LEGITIMISING CRITICAL PEDAGOGY IN THE FACE OF TIMOROUS, MECHANISTIC PEDAGOGY

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ABSTRACT

The literature on critical pedagogy is awash, on the one hand, with notions of emancipatory pedagogy that liberate students and teachers from the snares of capitalist ideological hegemony. On the other hand, claims abound about the declining fortunes of critical pedagogy, as it has struggled to find credibility, coherence and legibility. This article delves into critical pedagogy and its implications for education in a state of advanced capitalism, as well as its attendant functionalist thinking. Practically, this means that, via theoretical analysis, critical pedagogy is scrutinised in relation to student/teacher agency and resistance; whether critical pedagogy stands in defence of 'strong democracy';

the historical relevance of the theoretical genesis of critical pedagogy; whether critical pedagogy is effective as ideology critique; whether critical pedagogy is muscular enough as a counter-hegemonic practice; how critical pedagogy parades itself in practical situations; and whether critical pedagogy is able to conscientise students to asymmetrical power relations.

Keywords: critical pedagogy, agency, resistance, democracy, relevance, ideology, counter-hegemony, practical, conscientisation, power

INTRODUCTION

This article sets out to analyse the available literature that addresses the topics of ideological hegemony, resistance and human agency and their interconnectedness, in order to defend the liberatory ideals of democracy. Furthermore, the article hypothesises whether critical pedagogy displays any disruptive potential to combat the ravages of capitalist hegemony. As such, the parameters of the conceptual analysis will include the nature and function of hegemony and, more importantly, the possibilities for overcoming hegemony in pursuit of full democracy for all classes in society. The theoretical framework providing the boundaries for this analysis is to be found in the concept of critical pedagogy, with further tentacles in critical thinking, critical agency and everyday forms of resistance.

Critical pedagogy on its own is still a somewhat marginal approach to transforming education, primarily because of its abstractions and opaque language and practices. On this basis we argue for the possible fusion of Rancièrean ideals in terms of equality of intelligence where Rancière (1991) proposes a robust critique of Cartesian dualism. His investigation into the origin, continuation and subversion of the division between mental and manual labour led him to conclude that there is no justifiable hierarchy to maintain this division. While critical pedagogy provides a muscular theoretical framework within which to strive toward educational equality and emancipatory education for non-elite students, its practical applications remain anaemic to the point that many pedagogues still ask: 'How do we do critical pedagogy?' Is it sufficient to advocate for conscientisation (or awareness-raising) alone, or could we depart from the anticipatory point of equality of intelligence to exercise a more robust conceptualisation of critical pedagogy?

CRITICAL PEDAGOGY, AGENCY AND RESISTANCE

Human agency can be demonstrated through many faculties, so in this section the focus will be on how the power of the mind of non-dominant groups is given thorough analysis in a study of peasant resistance by Scott (1985, 29). He argues that the intellectual sophistication evident in 'everyday forms of resistance (foot

dragging, false compliance, feigned ignorance, sabotage, character assassination, gestures and silences of contempt) makes a shambles of official policies and muddles the hierarchical structure of the community' (Scott 1985, 34). In addition, he suggests it is through quiet and anonymous acts of resistance that subjugated groups do not necessarily equate poverty with misery (since it creates a fissure for them to expect the charity of the affluent as a form of cultural decency), or equate inequality with polarisation (Scott 1985, 63). Scott (1985, 310-319) further draws the reader's attention to the role of human agency, which he believes is a huge error of omission in structuralist thought, since agency exploits the opportunities to confuse the homogeneity claimed by the established order. To this end he invokes Brechtian forms of class struggle as the basis for the efficacy of the 'Weapons of the Weak' (Scott 1985, 29) because they require little or no planning; they represent a form of self-help; and they avoid any direct symbolic confrontation with authority or elite norms (Scott 1985, 291). In this form of resistance even theft is seen as counter-hegemonic, since subaltern groups impose a compensatory tax on the affluent by appropriating what they feel they are entitled to. So, when the subordinate groups fissure dominant ideology, they exercise their autonomy to develop their own understandings and interpretations of society, and this is given expression in their dialects, thoughts and ideas, customs, moral principles, religion and politics.

Scott (1985) concludes his analysis of the rupturing of hegemony by the underclass by allowing a penetrating appreciation that hegemony always provides the ideas, means or symbolic tools of critique. While hegemony advertises a meritocratic ethos, it instead delivers favouritism and unequal access to superior education; while it promises one person, one vote, it serves corporate interests and allows the media to help dictate election outcomes; while it follows a capitalist economic system, it translates into recession and unemployment (Scott 1985, 339). These very contradictions in hegemony allow non-dominant groups either to betray or ignore the implicit promises of ideology. It is within the space created by these contradictions that human agency sets to work in challenging meritocracy, favouritism, inequality, democracy and capitalism. So, the argument offered by Scott pragmatically reveals how human and social agency navigate the complex maze of understanding hegemony, seizing the vacant spaces created by it and resisting hegemony. As a result of this argument it becomes hopeful that students in marginal educational encounters inadvertently may already possess the agency to overcome the strictures of capitalist hegemony.

