World Voices Nexus
The WCCES Chronicle
ISSN: 2522-7483
Vol. 3 No. 1, Feb. 2019
Article 4 by Mwanza

A Reflection of how Revolutionary Pedagogical Approach will Uplift Student's Outcome

3/26/2019 0 Comments

Abstract

Teaching methods that mandates educators to prioritize students as subjects instead of mere objects during teaching is what we refer to as revolutionary pedagogical approach. This reduces feeding students with information or facts that the educator wants them to memorize without actual comprehension of the subject matter. Therefore, it is of great significance, that revolutionary approaches be employed or applied during teaching not only to stimulate critical thinking, but also to enhance consciousness and awareness of the subject matter in classrooms. In this paper I will attempt to discuss my lived educational experiences.

objects during teaching is what we refer to as revolutionary pedagogical approach. This minimizes feeding students with information or facts that the educator wants them to memorize without actual comprehension of the subject matter (hooks, 1994). It is therefore of paramount importance, that revolutionary approaches are used during teaching not only to stimulate critical thinking, but also to enhance consciousness and awareness of the subject matter in classrooms (Freire, 2005). In this paper I will attempt to discuss my lived educational experiences, focusing on the period between grade nine up to second year of my undergraduate studies. This period was chosen because it serves as a critical turning point on my educational journey since it combines my academic and personal challenges (oppressions), that I experienced. These challenges were a clear indication to the oppression that I underwent as a student. It would be noted that discussing the forms of oppressions I encountered does not mean I never enjoyed my educational pilgrimage; it is because talking about them reveals my enlightenment on social injustices and how I now have become an activist in fighting against oppression. Moreover, sharing them will not only help me growing from these experiences but also help other people liberate themselves and find their own voices. Furthermore, I will also highlight aspects that have contributed to my critical awareness through conscientization (reflection and action). My educational experiences will be theorized using Freire (2005) hooks (1994) and Burke (2012) because of the closely connectedness the readings have to my lived educational trajectory. These collectively touch on using interactive approaches during teaching, cultivating students' critical thinking to attain the expected relevant knowledge and the effect of widening participation in education. So, they will be used to build-up and foster deeper understanding of my experiences. This paper therefore, is divided into four sections: i) using my lived education experienced will provide the forms of oppressions I witnessed, ii) will show how I contributed to these oppressions and resisted them, iii) will explain how being conscious about the oppression impacted me and iv) conclusion.

Reflecting on the forms of oppressions I have experienced in my educational trajectory

Having a mother who is a teacher by profession made the decision to educate me a priority. This I think was essential because she understood the benefits education has on a girl-child. Being educated has been the best decision I ever made because it has enabled me participate in formal labor market (such as in teaching and research sectors), making informed personal decisions, earning my own income and enabling health care and education for the children I have. However, my educational pilgrimage has not been a rosy one; it has been blended with educational tasks, challenging and adventurous experiences. Some of the educational tasks included attending extra lessons, writing examinations, meeting assignment/homework deadlines, class presentations and extensive studying and memorizing. In addition, I was susceptible to challenges (oppressions) in form of financial constraints (tuition fees), suspension of learning due to strikes by teachers, pedagogical methods some teachers used during teaching and time wastage due to closures and emotional humiliation (being bullied by peers and sometimes teachers). In spite of all these oppressions, I managed to complete my education with a story to be told. This experience I have carried for years and now that am an educator, use it (my experiences) as a tool to build on my

