

Culturally inclusive pedagogies of care: A narrative inquiry

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Abstract: This paper is a reflection on culturally relevant pedagogies of care to achieve more equitable outcomes for diverse cultures within early childhood. The authors are academics at a tertiary institute in Auckland, New Zealand. Our aim is to share our experiences as teachers in a diverse and multi-ethnic city in New Zealand. Authors draw on narrative methodology to deconstruct our experiences and share how we position ourselves in teaching and learning. The paper emphasises an enactment of pedagogy that recognises diverse cultural knowledge and other ways of knowing.

Keywords: culturally inclusive pedagogy, narrative inquiry, diverse cultures.

Paper

The present discourse of globalisation has shaped the world of early childhood education as society has become more and more diverse. As the population becomes more diverse, teachers are challenged to incorporate inclusive pedagogies. New Zealand today is characterised by a number of cultures and identities. The authors share their experiences as teachers as we believe that culture and experiences of teachers and learners affect the enactment of pedagogies. Cherrington and Shuker (2012) highlight the importance of engaging with teachers' cultural identity and otherness and how they engage with children, their own and their peers' cultures. We argue that besides engaging with cultural otherness of teachers, there is also a need to look beyond the universalising approaches to otherness and move towards a culturally inclusive and relevant pedagogy.

Culturally inclusive pedagogy focuses on respect for cultural differences and inclusion of diversity. It also emphasises power sharing equity and justice. Culturally inclusive pedagogy is not a new concept. It has been extensively regarded as a useful strategy to improve educational outcomes for indigenous students worldwide (Habib, Densmore-James & Macfarlane, 2013). Relevant pedagogy thus recognises the experiences and cultural identities in teaching and learning. According to Ndemanu and Jordan (2018) culturally responsive pedagogy is about teachers growing knowledge about their students, their culture, perspectives, experiences and values. Authors strongly warn against including stereotypical information about different cultures and emphasise authentic knowledge as a tool to avoid stereotyping (Ndemanu & Jordan, 2018). The paper draws on experiences of two academics as we believe values and perspectives of teachers influence what goes on in education.

Critical pedagogy focuses on issues of culture identity and inclusion and how these influence what goes on in education and shapes the purpose of education. This paper draws on critical pedagogy to analyse the narratives to develop a discourse of care; empowerment and participative democracy that is authentic. Henry Giroux (2016) recognises critical pedagogy as an ideology where educators must encourage students to be critically engaged and attentive to the social issues of the time. The issue of cultural diversity in relation to inclusion has become a major focus in early childhood as a result of globalisation and migration of people from one country to another. The issue is also a complex one as it includes notions of culture, race, ethnicity, equality and inequality (Chan 2006; Robinson & Diaz, 2006; Ang, 2010).

Culture is a difficult term to define. It has been widely defined as shared values, people's way of doing things, social practices, attitudes of people and shared behaviours (Rata, Obrien, Murray, Mara, Gray & Rawlinson 2001; Verner & Beamer, 2005). These understandings of culture refer to everyday practices and values of groups of individuals and is used commonly today in sociological paradigm to define the notions of culture in an inclusive manner (Ang, 2010). Moreover, contemporary understandings of culture also celebrate complexity and diversity. The cultures of individuals include identities that are continuously evolving and changing. Homi Bhabha points out that culture represents diverse values and practices that interact with each other to form different cultures (Homi Bhabha cited in Ang, 2010). Thus in order to understand culture and diversity, one needs to recognise that cultures are not homogenous but heterogeneous. This paper deconstructs the discourse of diverse 'other' pedagogies in the early childhood context

of New Zealand to increase our awareness of diverse cultures in relation to teaching and learning. It also critically reflects and questions the dominant discourses that govern our ways of thinking about diverse pedagogy. Critical pedagogy locates human beings as agents of change and promote action against injustices in the society. Critical pedagogy allows teachers and learners to engage in critical discourses and take action around issues of hegemony, privilege and social justice Sauto-Manning (2017).