Which leads us to the next question: If non-dominant students already possess the habits of mind to overcome educational inequality, why is it not incorporated to their benefit in their everyday and academic encounters? The subsequent section will attempt to address this question by looking into the nature of the agentic force that might produce positive transformational, liberatory and democratic experiences. This may further highlight the potentials and deficiencies in student agency that act as either inhibitors to or enablers of strong agency.

CRITICAL PEDAGOGY: IN DEFENCE OF 'STRONG' DEMOCRACY?

The abovementioned socially constructed world now has to contend with the onward march toward globalisation. Such transition summons a fresh interrogation of democracy in the light of communitarian and liberal positions, as well as the tensions and paradoxes inherent in democracy, such as liberty, equality and anarchy as a practice of democracy (Barber 2003, xi). Will the future demand a more deliberate form of participatory democracy or will people continue in the overwhelmingly inadequate tradition of representative democracy, and how does this bode with student agency? Barber (2003, xi) contends that the neoliberal ideology of privatisation and an assault on the public sphere has heralded the end of democracy as a public good and ushered in the advent of 'thin democracy'. Further to this, he believes that this marks the end of progressive, 'strong democracy', in which people would pool their resources and find the common will to undertake common tasks (Barber 2003, x). In such an environment, new forms of liberty and tyranny emerge that are characterised by the marketisation of politics and the privatisation of the economy, which in turn marginalise opportunities for public goods or common tasks (Barber 2003, xviii). However, the danger lurking within 'thin democracy' exists on account of representative (government) bodies no longer having the power and authority to make decisions on behalf of the voters, as they 'outsource' their responsibilities, trivialise democracy and abuse civic deliberation (Barber 2003, xvii). It therefore would seem that human agency is the cornerstone in a strong democracy, since it demands civic engagement and citizen participation to thicken thin democracy. But in order for the fruits of the democracy, namely, autonomy, freedom and justice, to be actualised requires a well-informed citizenry who are enlightened enough to exercise discretion as a form of agency (Barber 2003, xvii).

As alluded to above, the threats that impinge on democracy, that is, the marketisation of politics and the privatisation of the economy, lead us into Harvey's (2005) theorising on neo-liberalism as the capitalist ideology that stands in opposition to democracy, as it presents itself as a vehicle to human liberation and well-being, while insidiously relying on individual entrepreneurial freedoms through property rights, free markets and free trade to subvert democracy. Neo-liberalism is defined as the macroeconomic approach to economic and social studies, where the control of economic factors is shifted from the public to the private sector. Furthermore, Martinez and Garcia (2000) define neo-liberalism as having five defining features. According to Martinez and Garcia, neo-liberalism operates on a system of free market or private enterprise with no state interference, and continues unabated no matter how much social damage it causes, such as:

1. Reduction of public expenditure, where less government spending is devoted to social services such as health and education.

2. Deregulation of private enterprise by government in everything (from environmental protection to job safety) that could diminish profits.

3. Privatisation, as state-owned assets, goods and services are sold to private investors.

4. Eliminating the concept of 'public good' or 'community' and replacing it with individual responsibility. As an example of this, the poorest members of a society have to find their own solutions to social problems such as health care and education.

Interestingly, neo-liberalism introduces the question of how we expect the market ostensibly to create human freedom when it is predicated on competition and individual property rights, and is prepared to achieve these aims by any means necessary. Conversely, neo-liberalism perpetuates the class hierarchies apparent in capitalist societies, which are characterised by lack, scarcity and poverty for the masses, and in direct contrast provides opulence and extreme wealth for the ruling elite.

The capitalist ideology that legitimates neo-liberalism has a formidable history and global reach, as Wallerstein (1999) remarks:

> Margaret Thatcher launched so-called neo-liberalism, which was of course really an aggressive conservatism of a type that had not been seen since 1848, and which involved an attempt to reverse welfare state redistribution so that it went to the upper classes rather than to the lower classes.

However, in South Africa, the post-apartheid African National Congress (ANC) government has adopted neo-liberal policies that perpetuate the inequalities of apartheid (Seekings 2010). As such, the state has become complicit in aiding global capitalism as it has withdrawn from playing an active role in the regulation of markets, that is, the state is withdrawing from any commitment to de-commodification. Policies such as the privatisation of and introduction of end user-charges and cost-recovery measures for municipal services; the delegation to the private sector of house-building; and the proliferation of gated communities and business-led improvement districts (Seekings 2010) implicate the state in the dereliction of its duties to eradicating economic inequality.

In such a system of carefully constructed capitalist hegemony and neo-liberal conventions, schools function to perpetuate class hierarchies and inequality in society by their preoccupied institutional efforts of preparing students to fit into the global economy. The role of students in the global economy, which is predicated on consumption, is to be passive, unquestioning and prolific consumers in their youth, who graduate to become dominated and exploited workers in adulthood. In sum, the gloomy outlook for economically marginal students seems impenetrable, yet even imprisoning ideology presents alternatives for those looking to what exists, what

is good, and what is possible. And it is particularly true for the counter-hegemonic measure in critical pedagogy that 'conscientises' to alternative existence, goodness and possibilities. While we have tried to hint that the virtues of liberty and equality promised by democracy have still not materialised for non-elite students, the lingering question is: How realistic is it to expect subordinate students to become informed and exercise discretion in a condition where schools are seen to reproduce and maintain the status quo? Could we follow the belief and some evidence that critical pedagogy can infiltrate normative education to empower marginal students?