engage pupils in creative and analytical writing related to the subjects' content, readings and discussions (MoE, 1996). History for instance, was one of the subjects I learnt, it required creative and critical thinking/writing as it explored the cultural, social, economic, political and religious aspects of diverse African people's life styles. History was both narrative and descriptive in nature especially when it came to writing essays of a given context. Being an average pupil, I was still struggling in perfecting my essay writing skills through narrative writing. This exercise was sluggish probably because of the teacher-centered approach the history teacher used. The approach used did not guide learners to creative or critical writing and the teacher addedly, discouraged asking questions citing that it was interrupting the flow of teaching. I and my classmates were told to memorize the essays especially the dates of events, names of places and the people involved or ethnic groups being studied. This shows that there was no pupil engagement during lesson. A teaching approach according to Burke (2012), which does not engage pupils, misses the opportunities for students to develop their critical perspectives required to develop their writing and sense of authorial voice. Davies (2005) further suggests that intellectual writing should be a position from which the academic culture draws both sustenance and critique, authors' voice be heard and carries with it the weighty responsibility of doing more than mimic the wise word of others. Since my history did not consider what Burke and Davies suggested, hence my challenges in essay writing. In spite of the challenges, I faced in the history class, I managed to work hard and I successfully scored good grade in the national examination.

Considering the above scenario, the teacher controlled and exercised full authority during teaching; without engaging us (students in the class). According to hooks (1994) when teachers use control and power over pupils during teaching, it reduces the students' enthusiasm to learn or participate during class and teaches them obedience to authority. This argument was based on the understanding that teaching is a performative act and teachers are catalysts that invite pupils to become more engaged and active. I strongly agree with this idea based on how my classmates and I dreaded the history subject. This was evidently seen on a number of classmates dodging the history class by giving excuses to miss the lesson and others like me being passive pupils. The teacher seemed less concerned with what was happening in class. As for Freire (2005) he calls the above teaching method as the 'banking system approach' of education as it consists of monologues and communication designed to make the students passive receptors. He contended that for any efforts to transform the condition of oppression, it is essential not to see learners as mere 'spectators' but as 'co-creators' of knowledge. This implies that monologue be replaced by dialogues and communication, were students and teachers attempt to unveil reality and co-create new knowledge. hooks (1994) further suggested that the classroom should be the most radical space of possibility in education where the teacher should be concerned with pupils' class achievements, allowing pupils' individual voices be heard and recognize each person's presence. Freire (2005) advocates that instead of learners receiving, filling and storing deposits made by educators, learners should be allowed to develop praxis, an inventive way of life that encourages free, creative reflection and thoughtful action in order to change the world, even as the learners are

and pupils could collaborate so as to make learning more relaxing and exciting.

I remember sometime in 1998, I was still in grade nine, when the Zambian Army captain attempted to overthrow the Government; citing the reasons of low economic performance which resulted in high poverty levels, corruption and high unemployment levels. This occurrence was the first of its kind in the country. It affected the operations of the Zambian economy as production processes were brought to a halt. Moreover, this affected the provision of service such as teaching. Teachers, just like other civil servants country wide went on strike; teaching was on a standstill for a good five weeks. Being a grade nine student, I was terrified and tormented psychologically because this was my final year in basic school of which we sat for national examinations. This feeling kept me from reaching the stage of readiness for the examinations because I still yearned for more knowledge. This thirst could not be quenched during this time as teaching was on standstill. My concentration on school work was negatively affected because the time spent without learning meant lagging behind in all the subjects. Burke quoted Gorard et al. (2007) who identified time to be a barrier when it hinders access to and participation to education. Time in this case considered educational issues of time management on successfully covering all topics listed in the curriculum of each specific subject. hooks (1994) highlighted that there is a serious crisis in education when teachers do not want to teach and pupils on the other hand not wanting to learn. I disagree with hook's assertion that pupils do want to learn, am basing my argument on the desire I had to learn more and prepare for examinations. My strong belief is that when an individual is preparing for an examination, their craving to learn grows yonder as they desire to graduate with honorable scores. After five weeks, the political instability was over, the peace and tranquility that Zambians especially students enjoyed, was disturbed. This is because time to catch up for those in examination classes was already lost.