Current Context

Globalisation has resulted in migration of people to different parts of the world. This has resulted in immigration of people from developing nations like India to Westernised societies. (Sanagavarapu, 2010). As a result of immigration from Asia, the ethnic composition of early childhood centres in New Zealand has changed tremendously (Shuker & Cherrington, 2016). There has been a rapid increase in student teachers coming to New Zealand from different parts of the world including India.

It is also important here to recognise the bi-cultural nature of early Childhood sector of New Zealand. Treaty of Waitangi is the founding document of Aotearoa, (New Zealand). The three principles of the treaty: Partnership; Protection and Participation guide the teaching framework. The treaty is mandated in many policy documents and legislation. However, within the early childhood education sector, even though many teachers (both preservice and inservice), may recognise the importance of biculturalism, a large majority of early childhood centres continue to educate children from a monocultural, monolingual perspective and position (Ritchie, 2003). Early childhood sector is also influenced by the neo-liberal market ideology that emphasizes individualistic European American ideologies of child centered development that do not recognise other cultures that are influenced by others in the community and identities are construed in relationship and interactions with others (Kennedy, 2006; Rana, 2012). Sauto-Manning (2017) suggests it is important to recognise that early childhood teacher educators are cultural beings and have their own identities and pedagogies. We need to however also challenge the existing normative or privileged identities of early childhood teachers that view other cultures from the perspective of one's own. The privileged identities we are referring to here is the dominant western ideology that prescribes our curriculum. Critical pedagogy challenges the assumptions of dominant discourses around curriculum and other areas of teaching and learning (Sauto-Manning, 2017). We invite pre-service teachers to do the same in their student teaching placements.

The authors of this paper aim to incorporate culturally inclusive and relevant pedagogies into pre-service teacher education programme. Authors consider experiences in their cultures and context of teaching to promote a pedagogy of care for early childhood educators to work in diverse settings in critically inclusive and culturally relevant ways. The experiences shared as narratives include our stories of growing up in our respective cultures and values of teaching and learning.

A Brief Note on Methodology

In recent years narrative inquiry has become a popular method of inquiry and writing. Narrative inquiry as a research approach today is reshaping qualitative inquiry in the academic world. There is no single explanation of narrative inquiry. It has different meanings for different disciplines. Simply stated narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience. They are stories that are lived and told (Richards, 2011, Clandinin & Connally, 2000). Narratives are mostly autobiographical in nature, they also include: memoirs, biography, diaries, documents, records, folk ballads, photographs and other visual representations (Richards, 2011, Clandinin & Connally, 2000). Narratives give voice to researchers' stories and has many links to events and subjective understandings of the researcher (Richards, 2011).

There is a lot of debate about narrative research and how it differs from traditional research. Traditional research "strives to discover and verify knowledge about the real state of the world. In contrast narratives strive to portray experience, to question common understandings..." (Coulter & Smith, 2009, p. 577). Our research explores our stories of cultural contexts and experience as teachers. Narrative research therefore is suitable to investigate our cultural contexts and social realms that would be difficult to investigate under traditional method (Richards, 2011). We employ a narrative framework to uncover our perceived truths based on our experiences. Our narratives offer our stories and values of teaching and learning. We are creating a space for us to listen to ourselves and also leaving further analysis to the reader. We included two different perspectives as it validates the need to understand and respect diverse knowledge.

Polkinghorne (2007) points out the validity of narratives is verified by its rich details and description. A narrative inquirer, by providing a detailed and rich description validates the research and arguments presented in the text. Drawing on Polkinghorne, we think narrative inquiry gives us an opportunity to analyse socio-cultural environment that shaped the experi-

ences (Polkinghorne, 2007). The authors also analyse their experiences and group them into themes.