THE THEORETICAL GENESIS OF CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

An effort to resolve the above question begins with an attempt to clearly articulate the origins and development of critical pedagogy as the philosophical theory and counter-hegemonic educational intervention that was considered to make the critical agents more strident in their demand for equality. To begin with, critical pedagogy was conceived of by Freire (1970), who proposed the theory in the political and social climate of the 1960s and 1970s. This historical period was characterised by social movements concerned with transformation, liberation from colonialism, civil rights, women's rights, gay rights, environmental issues, and anti-war movements. Thus, it was against this backdrop that Freire suggested critical pedagogy as a process through education to address social problems and as a means through which society could be transformed along inclusive or participatory, democratic lines. Using critical pedagogy, he worked with illiterate and disenfranchised adults to allow them the ability to interpret their lived reality, reflect upon it, act upon it, and ultimately to change it. This sequence of action, reflection and action is what he termed the 'praxis' necessary to transform undesirable elements brought about by irrational, illogical and unexamined living (Paul 1983, 23). The promise of critical pedagogy lies in its supposed capacity for self-critique, or the notion that everything is up for questioning within critical pedagogy (Kellner 1978). In marked contrast to ideology, which is not easy to displace and is seeking preservation, critical pedagogy is allegedly able to trace its origins and limits and, in so doing, invite new ways of thinking through plurality, tolerance and respect. It is with this in mind that Giroux (1983, 88) advocates that the critical aspects of critical pedagogy allow for the reconstruction of schooling toward a more democratic culture that promotes radical democracy, rather than its current repressive function under capitalism. Here, radical democracy is to mean radical social transformation by promoting new understandings of culture, cultural politics and pedagogy (Kellner 2001, xxiv).

Giroux's particular position within critical pedagogy during the decades spanning the 1970s and 1980s was to highlight the role of critical pedagogy in

terms of educational reform, and the transformation of education to promote radical democracy (Kellner 2001, 7). He admittedly recast his theoretical and political approaches during the decade from 1990 to 2000 in order to address what he saw as the nexus between cultural studies and pedagogy, as well as the importance of literacy (Kellner 2001, 1−17). While Marx did not conceive of critical pedagogy as a concept, it could be argued that, through the theory of material historicity, he provided the foundation for Freire to envision alternatives to capitalist hegemony in an era of post-structuralism and postmodernism, and to carve out horizons in a post-colonial, anti-racist, feminist landscape (although he was not initially gender sensitive). It is within this critical landscape that Giroux identifies youth as complex sites of hope and possibility, as well as domination and exploitation, and encourages critical pedagogues to conceptualise youth as contested terrain between two spheres: oppression and struggle. On this basis, there thus is consensus between Giroux and Freire (2005, 30) that teachers take up a position as cultural workers who provide the theory, language and skills to dissect the dominant culture and construct a more democratic culture. In short, critical pedagogy has engaged in an almost six-decade fight for legitimacy, authority and respect as a theoretical and empirical counter-hegemonic approach to reform education and to transform it more equitably. But the struggle for authenticity and value in critical pedagogy has produced more questions than answers (Freire 2005, 20−23), and this is especially true for South Africa, as we will be seen in the following section.

Concerning Freire's (2005, 12) work on the African continent, he physically did work in some parts of post-colonial Africa, namely, Tanzania, Guinea-Bissau, Sao Tome, Angola and Mozambique. It is thus not surprising that his ideas would light a spark in oppressive, segregated South Africa, as critical pedagogy was advocated by and advanced through the work of the Teachers' League of South Africa. The Teachers' League of South Africa employed the central features of critical pedagogy as a means to undercut apartheid ideology in Cape Town schools and prisons (Macedo 2005, 12; Wieder 2003, 6−11). These covert collaborations of teachers were engineered to undermine the government's ferocious attempts to inhumanely subject and oppress citizen students via a racist curriculum. In a backlash, these radical teachers used an intensely critical examination of the oppressive state apparatus, and it is understood that these initiatives helped to ignite the protests that erupted in the Soweto student uprising of 1976 (Alexander 2012, 1−23), during which students openly defied the unfair state expectation of instruction in Afrikaans (a language appropriated and spoken by Afrikaners, but not the language of the majority of the black citizens). Thus far we have worked to provide an historical account of critical pedagogy, and will further explore how youth might negotiate the contested terrain of struggle and oppression, and whether critical thinking is authoritative enough to help steer them to greater equality.

CRITICAL PEDAGOGY AS IDEOLOGY CRITIQUE

As illustrated by Freire and the Teachers' League of South Africa previously, one of the ways to scrutinise the dominant culture is to incorporate the process of critical thinking, which is defined by Lipman (1988, 1−12) as thinking that preserves and refines meaning in four ways. Firstly, critical thinking facilitates judgment; secondly, it relies on criteria; thirdly, it is self-correcting; and lastly, it is sensitive to context. But how does critical thinking manifest itself? McPeck (1983, 154−157) advocates that critical thinking distinguishes itself by the fact that students do not only know the facts in a given field, but also have a deep understanding of why they came to be regarded as such, and therefore are empowered to make the judgments required of a critical thinker. Bailin and Siegel (2007, 43) identify these to be the values that propel critical thinking, that is, intellectual honesty, justice to evidence, sympathetic and impartial consideration of interests, objectivity and impartiality. They also advance a notion of critical thinking as being a complex business that seeks to foster a host of attitudes, emotions, dispositions, habits, character traits and reasoning skills in students (Bailin and Siegel 2007, 77−94). Critical thinking embedded within critical pedagogy seems to suggest itself as an alternative way of thinking, grasping, acting, feeling and being to both students and teachers who are concerned with distributive justice and are keen to operate as social activists. The impetus of critical pedagogy is dedicated to the alleviation of human suffering, and critical agents such as teachers and students seek out the causes of such suffering with the understanding that it is humanly constructed and does not have to exist (Kincheloe 2007, 11).