Completing my secondary level and preparing to participate in higher education was a dream come true for me. Obtaining higher education as a girl-child fundamentally empowered me with the necessary skills to effectively compete in the labor market; learn the socio-emotional and life skills necessary to navigate and adapt to a changing world; make decisions about my own life; and contribute positively to my family, community and the nation at large. Based on these reasons, lay my desire to obtain higher education. But this dream was almost lost because of financial constraints my family faced. This is because the Zambian government had shifted its full scholarship responsibility to cost sharing. The government was paying off 100% of the tuition fees for vulnerable students who were orphans. For non-orphan students but vulnerable students, were given a partial scholarship of 25%, 50% and 75% respectively. On first admission at the University of Zambia, I was awarded 25% scholarship, and my parents had to pay the remaining 75% which was too much for them to raise. As Burke (2012) rightly stated, the shift of costs from government to students and families have narrowed the participation of some young people in higher education because they do not want to end up in debt. My parents tried to raise money for my tuition and as the opening day was approaching, they still had not raised the expected amount. This experience

and the causes of their problems, are a necessary but insufficient condition for liberation. Liberation, he believes can only be achieved if the perception motivates the oppressed to struggle, true reflection and action. This leads to transformation, and the transformation in my situation was that I enrolled into school and fought to be given a 75% scholarship to liberate my family from tuition fees pressure. I received this and enabled me complete my studies at the university. The scholarship I received was an initiative the Zambian government offered so as to increase access to education, which can be associated to Apple's (2007) argument of ensuring 'No Child is Left Behind' (NCLB). Receiving the scholarship enabled me access higher education. However, it is worth mentioning that I just as Apple does, strongly oppose to most of the assumptions behind NCLB act and figures a number of key negative effects for educational policies and practices. Disparities and inequalities to education access are some of the negative effects bred from the educational policies and practices.

I was so thrilled to be going to the University of Zambia because I knew this education would become my ticket to a better tomorrow. As a freshman at the university, I was exposed to emotional harassment from the male peers and some male lecturers, especially during lessons. Recalling as though the incident happened just today is when my psychology lecturer posed a question during class, and I gave my opinion. He made fun of my opinion and my classmates especially the boys laughed at my opinion. This affected me emotionally, felt humiliated, ashamed, insecure and vowed never to contribute whenever it was discussion time. This was an act of oppression and the 'teacher was not teaching in a manner that cares for the souls of the students' (hooks, 1994, p.130). I confronted this oppression by expressing to my lecturer how humiliated I felt based on his comment when I was trying to actively participate during class. He apologized, but my emotions were still affected. I felt disappointed about it. Through determination to participate in class discussions helped me understand issues that seemed unclear to me. Burke (2012) suggests pedagogical practices that should be inclusive, interactive and participatory, which aim to involve the students in deconstructing key discourses in relation to their thought patterns, perspectives and experiences. This way, students have a sense of connecting to those ideas which seem distant, abstract and inaccessible to resonance with their own interests and subjectivities. hooks (1994) on the other hand states that, teachers should teach students to transgress against racial, sexual and bullying within classroom boundaries in order to achieve the gift of freedom. This way of teaching would encourage every student to learn. When students' practical knowledge, personal expressions and experiences are engaged in a classroom, true learning is attained.

At university level, writing assignments had more to do than simply reproducing the words that already exist in literature, it demanded to meet the conventional academic way of writing. For instance, when writing an assignment, I had to read vastly round the topic in question, frame my understanding in relation to academic knowledge, providing correct citations and references, and positioning own standpoint in what was being written. Burke (2012) further stretches this binary by arguing that in academic writing the literature must validate the points the student wants to make.

should build a student's reality from the circumstances that give rise to the daily events of a student's life. In my case, the texts I created permitted me to reflect upon and analyzed the world in which I live in: not in an effort to adapt myself to this world but rather as part of an effort to reform it and to make it conform to my historical demands. The cultivation of critical thinking and writing made me not to be a docile listener but a critical co-investigator in dialogue with teachers and peers. Under such exposure, students are able to express their own opinions, their voices are heard. On one hand, academic writing as explained here could be inclusive rather than exclusive as students' voices are heard. On the other hand, it can prove to be a barrier to some students who fail to figure how to cite or reference or blend voices.

