



Book Review: Critical Digital Pedagogy in Higher Education

BOOK REVIEW

CARLOS EDUARDO FLORES MORENO 



ABSTRACT

This review of *Critical Digital Pedagogy in Higher Education* by Carlos Eduardo Flores Moreno explores the different sections and chapters presented in the book: “Shared Learning and Trust”, that focuses on alternative teaching methods; “Critical consciousness”, that focuses on the use of digital tools for critical thinking; “Change”, focusing on the potential of technology in education; “Hope”, focusing on how technologies can be used to improve society as a whole. The authors focused on different perspectives, mainly founded on Critical Thought and Social Justice, to bring new methodologies and interpretations on how to use technology in education, moving away from hegemonic populations and traditional methods, while considering the social issues that many minoritized groups suffered, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Critical Digital Pedagogy in Higher Education, a book edited by [Suzan Köseoglu](#), [George Veletsianos](#), and [Chris Rowell](#), compiles a series of texts focusing on how digital tools, methods, and theories can be reinterpreted through a social justice lens, critical theories, and inclusive pedagogies (the most prominent is Critical Pedagogy), as a way to tackle the issues of inequality presented in the use of different technologies as tools for education in different levels, in diverse geographic locations, and with different cultures, groups of people, and societies. A salient characteristic of this book is that all of the chapters were written between the years of 2019 and 2020, at the start and the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, thus they were affected and shaped by the political and pedagogical changes that accelerated the obligatory use of digital teachings. The objective of the book is to explore how online pedagogies can also be used as places for democratizing knowledge inside digital classrooms, while opening spaces for more humane interactions between educators and their students. It also considers all their individual, social, and cultural particularities, to break away from the white hegemonic perspectives of the Global North and develop methodologies in critical pedagogies using digital tools.

STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

The book is organized with an introduction, four different sections, and its conclusion. The introduction to the book defines the main themes and concepts of the different texts and the social context in which they were written. “Rather, our position is that humanization is a starting point for the nurturing of students as critical and compassionate human beings able and willing to imagine different and better possibilities for themselves and others, including the material world” (p. 7). This is the central thesis of the book and its different chapters.

The first section, which is titled “Shared Learning and Trust”, is divided into four chapters and dwells on different methods of breaking away from traditional teaching, “[...]to challenge the hegemonic teacher-student relationships and practices in higher education” (p. 8). For example, the first chapter titled “Talking about Nothing to Talk about Something” is a study that proposes diverse forms of relationship between students based on the Pacific “Talanoa” concept, which offers cultural values that could improve the online learning experience by creating strong relationships among the students. The chapter “Critical Pedagogy and Care Ethics”, by using a Critical Pedagogy perspective, proposes a reconfiguration of how feedback is given to the students, arguing that in a digital space, it is more effective to provide feedback based on a dialogue between the student and the teacher, instead of just a grade and written comment.

The second section, “Critical consciousness”, is divided into three chapters. The theme of the chapters in the section is the critical awareness of different subjects regarding technology in education. Chapter 5, “Hacking the Law: Social Justice Education through Lawtech”, discusses the use of digital technologies to undertake different aspects of legal work, and how in a higher education module, law, and computer science students, through interdisciplinary collaborations with a focus on social justice, develop tools that can help disenfranchised communities and individuals, such as creating applications that could transform information and advice available to users of different legal organizations. Furthermore, the chapter “Digital Redlining, Minimal Computing, and Equity”, discusses the significant class and racial differences between neighborhoods and the difficulties created by the lack of access to technology and resources some students have. The chapter focuses on the inequalities reproduced by the acritical use of these technologies and the lack of consideration of learners from lower-income communities and households.

The third section, “Change”, is divided into three chapters. It focuses on the liberating potential of technologies in education. Chapter 8, “Critical Digital Pedagogy and Indigenous Knowledges: Harnessing Technologies for Decoloniality in Higher Education Institutions of the Global South” is a study that asks the question “[...] how are African (Zimbabwean) Indigenous knowledge systems marginalized, trivialized, and commercialized through digitization and thus deprived of their cultural and liberatory potential?” (p.135) This issue is worsened by neoliberal politics that view culture as merchandise and strip all of its meaning. However, the authors propose that Decolonial Pedagogy can be used to encourage African learners to trust their Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) instead of consuming their culture through a commercialized and colonized filter. Moreover, the chapter “Not Just a Hashtag: Using Black Twitter to Engage in

Critical Visual Pedagogy” proposes the use of Critical Visual Pedagogy to analyze digital spaces created and managed by disenfranchised communities, such as black Twitter (now known as X) and give a voice to these communities.

The fourth section, “Hope”, is divided into four chapters and the main theme of the chapters of the section is described as “[...]a desire for things to be different and better, a desire that becomes a possibility, an optimistic endeavour” (p. 9–10). For example, chapter 11, “To Exist Is to Resist: A Reflective Account of Developing a Paradigm Shift in Palestinian Teaching and Learning Practice”, discusses the aim to innovate local teaching in Palestine through technologies, to develop curricula that is accessible to all learners without restriction. Moreover, chapter 12, “Critical Digital Pedagogy for the Anthropocene” proposes the use of Critical Digital Pedagogy as a tool to teach and inform students about the Climate Change in outdoor environments. By using their smartphones with a pedagogical perspective, the students could participate in the critique of local practices of sustainability and the creation of sustainability solutions by using the video making tools presented in their phones.

OVERALL IMPRESSION AND RELEVANCE TO THE FIELD

In a post-COVID-19 world, digital education has become a reality. Beforehand, it was considered an option, a method of teaching to complement traditional in-person schooling. However, now it has become an essential part of many educational spaces. Many graduate and post-graduate courses across the world are now given as hybrid or asynchronous courses, in comparison to the pre-pandemic days, where many of those same courses were solely in person. As such, the development of methodologies and tools that allow digital pedagogical spaces to become critical of the hegemonic ideologies is fundamental for a more democratic and liberating pedagogy.

DATA ACCESSIBILITY STATEMENT

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no datasets were generated or analysed during the current study.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The author has no competing interests to declare.

AUTHOR NOTES

The author didn't use generative AI in this book review.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS (CRediT)

Carlos Eduardo Flores Moreno: formal analysis, original draft preparation, writing-review, and editing.

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