Kincheloe's voice in critical pedagogy is significant for the fact that, although he is a white, English-speaking, Protestant and able-bodied male, he occupies the space of the 'other' (hooks 1994). This position is due to the fact that he grew up in an economically disadvantaged community in the Appalachian Mountains, rather than in the typical suburban upper-class family that represents Western cultural hegemony. He situates his voice among the disenfranchised and highlights the importance of understanding student context. Kincheloe (in Kincheloe and Steinberg 1996, 32) states that student difficulties are not from cognitive inadequacy, but from socially contextual factors. He proposes that each learning and teaching context has its own unique dimension that must be dealt with individually. A practical example could be where teachers delineate the effects of the contemporary political context shaped by corporations and economic interests to a community of learners and stakeholders. In so doing, they fashion deep relationships with local communities, community organisers and concerned citizens, exemplifying to students that learning does not only take place in the classroom, but also in the world at large and in community learning environments (Kincheloe 1996, 33). Kincheloe (2007) describes the merits of critical pedagogy based on its elasticity, as it is constantly changing and evolving in the light of new theoretical insights, new problems and new social circumstances (Kincheloe 2005, 255). The assumption is that the work of critical pedagogues can

never be concluded since they are always in search of new forms of understanding power and oppression, and how these shape human life. From this understanding, critical agents could develop the necessary knowledge to propose alternatives to the oppression and suffering of subjugated people. This is not to imply that there are no constraints, challenges and limitations imposed on critical agents. This fact is particularly true of teachers as researchers, who are called on to provide more complex and textured self-conscious forms of research as opposed to data-driven forms, or to sense data derived from pure observation (Freire 2005, 12). Teachers therefore occupy a space between personal and professional introspection and simultaneously take up a position of outward projection in educating their students. But McLaren (2007) warns that researchers should avoid the kind of theoretical elitism that denies common sense and experiential knowledge; in its stead, teachers as researchers need to provoke students to create coherence between the discourse and practice of critical pedagogy (McLaren 2005, 281). The discourse that defends the weak, poor, homeless and have-nots in society needs to be wedded to a practice that seeks practical solutions to these social problems (Freire 1998, 7).

CRITICAL PEDAGOGY AS COUNTER-HEGEMONIC

The sentiments of non-exploitation and equality resonate with the critiques Santos (2004, 9−33) has levelled against capitalist modes of structuring society that are in direct violation of democracy, freedom and equality. Santos proposes for the 'Reinvention of Social Emancipation' by offering alternatives to neoliberal globalisation and global capital. Counter-hegemonic globalisation could be constituted by themes such as participatory democracy, alternative productive systems, multiculturalism, collective rights and cultural citizenship, alternatives to intellectual and property rights as well as capitalist biodiversity (such as cloning), and lastly, new labour internationalism (Santos 2004, 1−2). Santos (2004, 3) mounts his defence on the back of Leibniz's call for the eradication of lazy reason and the adoption of cosmopolitan reason. His justification for the critique of lazy reason is based on the fact that much of social experience in the world is considerably wider and more varied than what Western scientific or philosophical tradition knows and considers. Santos believes that this social wealth is being wasted, as there are no formidable alternatives to 'Westernism' (Santos 2004, 3−33). He suggests a fight against this waste of experience that renders visible initiatives, births alternative movements and gives credibility to the experience of the 'other' (Santos 2004, 2). The insidious nature of Western thought and knowledge is based on its system of reasoning, which does not explain itself (Santos 2004, 11). It instead imposes itself in productive and legislative thought, and becomes all-encompassing with its claims to be exclusive, complete and universal while not admitting the value of non-Western knowledge systems (Santos 2004, 11). Critical pedagogy, in its turn, might stand

as a bulwark against Western hegemony as it seeks crevices in which to explore and research subjugated and indigenous knowledge systems in order to incorporate them into and enhance education (McLaren and Kincheloe 2007). The implication here is that different research methodologies need to be constructed to meet the demands of new knowledge systems, new understandings and new reasoning. The subjective methodologies of the Western tradition need to be substituted with meaningful multidimensional, multi-methodological approaches (Schön 1995, 68). This critical and counter-hegemonic thrust is in harmony with the concept put forward by Horkheimer and Adorno (1973), called immanence, which simply stated, is the examination of what is in relation to what should be. To that end, the practical dimensions of this concept were investigated by a teacher of young children who explored critical pedagogy from the lens of their lived encounters and experiences. Quintero (2007, 207) illustrates the impact of personal storytelling, of play-immersed literature, and how art can equip teachers with perspectives on what is and what could be. Her students used critical literacy as a process of constructing and critically using language as a means of expression, interpretation and transformation. Some of the activities students were engaged in were inventing stories, painting, writing a text, drawing, extending information from a film, video or game, arguing, and asking questions about the information supplied.

