

## Editor's preface 'HEADS UP'

Given the discussions prompted in education by the Kony 2012, as a critical literacy exercise, I started to make a list of common problems with campaigns and educational initiatives that gloss over the complexities of global issues. The first letter of the seven common problems in my checklist combined in an interesting acronym: 'HEADS UP' (i.e. hegemony, ethnocentrism, ahistoricism, depoliticisation, uncomplicated solutions, and paternalism). HEADS UP since then has become an educational tool (which is still work in progress) to support engagements with local and global initiatives to address social justice. In line with critical literacy approaches, it is based on the principles that, if we want to work towards ideals of justice, we need to understand better the social and historical forces that connect us to each other.

For example, if a group of people saw many young children drowning in a river, their first impulse would probably be to try to save them or to search for help. But what if they looked up the river and saw many boats throwing the children in the water and these boats were multiplying by the minute? How many different tasks would be necessary to stop the boats and prevent this from happening again? I suggest there are at least four tasks: rescuing the children in the water, stopping the boats from throwing the children in the water, going to the villages of the boat crew to understand why this is happening in the first place, and collecting the bodies of those who have died - honoring the dead by remembering them and raising awareness of what happened. In deciding what to do, people would need to remember that some rescuing techniques may not work in the conditions of the river, and that some strategies to stop the boats may invite or fuel even more boats to join the fleet - they may even realize that they are actually in one of the boats, throwing children with one hand and trying to rescue them with the other hand. Therefore, I suggest that education, more than the media, should help people in the task of learning to 'go up the river' to the roots of the problem so that the emergency strategies down the river can be better informed in the hope that one day no more boats will throw children in the water. Going up the river means asking questions such as: *What creates poverty? How come different lives have different value? How are these two things connected? What are the relationships between social groups that are over-exploited and social groups that are over-exploiting? How are these relationships maintained? How do people come to think and relate like this? What are the roles of schooling in the reproduction and contestation of inequalities in society? What possibilities and problems are created by different stories about what is real and ideal in society? When do institutionalized initiatives, such as the human rights declaration or military interventions, become helpful in promoting justice and when do they help reproduce the problems they are trying to address? If people believe in the human rights declaration, does it mean they are good people and not part of the problem? How would people respond if they realized that bringing justice to others meant going against national/local interests? Why and for whose benefit are relationships among people framed through and mediated by the Nation States identified in their passports?*

HEADS UP can work as a possible entry point to these types of questions. It proposes that if education is to prepare people to engage with the complexity, plurality, inequality and uncertainty of our inter-dependent lives in a finite planet, we need to 'raise our game' and expand the legacy of possibilities that we have inherited:

- we need to understand and learn from repeated historical patterns of mistakes, in order to open the possibilities for new mistakes to be made

- we need more complex social analyses acknowledging that if we understand the problems and the reasons behind them in simplistic ways, we may do more harm than good
- we need to recognize how we are implicated or complicit in the problems we are trying to address: how we are all both part of the problem and the solution (in different ways)
- we need to learn to enlarge our referents for reality and knowledge, acknowledging the gifts and limitations of every knowledge system and moving beyond 'either ors' towards 'both and mores'
- we need to remember that the paralysis and guilt we may feel when we start to engage with the complexity of issues of inequality are just temporary as they may come from our own education/socialization in protected/sheltered environments, which create the desire for things to be simple, easy, happy, ordered and under control.

Perhaps HEADS UP can support people in moving from *naive hope* towards *skeptical optimism* and *ethical solidarities* where we learn to face humanity, the world and our place in it without fear and with courage and strength to go through the difficulties and discomforts of confronting our past legacies and current inequalities in order to pluralize the possibilities for living together in the present and the future. Ultimately, this about remembering how to be open, to relate beyond the need for common causes or identities, and to be taught in a plural world where justice starts with the forms of relationships we are able to create. HEADS UP can be used to start conversations about local/global initiatives (documentaries, campaigns, teaching resources, etc) that may inadvertently reproduce seven problematic historical patterns of thinking and relationships:

