning as a dialogical process (Freire, 2017)—the inseparable binomial of teaching-learning—is

based on the development of “generative themes”. A generative theme is a problem faced by a group that can prompt reflection and action. Freire saw education as a political act aimed at the emancipation of the individual (Shor & Freire, 1987).

Based on Paulo Freire, hooks (2010: 187) claims that learning requires openness and willingness to engage with new possibilities, “so that we might discover those places of radical transparency where knowledge can empower.” The emphasis on politics, ethics and public responsibility of education and educators makes Freire’s work particularly relevant in today’s context of global crises. This is particularly pertinent given the recent Black Lives Matter movement and the (re)surfacing of hatred, violence, racism, misogyny and xenophobia in the context of far-right populism in many parts of the world (Barros and Wanderley, 2020; Prasad, 2020; Robinson and Bristow, 2020).

We invite authors to rethink management learning and education through critical pedagogic lenses by engaging with Freire’s work, or addressing its implications. For example, how can Freirean student centrality influence postcolonial and decolonial approaches in management? How do Freire’s contributions dialogue with participatory action research, participatory communication, and decolonial pedagogy (Lomeli & Rappaport, 2018; Suzina, Tufte, and Jiménez-Martinez, 2020)? Amidst calls for decolonizing management knowledge, reflexivity becomes even more important for academics, and business schools are invited to revisit their social purpose towards the broader communities in which they operate (Zulfiqar & Prasad, in press).

Alternatively, Freirean thinking can fruitfully combine with other approaches, or even reimagine critical management learning and education through the lenses of other critical theories and thinkers. It would be pertinent to explore organizational learning and pedagogical processes at the heart of social and communal enterprises; or how education as political engagement and emancipation serve as a basis for academic and intellectual activism (Contu, 2018). Manuscripts can also re-examine, as well as re-imagine, the public value of management learning and education in neoliberal business schools (Giroux, 2010), and continue the discussion about the “Performative University”, where universities that were once a public good are managed as if they were market-driven corporations with increasingly commercialized and commoditized higher education (Jones et al., 2020).

The COVID-19 crisis has made the crucial role of educators in society more explicit—not only in their impact on the present challenges but also in terms of their capacity to shape different futures. We believe it is now more imperative than ever to pose questions inspired by Freire “on power-benefit beyond...cost-benefit, of social justice beyond efficiency” (Kinsey, 1997: 470). It is equally important to interrogate Freire’s legacy from various related, conceptual and pedagogical paradigms, such as liberal feminism, black feminism, and personal praxis (hooks, 1994: 7) to enhance reflexivity and combat oppression in its intersecting discursive and material manifestations as well as deliver justice-oriented educational practices, including in business schools. Freire’s work and the productive potentials it offers may give rise to tensions, limitations and utopias. But, it is up to every educator to ask, as Meek (1987:vi) did, in her foreword to Freire and Donaldo (1987): “What are we helping students to learn?”

Bringing these ideas together, we welcome a broad range of perspectives and submissions, which can be conceptual, empirical or methodological in scope, and address a wide range of relevant questions, including but by no means limited to the following:

- How can we reimagine our role as academics in light of Freire’s legacy? How can we rethink and further develop the public and activist role of management educators in our changing societies?
- How can Freire’s work and concepts help (re-)interpret present-day management learning and education? For example, how can *banking education* contribute to understandings of the move to distance learning accelerated in the context of COVID-19 pandemic and its implications for developing countries and elsewhere?
- How can we bring together dialogical education, “conscientization” (Freire, 1970) and reflexivity central to critical management education? How might “generative themes” be used in student-based learning and in problematizing problem-solving in business schools?
- How might “everydayness” illuminate the need for rigor and relevance in teaching practices?
- How might Freire’s emancipation relate to the concept of performativity in critical management studies?
- What are the implications of Freirian thinking for postcolonial and decolonial approaches in management, especially in the contexts of increasingly commercialized higher education and far-right populism?
- What can we learn from operationalizing Freirian ideas in educational settings and other organizations, and from analyses of how Freirean perspectives have changed organizations?
- How can Freire’s work be read in a productive conflict with that of, for example, bell hooks, Donaldo Macedo, Jacques Rancière, Patricia Collins, George Sefa Dei?
- How can we reimagine critical management learning and education through other theories and thinkers who speak to the issues substantively engaged with by Freire?
- What are the implications of Freire’s legacy for rethinking (critical) management learning and education in today’s social, political and economic context?

Submission guidelines

To discuss your article prior to submission, please contact the special issue editors: Amon Barros (amon.barros@fgv.br); Alexandra Bristow (alexandra.bristow@open.ac.uk); Alessia Contu (alessia.contu@umb.edu); Ajnesh Prasad (ajnesh_prasad@yahoo.ca); Sergio Wanderley (sergiow.gaz@terra.com.br).

This call is open and competitive; manuscripts will be double-blind reviewed and a limited number of papers will be selected by the guest editors for publication in the special issue. Submissions must fit with the aims and scope of Management Learning: <https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/journal/management-learning#description> as well as with this special issue call. All submissions should be made online: http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/management_learning. Submissions should be accordance with the journal submission guidelines.

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