Of particular interest here is that these critical encounters were awoken and stirred at such a formative stage of human development, which may entice these young students to have a true appreciation for what could be, rather than the coercion and indoctrination of normative, non-critical educational episodes. The treasures hidden in student narratives could possibly present us with testimony of their realities and an opportunity for analysis in order to deepen our perspectives. As we reflect and imagine how things could be different by reading and understanding their world, we may inadvertently gain access to and insight into how they perceive the world they live in, constructed by others (Freire and Macedo 1987, 136−140). More profoundly, if students reconnect with their true selves, rather than the selves inscribed by the ruling classes, what potentials might exist in them to reveal how to improve education and deepen democratic practice as they strive for greater equality? In sum, thus far we have attempted to illustrate how critical pedagogy, through cultural and social consciousness, has had an impact on teaching, although further mining of the concept is necessary to uncover how agentic students might fuse theoretical and practical knowledge in a participatory and emancipatory democracy.

CRITICAL PEDAGOGY: MERELY THEORETICAL OR PERFORMATIVE?

At the same time as we have devoted considerable time to an exposition of critical pedagogy, it would be grossly irresponsible to neglect an interrogation of the

dilemmas inherent within critical pedagogy. How true is it that critical pedagogy is ever evolving due to the acceleration of change and the expansion of power? Does it possess the imaginative, intellectual and pragmatic authority to free us from ideological hegemony (Kincheloe 2007, 19)? As Huerta-Charles (2007, 249−263) reflects on the methodology of critical pedagogy, we are given the perspectives of in-service teachers' impressions of the concept. Initially, due to the analytical nature of the concepts, many teachers had difficulty understanding the main concepts of critical pedagogy. To these teachers, critical pedagogy is disconnected from and alien to their everyday practices. To the extent that teachers have become functionaries, implementing the policies and procedures of unaffected school bureaucracies, their perception was that critical pedagogy would become another subject they would 'have to teach' (in their classrooms). The nature of critical pedagogy does not accommodate the modelling of procedure as in other educational methodologies, so teachers could not conceive what it looks like in action and had no closure on the types of activities, so they adopted a sense of 'anything goes' (Huerta-Charles 2007, 252). Furthermore, student teachers did not develop enough insight and sophistication to think critically and problematise their misconceptions, which could also mean that they failed to apply conscientisation (or consciousness raising and awareness), which is a key feature of critical pedagogy. Lastly, one of the most damning statements against critical pedagogy comes from Apple (in McLaren and Kincheloe 2007, 252), who declares that the discourse of critical pedagogy has become too theoretical and abstract, far removed from the conflicts and struggles that teachers, students and activists act on.

In the light of this above challenge, perhaps to entrench the values embedded in critical pedagogy and to make them more practical and less opaque to students, an approach such as compassionate imagining (Waghid 2010, 38−45) could be considered. Here, compassionate imagining means an exploration of intellectual emotions in ethical deliberation with an explicit view to cultivate compassion. Not only could this approach succeed as being personable and intimate, but it would also empower students and teachers through questioning meanings, imagining alternative possibilities, modifying practical judgments, and fostering respect and critical engagement (Waghid 2004, 43). In contrast to the view of professors or teachers being the custodians of knowledge, compassionate deliberation could marshal the true power-sharing capacity emblematic of democratic education through active debate and argumentation, over the dull memorisation of facts on the part of students. Further, the supremacy of this approach of alternative imaginings and student activism was reinforced by practical application, as the graduating teachers were encouraged to spend a month teaching in challenging, real-life situations. These encounters ranged from severe socio-economic deprivation and war-torn civil societies, to struggling post-colonial environments that would force graduating teachers to engage critically with the material circumstances. What was even more important and exemplary

of this intervention was that the teachers had to confront themselves as agents of transformation in defence of democracy and humanity. However, it would be remiss for us not to delve into the romanticism suggested when mention is made of power-sharing between teacher (or professor) and student, as this questions the assumption of student agentic force.

Could there reasonably be equality of voice in student-teacher interactions, or do teachers invariably suffocate student voices (Macedo 2005, 12; Waghid 2004, 50−58) given their seniority and professional positions? Not only do teachers run the risk of unwittingly subjecting student voices to their own, but very often teachers continue with unexamined assumptions on their own beliefs and values and how this ideological posture subconsciously informs their perceptions and actions (Bartolomé 2007, 263−289). These unconscious and uninterrogated perceptions and actions could be particularly injurious when working with subjugated students. In such instances it becomes imperative that teachers and students work collaboratively to name and interrogate destructive ideologies that are exclusionary and that label students from non-dominant groups in deficit terms, such as less intelligent, less talented, less qualified and less deserving (Bartolomé 2007, 265). By this it is meant that both teacher-as-agent and student-as-agent are equally called upon to reflect critically and deliberatively in the quest of cultivating counter-hegemonic beliefs and practices that render some participants vulnerable in teaching encounters (Waghid 2010, 19−31).