<b>Hegemony</b> (justifying superiority and supporting domination)	a) does this initiative promote the idea that one group of people could design and implement the ultimate solution that will solve all problems?	b) does this initiative invite people to analyze things from different perspectives, including complicities in the making of the problems being addressed?
<b>Ethnocentrism</b> (projecting one view as universal)	a) does this initiative imply that anyone who disagrees with what is proposed is completely wrong or immoral?	b) does this initiative acknowledge that there are other logical ways of looking at the same issue framed by different understandings of reality?
<b>Ahistoricism</b> (forgetting historical legacies and complicities)	a) does this initiative introduce a problem in the present without reference to why this problem exists and how 'we' are connected to the making of that?	b) does this initiative offer a complex historical analysis of the issue?
<b>Depoliticization</b> (disregarding power inequalities and ideological roots of analyses and proposals)	a) does this initiative present the problem/solution as disconnected from power and ideology?	b) does this initiative acknowledge its own ideological location and offer an analysis of power relations?
<b>Salvationism</b> (framing help as the burden of the fittest)	a) does this initiative present helpers or adopters as the chosen 'global' people on a mission to save the world and lead humanity towards its destiny of order, progress and harmony?	b) does this initiative acknowledge that the self-centered desire to be better than/superior to others and the imposition of aspirations for singular ideas of progress and development have historically been part of what creates injustice?
<b>Un- complicated solutions</b> (offering easy and simple solutions that do not require systemic change)	a) does this initiative offer simplistic analyses and answers that do not invite people to engage with complexity or think more deeply?	b) does this initiative offer a complex analysis of the problem acknowledging the possible adverse effects of proposed solutions?
<b>Paternalism</b> (seeking affirmation of authority/ superiority through the provision of help and the infantilization of recipients)	a) does this initiative portray people in need as people who lack education, resources, maturity or civilization and who would and should be very grateful for your help?	b) does this initiative portray people in need as people who are entitled to disagree with their saviors and to legitimately want to implement different solutions to what their helpers have in mind?

The questions in the second column aim to identify the reproduction of the patterns in the checklist, the questions in the third column aim to identify awareness of and challenges to those patterns. It is important to acknowledge that some initiatives may do both at the same time (in different ways) and that in any initiative it will be very difficult to move completely beyond those patterns due to our historical conditioning, especially when it comes to mass or institutional forms of communication. For example, if a media campaign was to break with these patterns all at once, it will probably become un-intelligible for most people, and therefore it would be an ineffective campaign. This is consistent with an important aim of critical literacy which is not to find a perfect ultimate methodology for engagements with global issues, but to support people with the on-going wrestling with concepts and contexts, choices and implications, that we face every day as teachers and learners working towards deeper and more ethical ways of relating to others and to the world.

Like HEADS UP, many articles in this issue offer analyses and strategies for wrestling with meaning in ways that move debates and practices beyond the usual dichotomies of action/inaction, theory/practice, action/reflection, us/them, guilt/innocence, humanity/inhumanity, damnation/salvation, etc. Drawing on research with a first year teacher, Damico (USA) offers several critical literacy strategies of working with texts that deal with traumatic histories. He presents several classroom examples and reflections extend possibilities for reflexivity and textual critique in reading with and/or against texts. Jefferess (Canada) critically analyses the charity campaign 'Me to We' as a brand of a specific lifestyle that turns identification with distant others in need into a self-serving exercise of consumerism performed through celebrity and market associations. Mikander (Finland) examines representations in history textbooks used in Finnish schools looking into constructions of the 'West' as a non-violent benevolent force of world progress and of Muslims and Arabs as 'enemies of the West'. Bundsgaard, Lindø and Bang (Denmark) propose an ecological perspective on language education that highlights the need for sense and sensitivity in trans-personal dialogue and democracy. In her position paper, Vodopivec (Slovenia) challenges unexamined assumptions often associated with global citizenship to show how these can prevent solidarity across borders. The Practitioners' Insights section presents two articles that offer different perspectives on the ideas of deconstruction and reconstruction. Reid (UK) argues that reconstruction is an essential feature of critical literacy approaches, while Nicolson, Last and Widell (Finland) see reconstruction as potentially leading to indoctrination.

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