How I have contributed to or resisted forms of oppression witnessed along my educational journey? Considering the experiences shared above in one way or the other, I can explicitly state that I have resisted oppression which when explained within the African culture is not acceptable. In the African context, it is against cultural norms to speak back when an adult or elderly person speaks; what this means is that, if you are even asking a follow up question it is seen as disrespectful. It means that when a student is seen asking a follow-up question or saying sometime contradictory to what an elderly person has said earlier on, it is taken to mean as a sign of disrespect or being disobedient. This same cultural related situation is translated in the classroom setting; this is because of the teacher centered curriculum which places the teacher as the sole knowledge producer. Taking an example of banking education, the African culture does not allow students to question, contradict to an idea with a teacher; just as evidently described above of my history teacher. This meant that students had to learn what the teacher prepared without questioning; an indication of how students complied with cultural values. Even though students' silence was seen as being obedient it could be argued to be 'a hidden' form of oppression. Moreover, patriarchal cultures have socially placed girls in subordinate positions and discouraged them to speak –up as such, they cannot participate in public dialogues. In a classroom setting for example, fear to dialogue or fully contribute during teaching is a form of oppression. This way I contributed towards the forms of oppression as I feared to dialogue and fully contribute during teaching based on cultural belief.

Factors that have contributed to my conscientization

Having experienced the oppression and contributed to its existence helped me consider ways of how to help fight the social injustices experienced in education. I listened to various activists against oppression, read government reforms and carried out discussions with fellow teachers, students and education administrators. After reflecting on the various voices, I became an activist to fight against oppression.

Conclusion

In conclusion, my education journey has evidently shown how challenging it had been, and how through these experiences I have gloriously attained my education. My conclusion is that only through revolutionary pedagogical approaches and critical analysis of how students-centered

invite students to be more engaged and active during class. Therefore, students should be accorded access to education regardless their social, economic or financial status. It is evident in the three readings discussed: Freire's (2005) revolutionary pedagogical theory which focuses on student centered system of learning, hooks' (1994) advocacy for the process of teaching students to think critically and Burke's (2012) advocacy for widening participation of students into higher education; all challenge how knowledge is constructed in the formal education system and in the society at large. I notice that even though these readings were written some years back, their information is still relevant in today's teaching practices. If engaged quality education would be attained.

References

Apple, M. (2007). "Ideological Success, Educational failure: On the Political of No Child Left Behind." Journal of Teacher Education 58(2): 108-116.

Burke, P. J. (2012). *The right to higher education: beyond widening participation*. Milton park, Abingdon, Oxo; New York, Routledge.

Davies, Bronwyn (2005). *'The (im)possibility of intellectual work in neoliberal regimes." Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politicals of Education, 26(1):1-14.*

Freire, P. (2005). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum.

hooks, B. (1994). *Teaching to Transgress: Education as a Practice of freedom*. NewYork: Routledge.

MoE (1996) *Educating our future: National policy on Education.* Lusaka: MoE.

Mulenga, M. (2000). Zambia: Traditional Practices Impede Girls Education in Zambia. Lusaka: government printers. allafrica.com/stories/200012280139.html.

Like 0 Post

0 Comments

Author

Benita Nchimunya Mwanza Institute of International Comparative Education
Beijing Normal University
China

Archives

March 2019

Categories

All

RSS Feed

WVN is an open-access journal published by WCCES and licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

WORLD COUNCIL OF COMPARATIVE EDUCATION SOCIETIES
CONSEIL MONDIAL DES ASSOCIATIONS D'ÉDUCATION COMPARÉE
CONSEJO MUNDIAL DE SOCIEDADES DE EDUCACIÓN COMPARADA
Всемирного Совета Обществ Сравнительного Образования
世界比较教育学会联合会
المجلس العالمي لجمعيات التربية المقارنة