To digress momentarily to address the critical dimensions of the teacher-as-agent is important as a counter-hegemonic practice for this reason: modern teaching has been reduced to providing answers, rather than asking questions, which is the foundation of a democratic order (Freire and Faundez 1989, 35). Freire (2005, 73) calls this practice the 'castration of curiosity', where the teacher automatically provides answers without having been asked anything, thereby eliminating room for the discovery of fresh elements. This unequal and hierarchical rationality sways power in favour of the authoritarian teacher and entrenches the 'banking' model of learning (Freire 2005, 73). This model dismisses and negates non-scientific knowledge or the knowledge of the popular classes. It is for this reason that intellectuals (teachers included) omit the fact that the popular classes are not naïve in their thinking. In fact, more so than the elite classes, subjugated groups have the capacity for heightened criticality because their daily lives are rooted in real-life tragedies, suffering and overall social misery, and not in the ideals propagated by the ruling elite (Freire and Faundez 1989, 89). By this it could be interpreted that their consciousness is raised far higher than the distortions and deceits of superordinate groups because their realities are characterised by a myriad of social and economic oppression (substance and human rights abuses, gangsterism, unemployment, etc.) (Waghid 2010, 28). Their lives are not trivialised by facts, but by concrete and substantive problems and struggles that require action. It is at this juncture that Marx (1867),

Gramsci (1971) and Faundez (1989) agree that science, especially social science, thus far has done all it can do by way of describing society, but has done far less in the way of transforming it. In answer to this dilemma, Freire (1970, 90) suggests that intellectuals need to find creative ways of acting with the popular classes and not on them (further entrenching dominant ideology by telling them how to solve their problems). The deep need for academics and intellectuals to understand subordinate groups and to be immersed in their culture, history and aspirations is a plausible way of alleviating the impasse between social theory and social activism with a view to achieving balanced power in society. It is within the realm of social activism that agentic students may assert their right to struggle for the equality pledged in the name of democracy and wrest power away from external factors by restoring it to themselves as transformative agents.

DOES CRITICAL PEDAGOGY CONSCIENTISE PEOPLE TO ASYMMETRICAL POWER RELATIONS?

It is the issue of power that automatically brings us to the next point: part of conscientisation would require a penetrating gaze at the definition of that very power. What is power, where is it located and who possesses it (Freire and Faundez 1989, 123)? Faundez advocates for a redefinition of power, an exploration in the power of resistance and the building of power from the base (characterised by justice, solidarity and participation) rather than the ruling elite. In this instance, new powers may be identified who work in the interest of freedom, equality and justice and, more importantly, represent the interests of marginal and subjugated groups.

McLaren (1993, 167) confronts and challenges the abuse of power as it manifests in classrooms through teaching and learning rituals. Taken-for-granted teacher behaviours and procedures carry within them threatening positions of dominance. These may include, but are not limited to, facial gestures such as eye narrowing, deliberate silences, indirect speech, power positions and strategic seating arrangements (McLaren 1993). These undemocratic classroom management approaches on the part of teachers mimic the control and discipline imposed on especially minority students as part of the status quo. The subject of McLaren's (1993) qualitative study that informed this analysis attempted to illustrate how schooling is considered a ritual performance through symbols and gestures. In addition, the study revealed that students possess an alternate disposition (or even lived reality) when outside the constraints of the schooling environment. In this particular case, student behaviour observed on the street corner showed young people who were wholly physical and emotional; they governed their own time; they were in full control of space; they engaged in spontaneous activity; and their mood was imaginative and playful (McLaren 1993, 124).

This is in direct contrast to the classroom, where time is structured and movements are routinised and rigid, to the extent that there is an obvious disconnect between the mind and body (McLaren 1993, 69). This sketch provides insight into the profound ways that students have had to reclaim their identities from those imposed on them through teaching and learning episodes. In this way a student-led, counter-hegemonic response to the authoritarian, non-liberating rituals of school attempts to wrest power away from teachers and restore it to these same students in their personal space. This is not to mean that critical pedagogy or even criticality (the ability to challenge taken-for-granted-as-fact notions) brought about these naturally occurring, spontaneous acts of subtle protest in students, but the sublime elements to create awareness of injustice and undemocratic school rituals could be unearthed and given sharper focus through the lens of critical pedagogy. Subsequently, the truly critical question to ask about transforming education, which of course encompasses both student and teacher responsibilities, is how would a liberating classroom differ from a classroom where schooling is a ritual performance? McLaren and Leonard (1993) argue that a transformative classroom is democratic in that there is shared decision-making, collaboration, student problem-posing, self-discipline, and the ability to disagree. The behaviours, dispositions and actions of the actors in a democratic classroom are undergirded by values that are participatory, situated (or providing context), critical (displaying self- and social reflection), self-governing, dialogic, desocialised (free from the negative values in society such as racism, sexism, classism), multicultural, research-oriented, activist-centred and affective (McLaren and Leonard 1993).

Further to this, an examination of the features of a democratic classroom prompts a return to a theme introduced earlier, that is, critical literacy. To appreciate the significance of literacy it would be instructive to understand its antithesis too. Freire (2005, 110) calls illiteracy 'violence' against people who are prohibited or denied the opportunity of reading and writing. The aggression, as he describes it, is akin to suffocating consciousness and expressiveness and curtails a capacity to write about their understanding of the world (Freire 2005, 42). In opposition to the technocratic view of literacy development, which stresses routines, repetition, syllabification and fragmentation of symbols, sounds and words, critical literacy begins with reading the everyday experiences of students (their world), and making sense of it in their literature (their word). Freire (2005) sees reading and writing as integral to an exploration of human potentialities and warns that literacy development should occur even before material transformations necessitate it, since it brings with it the capacity to critically analyse the world to understand it, and to transform it. He further elucidates that reading must be a dialogical experience in which the discussion of the text by different readers clarifies, enlightens and creates group comprehension (Freire 2005, 106). This process facilitates the ability to respect different points of view and enriches the production of text comprehension. The value to be gained

through this process is that it allows readers to imaginatively relive the story or gradually appropriate the significance of the text (Freire 2005, 12−16).