In this narrative analysis we have two academics who are narrating their experiences from their cultural contexts. One is originally from India who is looking at narrating postcolonial discourse of teaching and learning. Second author is from Cook Island and Samoan descent, born in New Zealand. The two constructs of pedagogies in education reflect the diversity in education. This paper presents our values about teaching and learning as who we are as educators, shapes our day to day teaching in the classroom. This also impacts what students learn (Richards, 2011). Therefore, in the next section we present our narrative of who we are and our teaching philosophy.

Narrative One

I, Dr L, am an Indian academic in the school of education at a tertiary institute in Auckland. I grew up in Delhi, India in a Gujarati (ethnic group from Western parts of India) family. I grew up in a culture where families put a lot of emphasis on education. It was very important for the family to provide the best of education to children. I went to a private convent school and later to a prestigious college to complete my first degree. Research also highlights the importance of education for Asian families. Many of the Asian parents expect their child to engage in academic learning from a very young age (Chan, 2011, Wu & Singh, 2004). Findings of a research study about Indian migrant parents' perspectives about Australian early childhood too highlighted how Indian parents lay emphasis on academic excellence and disregard play as a form of learning (Patel & Agbenyega, 2013). Similar to these research my father was very keen that I and my siblings should go to the best schools in the region. My parents encouraged me to pursue my dream of becoming a teacher. I have five other siblings (four sisters and one brother), my parents always encouraged us to excel in whatever we did. My parents believed education was the best gift they could give their children. So here I am having fulfilled my dream of becoming a teacher and sharing my experiences with my students and peers.

The cultures of individuals include identities that are continuously evolving and changing (Ang, 2010). In this context my values and identity further evolved as I continued with my further education in India and overseas at an Australian university where I completed a doctorate program. As I reflect on my experiences of studying and migrating to the western world, the differences in approaches between western and traditional Indian ideologies

become very apparent. And this has influenced my identity and experience as a migrant educator. Today I identify myself as an Indian migrant academic in a multicultural society dominated by white European discourses. This gives me an opportunity to share my indigenous values and also encourage students to question neoliberal ideology of standardised tests and achievement levels prescribed by the corporate industries. I have grown up with values of respecting the elders, humility and tolerance. I remember as a child listening to the traditional legends and stories recited by the elders in the family out of respect for the members of the family.

Critical pedagogy recognises the significance of indigenous values and ways of doing, seeking to revive and foster indigenous epistemologies (Kirylo, Thirumurthy, Smith & McLaren, 2010). For example, indigenous values give significance to family. Education is not an individual effort but involves the whole family. If my students are not able to come to my class due to circumstances in the family, I do not judge them for it. I understand as I can relate to them and how they value their families. However, the dominant ideology that prevails among the academics find it difficult to understand how education which is an individual pursuit is affected by family and its wellbeing. Ling-Yin (2007) points out in this context that it is important to critically reflect and question the dominant discourses that govern our ways of thinking about diverse cultures.

My teaching philosophy is based on my experience and knowledge as a teacher and learner. It is influenced by the cultural values I grew up with and also recognises the influences of western developmental theories. It is greatly influenced by Rabindranath Tagore's (Indian philosopher) ideas and philosophy. Rabindranath was the first non-European to receive a Nobel Prize in Literature. Rabindranath Tagore saw education as a vehicle for appreciating other cultures while maintaining one's own cultural specificity. Tagore believed in democratic values and freedom of power in language. He believed in the power of education and how it empowered an individual to develop to the fullest extent (Singh & Rawat, 2013). Thus my decolonising pedagogy goes beyond the perspectives and norms of the dominant discourses in the west to include other cultural perspectives. My teaching thus incorporates a number of Indian cultural aspects. For example, I bring in practices related to celebration of festivals including telling stories about Indian legends. I also consciously share ideas and knowledge of great Indian philosophers like Rabindranath Tagore. For example, on the occasion of celebrating end of semester for year two students I shared the educational philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore that emphasises freedom and creativ-

ity of learners. Students and other staff immediately wanted to know more about his ideas.

