



NORRAG

TEACHERS COLLEGE  
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

## **The Geneva Paulo Freire Centenary: Speakers' Biographies**

**Co-organised by NORRAG, Graduate Institute and Teachers College, Columbia University**

**Thursday 18 November 2021, 15:00-17:00 CET/Geneva,  
ZOOM**

*The event will be available with simultaneous translation in English, French and Portuguese*



## **Paulo Blikstein, Associate Professor of Communications, Media and Learning Technologies Design at Columbia**

**Biography:** Paulo Blikstein is an associate professor at Teachers College, Columbia University, where he directs the Transformative Learning Technologies Lab. Blikstein's research focuses on how new technologies can deeply transform the learning of science, engineering, and mathematics. He creates and researches cutting-edge educational technologies, such as computer modeling, robotics, digital fabrication, and rapid prototyping, creating hands-on learning environments in which children learn science and mathematics by building sophisticated projects and devices. He also focuses on the application of data mining and machine learning for the assessment of hands-on, project-based learning. Blikstein has spearheaded the FabLearn project, building advanced digital fabrication labs in middle and high schools in four continents. Paulo was also the Founder and Principal Investigator of the Lemann Center for Brazilian Education at Stanford, a 10-year initiative to transform public education in Brazil.

**Title: Can technology be an agent for Freirean emancipation? Case studies from Brazil and Thailand**

**Abstract:** Digital technologies are often (and rightfully so) associated with surveillance, exploitation, compliance, and control, used in education to strengthen oppressive approaches to schooling. Such uses are even more present now with artificial intelligence, the ubiquity of smartphones and social media, and the partnerships being established between large technology companies and public-school systems. In this talk, I will present experiences that tell a different story: how technologies can be used in subversive ways to challenge current classroom practices and public policy, à la Paulo Freire. Instead of being controlled by technology, children are given the control; instead of using technologies for curriculum compliance, they use it to create projects connected to their lives and communities. I will draw from data from different communities in Brazil and Thailand, both in public schools and in informal education.



## Joao Abilio Lazaro, Lecturer, Researcher, ISCED Open University

**Biography:** Joao Abilio Lazaro ([lavumoabilio@gmail.com](mailto:lavumoabilio@gmail.com)) is an official translator (PT, EN and FR), Proof-reader, Lecturer and Researcher, currently working for ISCED Open University (UnISCED) in Mozambique. His areas of interest range from Political Science, Education, Political Theory, Philosophy and Humanities, among others.

**Title:** *Repositioning Freire in a society that rejects critical rationality in Mozambique*, **Keywords:** *critical consciousness, rationality, education, society*

**Abstract:** As a politically and economically dependent element of our human existence, education, particularly in the Mozambican context, has mainly been confined to a utilitarian perspective for people to be trained in view of meeting the demands of the labour market to promote economic productivity within society. This type of education, however, ignores the need for people to develop the Freirean understanding of critical rationality, which is supposed to promote a democratic consciousness, the values of human dignity and the moral and intellectual advancement of the human person. In fact, it is not through resorting to a utilitarian education approach that, for instance, social conflicts, social injustices and social inequalities can be resolved. As a matter of fact, those who benefit from such social structures will never want to witness the improvement of the living conditions for the oppressed. Therefore, this kind of education may help to explain the attitude of most African political leaders' greed for power in getting richer and richer while their citizens get poorer and poorer. Based on the problems stated above, this paper firstly presents the Mozambican education scenario in order to reposition Paulo Freire's conception of education to the situation of African education systems, particularly in Mozambique. Having argued for Freire's approach of education that empowers the human person, the paper challenges African political leaderships to embrace a critical consciousness-based education for the growth of their countries and citizens, as Freire would have defended it, particularly for the growth of the Mozambican people.



## **Leon P. Tikly , UNESCO Chair in Inclusive, Good Quality Education and Global Chair in Education at the University of Bristol**

**Biography:** I am UNESCO Chair in Inclusive, Good Quality Education and Global Chair in Education at the University of Bristol. I also co-direct the Centre for International and Comparative Education (CIRE) in the School of Education. A key focus of my work is education in low-income countries and in particular countries of sub-Saharan Africa. I am currently PI on a Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) Network Plus entitled Transforming Education for Sustainable Futures (TESF) (ESRC £4.75 million; 2019-22). This includes partners in Rwanda, South Africa, India and Somalia/Somaliland as well as in the UK and the Netherlands. The purpose of the Network Plus is to mobilise capacity to undertake Southern-led research into the role of education systems in supporting sustainable livelihoods, sustainable cities and communities and climate action. I am pleased to be collaborating on these inter-disciplinary projects with colleagues from the School of Sociology, Politics and International Studies (SPAIS) and Geography. I have also recently directed projects on language supportive textbooks and pedagogy in Rwanda and I have previously led a DfID funded Research Programme Consortium (RPC) on Implementing Education Quality in Low Income Countries (EdQual) (DfID, £2.5 million; 2005-11).

### **Title: Freire in Africa**

**Abstract:** Freire had an intimate connection with liberation struggles in Africa. In this presentation, discussion will focus on how Freire's work including Pedagogy of the Oppressed was profoundly influenced by African intellectuals including Franz Fanon and Amilcar Cabral. The talk will critically consider the contribution that Freire's work made to national liberation struggles in South Africa and elsewhere on the continent as well as to the development of mass literacy programmes. The presentation will conclude with a consideration of the relevance of Freire's ideas today and in the context of regional agendas such as Agenda 2063.