These sentiments are echoed by Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2007, 183−201), who assert that critical pedagogy is effective in so far as it motivates and empowers students to develop literacies and numeracies of power in their struggle for educational justice. These researchers found that their qualitative study in an English class reinforced an appreciation that comprehension is a prerequisite to critique, as it appropriates an understanding of the ideologies and values of the dominant elites in a society. The duo found critical pedagogy to be the most effective vehicle to bring about individual freedom and social change in an urban secondary school, as it helped students understand what they had in common with those they perceived as different. It was via the critical analysis of hegemonic texts, such as local, state and national legislation, professional contracts and school reports that students exposed the way that these texts and their meanings served to limit, constrain and control their actions and thoughts (Duncan-Andrade and Morrell 2007, 186). The conclusion students themselves arrived at after the exercise was that these hegemonic texts needed to be critiqued, contextualised and rewritten critically by them (Duncan-Andrade and Morrell 2007, 186). The abovementioned study illuminates the vital role of teacher agency in providing the optimal conditions for students to reflect on and shape their own experiences and views (McLaren and Tadeu da Silva 1993). Most telling, however, is that the students were able to formulate sophisticated and deep knowledge of the destructive effects of hegemony and attuned their power to criticise it. In the foregoing scenarios we encountered the life-worlds of agentic students who are able to institute counter-hegemonic responses to repressive literacies and numeracies to envision an alternative future with greater equality. But in the upcoming section, we shall encounter scenarios in which student agency is magnified exponentially, to the point where Rancière (1991) implies that perhaps teachers are not so instrumental in student agency. This is only likely to occur, following Rancière (1991), when students are in fact able to rely on their own intellect to attain democratic rights and aspirations for educational equality.

CRITICAL PEDAGOGY IN THE LIGHT OF EQUALITY OF INTELLIGENCE

In an attempt at equality Rancière (1991, xvii) believes that there is only one way for students to begin to criticise their teachers' knowledge, and that is by dismantling authoritarian structures and becoming peers so that they may have equality of intelligence. It is with this in mind that he advocates for a position of pedagogic and intellectual equality from the outset, rather than equality as a goal to strive for in the distant future. In the same vein he studied the victories won by workers when they claimed the right to aesthetic contemplation, or dead time, as well as time to

and the right to think, which contests the notion that they cannot be cerebral because they are labourers. The contempt Rancière (1991, xx) has for deficit models of thinking is expressed in his rebuke of the manner in which inequality of intelligence is represented in terms of velocity, such as slowness, backwardness, delay or lag, which suggests that the student will never catch up to the teacher. As an extended metaphor, this could also be interpreted as that the 'developing' nations will never catch up with the 'enlightened' nations, which tidily omits the fact that recorded history (and by implication intellectual development) itself is an additive, gradual, slow, reasoned accumulation of data (Rancière 1991, xxi). It is deficit thinking or lazy reason (Santos 2004, 2) that has prescribed to individuals that they come to learning through explication, when in fact young children prove that they learn to speak through their own intelligence and not through a form of guided practice (Rancière 1991, 42). Furthermore, Rancière (1991, 11) takes the view that to explain something to someone is first to show him/her that he/she cannot understand it by him/herself, when in fact evidence abounds of the power non-dominant students have in shattering the hierarchical world of intelligence. Here he calls forth an instance when the peasant's daughter is sufficiently self-directed to the point of training herself to be a chemist without the supervision and knowledge of her boss (Rancière 1991, 18). In this way, Rancière presciently proposes that the educator announce and broadcast publicly, especially to the poor, this inborn ability they hold in order to raise their consciousness and reveal intelligence to itself. Quite simply, he cautions that there well may be inequality in the manifestations of intelligence, but that there is no hierarchy of intellectual capacity, since economically marginal students do not have the will to discover elite knowledge if nothing in school relates to their associations of lived experience. The warning he issues here is that non-dominant students have to resist the distractions that lead to intellectual laziness and refuse the willingness to retire from effort because it is a signifier of the mind underestimating its own power (Rancière 1991, 79). The value in the argument offered by Rancière is that students draw upon their intelligence as a reified form of human agency to assert their equality not only with the teacher but, by extension, with that of the broader society, and lastly with the whole of humanity. In this way critical agents assert and seize their rights promised by democracy, namely freedom, equality and justice. Therefore, what follows below is a valiant attempt, under oppressive, anti-democratic conditions, to allow equality of intelligence to manifest in South African education.