Literature points out that the beliefs held by the teachers influence their practices (Gay, 2000). My teaching beliefs have also been shaped by western critical pedagogies and philosophers. Moreover, the cultural and educational experiences of teachers also influence their practices in the classroom. I believe teaching gives one an opportunity to inspire and empower students. I encourage students to be involved in discussions and activities in classroom. As Freire (1984) points out education is not about transference of knowledge, it is grounded in the reality of students' lives and is a collaborative and collective production of knowledge.

Today the world is changing at a very fast pace. I like to keep current with new technologies of learning so I can share and use these in my classroom. Freire saw dialogic relations between teachers and learners, and emphasised problem-posing as liberating that would develop a critical consciousness among students (Keesing-Styles, 2002). I encourage students to question and see outside the box when trying to understand a phenomenon. As a teacher I am flexible and like to centre my teaching to the context of students. Learning is something very individual and teaching needs to be in relation with the needs of learners. Moreover, engagement with the students is key to a good teaching and learning environment. It is the responsibility of educators to empower young people with the capacities to think, question, and doubt, and be attentive to significant social issues (Giroux, 2016).

Narrative Two

My (Y. Culbreath) ancestry is diverse and multi-ethnic. I am Cook Islander and Samoan, New Zealand born and educated. Education was an expectation and priority in the preparation for finding a job. In finding a job I would then be able to contribute to my family.

My parents believed a good education would enable success in New Zealand. A migrant view that emphasised the speaking of English as paramount to a successful life in New Zealand. I attended schools that were located in the vicinity as these were accessible to us. My journey in education has evolved through life experience as a mother with two children.

Involvement in my children's education was the catalyst for my pursuit of further educational knowledge. Over a ten-year span the achievement of

an Early childhood teaching diploma, a Bachelor of Education Degree and a Master of Arts in Education Degree was realised. Fifteen years ago this enabled me to enter into the Academy as a lecturer.

The experiences alongside the triumphs and challenges as a Pacific Nations lecturer in the academy will inform my narrative. This view is further informed by reflective analysis and a deepening understanding of the self or many selves. Although the ideas are perceived as my own, and my truth, how much of this thinking has come about as a result of what I have studied and learnt over almost twenty-five years.

I believe a holistic view enables many aspects to be called on to reveal what has been effective and meaningful when engaging with diverse groups of students. A holistic view means the responses, comments, queries students bring to the discussion are cues for me to engage with their views. Ensuring their ideas and world views have a place and contribute to a shared understanding. Students have a voice and in sharing their voices we learn from each other. Creating opportunities, utilizing spaces for this to take place empowers the learner and the teacher. It is very much a reciprocal relationship where the teacher and learner is interchangeable. The many views create further thinking that I believe empowers on many levels. Holistic is also the spirit, the emotion, the nuances, the questioning sometimes the biases and prejudices which are not obvious but I believe enable rich dialogue to take place. Always open to interpretation and always with respect and honor for students having the courage and freedom to step out.

We must first of all start with ourselves. Understanding yourself and your many selves requires careful unpacking as truths can be very confronting. However, this unpacking also liberates and frees taken for granted assumptions about who you are. Through the 17 years of teaching in the academy the students have been the impetus for me to carefully examine who I am in this place. Therefore, the reflections and revelations have sometimes been confronting for me. How I honor the many selves that make up who I am requires courage and strength that I believe is ancestral. Significant family members who have influenced and shaped me guide who I am today. Some views I leave, as my learning evolves, ideas change, thinking also is influenced by many factors. An understanding of me, past present and perhaps future opens up many possibilities to be examined.

The revelations require careful analysis and a 'kindness lens' which re-awakens perhaps historical ideology that has become my mantra as I navi-

gate the teaching, learning space. 'Kindness lens' I am referring to here is about looking at myself with a lens that accepts who I am with all the frailties and strengths. This might not be a view that conforms to the academic rigour but is my cultural value that is a key to my teaching and learning. This lens allows me to bring in my cultural essence and wairua (spirit) to this teaching and learning space. I use a kindness lens as too often I can be harsh and judgmental of myself. This is based on what I have believed to be right, acceptable and appropriate given specific contexts and circumstances. Expectations of others determine ways of being and behaving in the academy. Therefore, I need to be mindful of ownership when advocating for my values, principles and beliefs. This is my response and view about teaching and learning.

