

Towards a Critical Multiculturalism: A Practical Implementation Guide for Social Justice Educators

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A Note on Criticality

Critical Studies in Education: an examination of how oppressive structures in education can be produced, reproduced and justified by local, state and national entities.

The most important commitment in critical studies in education is the active, persistent work to change the existing condition.

Talk is Cheap.....PERIOD

Too Damn “Nice”

- Teaching and teacher education is framed as a “nice” and “safe” field
- Subscription to this idea justifies disinvestment, dehumanization, and a declaration of disposability
- Teaching is one of the most politically charged fields one can enter
- It is imbued in power relationships and processes that can longitudinally impact the life or death of a student

From Christine Sleeter

The widely used lens of individualism obscures shared cultural patterns to collectivize power and privilege. The general lack of historical consciousness...not only obscures how social relationships were constructed, but also what those constructions cost, including what they cost those of us who are White and relatively well-off (2006).

Patrick Camangian's True Education

Harsh realities of the classroom:
dispossessed youth of color commonly
experience irrelevant, racially hostile
classroom curricula and impersonal,
culturally biased teachers (2011,
p.129)

Cam (cont'd)

- Goal of critical education is to humanize
- To design curriculum where students draw from experiences in order to study the conditions that shape their lives
- To analyze issues in the interest of the oppressed
- Students as experts of their own knowledge
- Self-hate to knowledge of self
- Divide and conquer to solidarity
- False consciousness to self-determination

False Narrative on Teaching

- Current state of teacher bashing
- Teachers as complaining too much
- Current attack on teacher unions as too demanding
- Testing as sole indicator of achievement
- 24 hour media cycle manufactured soft target

The New Bag Folks

- Arne Duncan
- Koch Brothers
- Teach for America
- Michelle Rhee
- Joel Klein
- Paul Vallas
- KIPP
- Educational Management Organizations

A Sharecroppers Education

The new “proponents” of education reform would NEVER think of educating their sons or daughters in the systems they are proposing.

Bold play on the desperation of families that have been historically underserved and under-resourced by large urban school districts.

WHAT ARE WE DOING?

- Teaching as interrupting the commonly shared narrative on young people of color in schools (critical race theory)
- Teaching as justice work
- Teaching as self-development (we are not here to “help”--young people do not need our pity in trying times)
- Teaching as praxis

3 C's Curricular Framework

- Gutstein from Moll and Gonzalez (1996)
- Funds of knowledge to community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005)
- 3 Knowledges
 - Classical
 - Community
 - Critical

Bucking “Standards”

- First mistake: letting the benign state standard guide the unit plan
- Second mistake: feeling as if you can't make adjustments to whatever the state puts forward
- Connect the goals, skills, enduring understandings, to the lives of your students
- Remember Cam's point: the skill allows students to analyze issues in their own interest

Examples

- Social Justice HS (Chicago, IL)
- Science of Bling/Pharmaceuticals/Climate Change (chemistry, env science, bio)
- Hunger Games/Fire Project (English)
- Cocaine and Colonialism (Social Studies)
- Theft of 2004 Presidential Election/Mortgage Foreclosure Crisis (Math)
- Unnatural Causes (Physical Education)

Remember...

- WE ARE NOT POST-RACIAL!!!
- We are in a moment to strategize, organize in solidarity with others while improving our practice
- This requires an explicit investigation of the issues and concerns that directly affect our ability to carry out the larger justice project in education

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