CRITICAL PEDAGOGY AS PROGRESSIVE PEDAGOGY IN CURRICULUM TRANSFORMATION

By imposing an unfair language policy, the tyrannical apartheid state became trapped in the consequences of its own policies (Gardiner 1987, 8), necessitating

and culminating in resistance from popular education movements such as People's Education for People's Power. The People's Education movement was invested in the real interests and struggles of ordinary people, seen in the fact that they were overtly political and critical of the status quo, as well as being committed to progressive social and political change (Crowther 1999, 4). Consequently, Gardiner (1987, 8−10) outlines the mission of the movement in relation to the reconstituting and reconceptualising of South African education, with its manifesto stating alignment between education and the broader social experience by redefining teacher roles; revising content; embracing participatory methods of learning; incorporating student lived experience; reforming school governance; and forming greater solidarity between political movements and trade unions, all in a bid to make education more democratic and humane. A retrogressive analysis of this manifesto highlights that some of the proposals contained in the People's Education movement are consonant with the spirit of the new education policy, the National Curriculum Statement (DoE 2011). What follows is an attempt to clarify the resonance between Gardiner's 1987 appeal to democratic principles, namely freedom, equality and justice, and the principles favoured in the National Curriculum Statement (NCS), which are:

> social transformation; active and critical thinking; high knowledge and high skills; progression; human rights; valuing indigenous knowledge systems; credibility; quality and efficiency; and providing an education that is comparable in quality, breadth and depth to those of other countries (DoE 2011).

CONCLUSION: CRITICAL PEDAGOGY AND IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION

From the above curriculum policy it becomes immediately apparent that some heed has been paid to Gardiner's (1987) proposal in that social transformation has resulted in slightly reconstructed student/teacher roles. Added tentative indications of transformation could be imagined via the participatory methods Gardiner called for, that might be manifest in critical thinking skills and the valuing of alternative knowledge systems, for example. Furthermore, student lived experiences may be empowering in their (student) discovery of high knowledge and high skills, all the while endeavouring to attain a more democratic and humane pedagogic experience. More alarming, however, are the technical, productive elements contained in the NCS, namely progression, credibility, quality and efficiency, and providing an education that is comparable in quality, breadth and depth to those of other countries (DoE 2011). The implication here is that progressive pedagogical principles are not at all antagonistic to the capitalist, functionalist timber of the other principles as they are presented alongside each other in official state policy. This schizophrenic approach to education portends ominously for critical pedagogy for a number of

reasons. First of all, it coincides with Bowles and Gintis's (1976, 246) appraisal of the 'correspondence principle' that schooling coincides with the capitalist economic structure, thereby entrenching inequality while creating the popular fiction of social mobility through meritocracy (Molteno 1987, 4). Consequently, capitalist structures reproduce social relations and structures that favour the dominant elite, while accommodating a mechanistic model (as seen through education) of supplying cheap labour for capital (Molteno 1987, 10). Secondly, building on the first objection, the NCS gives the impression that students use knowledge and skills (intelligence) in the employ of capitalist aspirations (crass materialism, exploitation, individualisation and competition), rather than in the struggle for human dignity and the pursuit of strong democracy. Thirdly, and while the NCS seems to promote the concept of social transformation, it is ambiguous about how this transformation might come about. Furthermore, it provides a shabby indication of the imaginative possibilities that students could engage in by way of seeking alternatives and forbidding capital to construct subjectivities and create external needs in us. Rather, it creates such suspicion that even 'valuing indigenous knowledge system[s]' could be construed to mean in the interests of capital. Fourthly, a rather ephemeral attempt at social cohesion and democratic rights neglects to admit the suffering and distress attendant with capital (particularly for the economically marginal), and how students could possibly engage with these problems meaningfully to help find solutions to bring about greater equality, inclusion and participation. Simply stated, this means that the ideology undergirding the NCS document says more in the way of omission than it does in admission. And finally, the sedated thinking inherent in a mechanistic pedagogy under capitalism immobilises critical thinking. If the allure of capital is so enchanting to students, it need not demand alternative ways of thinking, grasping, acting, feeling and being, since students would either be unconcerned with distributive justice or keen to operate as social activists, as this has no individual benefit under capitalist social relations.

In conclusion, the assault on the invisible (or barely visible) footprints of critical pedagogy as envisioned by People's Education for People's Power is evident in its cohabitation with the functionalist, technocratic principles of capital accumulation. This cohabitation, which might actually mean a complete overshadowing of critical pedagogy, forecloses on critical student agency, unless the contradictions of capital become so stark that students revolt out of individual rather than collective displeasure with capital. Furthermore, it provides cold comfort that students might resist capital in defence of strong democracy if democracy is defined greatly in capitalist terms (property rights, greed, corruption, lack, scarcity, etc.), and that society supports identities constructed under capital only. With all that being said, more humane consequences for human life are unnecessary when students accept the status quo. The danger herein is that it eviscerates the need to engage in ideology critique, counter-hegemonic practice, finding practical situations to social problems,

or even conscientisation of asymmetrical power relations in society. But even more arresting is that the heinous violence internalised in capitalist ideological hegemony has the power to neutralise critical student agency and critical pedagogy to the point that capital assumes an unquestioned (unquestionable and uncontested) logic.

Hence, in all the aforementioned strands of critical pedagogy, the potential impact on higher education has become apparent in quite definitive ways. Critical pedagogy has been stretched beyond the mere rhetoric of counter-hegemony, ideological critique and conscientisation towards an equalisation of human (student) agency as progressive and transformative that might turn out to be a pedagogy grounded in what the agent disrupts, rather than just being framed by the mere cognitive enhancement of the mind's conscientisation.

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