Alongside the 'kindness lens' surveillance lens is another aspect of my teaching philosophy. This means awareness of my practice in relation to past events and considering the present moving towards the future. Surveillance lens ensures what is required in terms of the teaching and learning of prescribed content and knowledge takes place. My initial intention was to be aware of many things at the same time in a positive learning manner. One then becomes discerning as priorities require immediate response. Familiarity and different experiences means the lens changes over time. Therefore, alongside the academy requirements being an effective communicator, building meaningful relationships that have the interests of the students at heart has enhanced my philosophy of teaching.

One of my students said "you do not speak the language but you have a heart for our people." She said 'you always make sure you do not offend when you speak.' 'Our class is so diverse but we feel respected and heard'.

Therefore, relationships based on respect for people and the richness of life experience they bring to the learning enables me to weave connections to the learning in the immediate (for example the prescribed knowledge) and also validation of the student world view. Relationships are at the core of Pacific nations' culture and continue to be foundational to teaching and learning.

Some Themes Arising

Culturally inclusive pedagogies in today's complex society is fraught with many challenges. These are in relation to role of teacher; role of education in today's globalised world and diverse ethnicities in a multicultural world.

Higher education today is challenged by social and cultural diversity and the rise of neoliberal ideology focusing on knowledge economy. Critical pedagogy provides a framework to analyse these challenges and issues in education. Culturally responsive pedagogy informed by the ideology of critical pedagogy that emphasises transforming relationships and production of knowledge that is inclusive provides for a better teaching and learning environment.

Culturally responsive and inclusive pedagogies as the above narratives highlight can be defined as using cultural knowledge and prior experiences. It also respects diverse student learning styles. Culturally responsive pedagogy is about cultivating an open attitude and acquiring new skills. It is about exploring and respecting your own culture and also learning about other cultures. It is about building meaningful relationships and creating a culture of care (Habib, Densmore-James & Macfarlane, 2013). The narratives above have emphasised prior experiences, recognition of diverse cultures, identity and meaningful relationships as being core to teaching.

In the context of New Zealand, culturally responsive pedagogy is aligned with the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi which is the founding document of Aotearoa, (New Zealand). The three principles of the treaty as mentioned before guide the teaching framework. The principle of partnership encourages power sharing and involvement of families and community in decision making. The principle of protection safeguards the cultural knowledge of indigenous people and respect for diverse cultures. Participation is about engaging and promoting equitable rights and opportunities (Habib, Densmore-James & Macfarlane, 2013). Gay (2000) also acknowledges cultural knowledge and prior experiences as key to providing appropriate and effective educational experiences.

On a final note, the authors would like to emphasise the need for educators as pointed out by Giroux (2016) to focus on democratic values and culture of care in a society influenced by neoliberal ideas of education as a form of training and teaching standardised skills. We have argued for a relevant pedagogy that is inclusive and does not marginalise other knowledge. Education should not be about transference of knowledge but rather the collaborative and collective production of knowledge grounded in the reality of students' lives. As Souto-Manning (2017) point out critical pedagogy positions human beings as agents of change who do not accept things as they are. This ideology is based on recognising that human beings are capable of naming injustices for transformation. Therefore, critical pedagogy is an ideology where educators encourage students to be critically engaged

and attentive to the social issues of the time and take action around issues of power, privilege and social justice. This paper draws on critical pedagogy to analyse the narratives to develop a discourse of care and empowerment. This paper hopes to further contextualise teaching pedagogies and identities in a world which is challenged by diversity. Further research is required to examine how teachers are prepared to be inclusive of diverse ways of being. Multiple perspectives need to be valued, including students' experiences and indigenous ways of knowing. This is an ongoing study and the next step is to explore students' narratives in this space.

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