Along with post-structuralism, which was detailed in Chapter 5, post-colonialism has emerged as yet another hermeneutical lens with which to understand our practice and context. Helpfully, there is a burgeoning literature focusing on post-colonialism, much of it in its first years deriving from the study of literary texts. Other areas of enquiry embraced a post-colonial approach and these include education. Book series and journals are now emerging in the area. Others prefer the term “anti-colonialism” (Dei & Kempf, 2006) instead while there are authors who would prefer to stick to the term “neocolonialism.” What compounds the issue is the existence of countries and peoples that are perceived to be still in a situation of direct colonialism. Cases in point would be Palestine, Puerto Rico and Northern Ireland and a variety of ethnic groups, including a range of dispossessed people in various corners of the world. There is also internal colonialism based in the historical colonisation, and subsequent stagnation, of certain regions in the process of a country’s so-called “unification.” Gramsci and others have written about the colonisation of the Southern Italian regions and islands by the Italian North, especially the Piedmontese. As Pino Aprile (2010) demonstrates, in a book published at a time when Italy celebrated the 150 anniversary of its “unification,” this colonisation involved a brutal process of suppression and extermination comparable, in his view, to that meted out to the Cheyenne.

We therefore use the term “post-colonial” in the broadest sense possible following Ascroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (1995) who use it to “represent the continuing process of imperial suppressions and exchanges throughout . . . [a] diverse range of societies, in their institutions and their discursive practices” (p. 3). Studies of this phenomenon are “based in the ‘historical fact’ of European colonialism, and the diverse effects to which this phenomenon gave rise” (p. 2). The authors stress this point to counter the rather loose use of the term, especially the tendency to use it to refer to “any kind of marginality” (p. 2). Post-colonialism is therefore conceived of as an all-embracing concept accounting for the process of domination that has its
basis in European colonisation and which incorporates all the different forms taken
by colonialism up to the present day (Mayo et al., 2002, p. 4).

Ngugi Wa Thiong’o (1981) argues that

Colonialism imposed its control of the social production of wealth through mil-
itary conquest and subsequent political dictatorship. But its most important area
of domination was the mental universe of the colonised, the control through
culture, of how people perceived themselves and their relationship to the world.
Economic and political control can never be complete or effective without mental
control. To control a people’s culture is to control their tools of self-definition in
relationship to others. (p. 16)

Colonial adult education often served this interest. In Malta, to give one exam-
ple, state-sponsored adult education, which preceded mass public schooling, was
encouraged, during the British colonial period, for the purpose of migration. It in-
cluded a literacy program that helped the spread of English throughout the country,
an important feature of “anglicisation.” A smattering of English was provided for
those who elected to remain in Malta and those aspiring to emigrate to English-
speaking countries. Adult basic education, here, contributed to anglicisation on two
fronts. Deference was fostered to the English language both at home and abroad,
in the latter case contributing to the consolidation of the dominant White-Anglo
culture.

Colonial relations between countries are transposed to the country of settlement,
with certain cultures being regarded as the norm, because of their relationship
to the dominant group, and others being regarded as subaltern. Adult education,
especially in the form of ESL classes for immigrants, is often examined for its role
within this process of colonial transposition.

Counter-hegemonic approaches to adult education, advocated in the writings
of such people as Julius Nyerere (see Mayo, 2001; Mhina & Abdi, 2009), Tanza-
nia’s first president, emphasised the validity of subaltern knowledge that had been
devauled by colonialists.

Colonial education in this country was therefore not transmitting the values and
knowledge of Tanzanian society from one generation to the next: it was a delib-
erate attempt to change those values and to replace traditional knowledge from a
different society. It was thus part of a deliberate attempt to effect a revolution in
the society; to make it into a colonial society which accepted its status and which
was an efficient adjunct to the governing power. (Nyerere, 1968, pp. 269–270)

Others affirm the importance of indigenous forms of knowledge and technologies
to rupture the hegemonic presence of Eurocentric thought and values (Dei, Hall, &
Rosenberg, 2000; Semali, 2009).

Emphasising that which is indigenous and popular has been a key feature of
the mass adult education programs carried out in post-revolutionary and post-
independence contexts. It emerges quite clearly in the work of Gandhi, Tagore, and
Freire (Bhattacharya, 2010). Rabindranath Tagore came from a distinguished back-
ground, a joint landlord’s family. He exerted much energy into providing space for