

# The culture space in the education classroom

## Teachers' perspectives

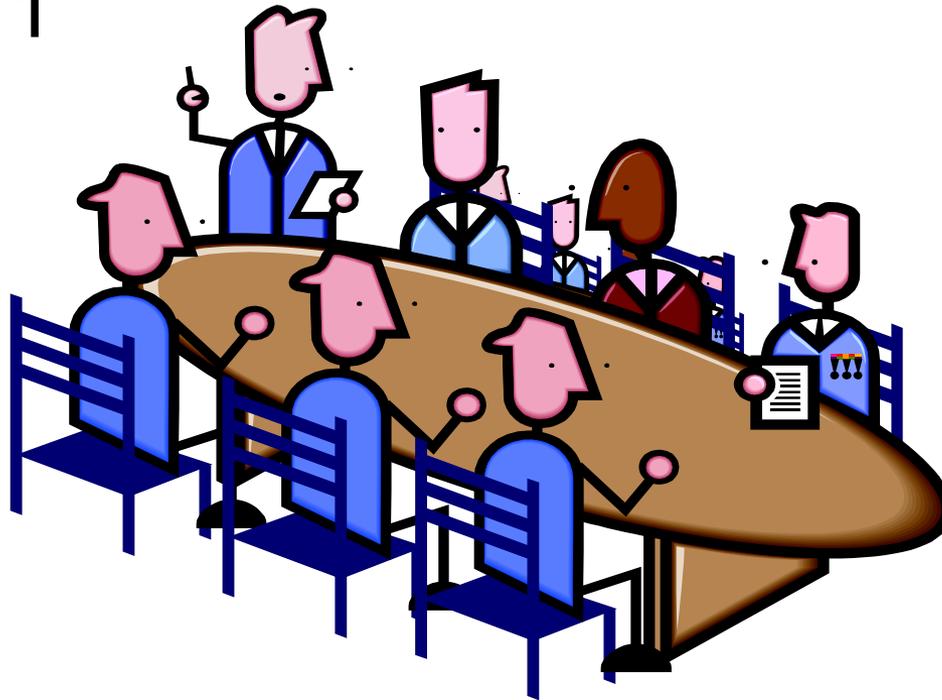
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# Background: the issue

- Curriculum is culturally irrelevant

# Background: Data Collection

- Part 1



# Findings

- Culture and identity in the midst of diversity
- Local/global dichotomy/continuum
- Temporality (past/present/future orientation)
- Student-centeredness
- Teacher competence
- Curriculum design and support structures

# The issue

- Teachers had not been consulted
- A larger group (ECCE, primary and secondary teachers)

# Research questions

- What is the extent of agreement between teachers and other stakeholders in society regarding the culture curriculum nexus?
- What examples of students' culture do teachers suggest for curriculum development?
- What significant issues must be considered when developing culturally relevant curricula in the context of Trinidad and Tobago?

# Theoretical concepts

- Colonialism, neo colonialism and post colonialism (Childs & Williams, 1997; Dei & Kempf, 2006; Yazzie, 1999)
- Cultural retentions (Warner-Lewis, 1991)
- Identity (Fanon, 1963; Yazzie, 1999)
- Psycho- affective motivations (Fanon)
- Third-space approach (Lipka et al, 2005)

# Questionnaire

- A suitable data collection strategy

# Literature on questionnaire development

- **Issues**

- Item type - closed Likert type (Gift, 2009) or open-ended items (Lederman et al, 2002)
- Summative score? combining unrelated items into a single total is unjustified psychometrically (Osborne et al cited by Tzu-Ling & Berlin, 2010)
- Validity issues

# Validity

- Lederman et al (2000, p.336), in discussing the development and validation of the SPI inventory, “the validation of SPI was achieved in the usual manner for such instruments: literature review, devising a model, employing the judgments of experts, getting feedback from pilot studies, and testing the instrument’s ability to distinguish among different groups of respondents.”

# Validity

- Related to research on views of NOS, Lederman et al (2002) advocate a method of validating such instruments through the use of interviews to probe responses to open-ended questionnaire items

# Questionnaire format

- **Decisions**
  - Mix of closed Likert type and open-ended
  - No summative score required
  - Use of empirical data, peer review, issues in the literature, pilot and revise.

# Procedure

- Develop questionnaire
- Peer review
- Pilot questionnaire
- Revise based on feedback
- Distribute to wider sample of teachers for completion
- Analyse responses
- Interview with selected teachers

# Data collection

- Pilot group (primary and secondary teachers)
  - Group of 18 teachers involved in the MEd programme

# Data collection cont'd

- Live groups
  - MEd group (35 students: primary and sec)
  - Dip Ed Trinidad (66); Dip Ed Tobago (9)
  - BEd (level 3; 27: primary and ECCE)
- Interviews with 8 of 13 Dip Ed T'dad students (who consented to participate if required)

# Research Question 1

- RQ 1: What is the extent of/areas of agreement between teachers and stakeholders in society regarding the culture curriculum nexus?

- Generally there was high agreement of these teachers with the themes developed from the previous focus groups
- 84% felt that culturally relevant curricula should be included in the content of all schools
- Only 44% agreed that alternative type schools were required

# Statistical analysis

- Principal components – 12 factors
- Re-run analysis with forced factor of 5
- 53% variance

- Focus on outcomes/future orientation - 14 items, e.g.
  - prepare students for independent behaviour
  - prepare students for the adult world
  - include global issues/scenarios

- Lived experience – 9 items
  - address students' backgrounds
  - include assessment tasks that are related to students' culture
  - relate to students' home life

## ● Content – 10 items

- culturally relevant curricula can be developed for language arts
- culturally relevant curricula can be developed for physical education
- curriculum can be simultaneously of a high academic standard and culturally relevant

## ● Standards – 5 items

- a national curriculum cannot be culturally relevant
- a curriculum that is culturally relevant will restrict students from participation on the global stage
- alternative schools should be established to deliver culturally relevant curricula

- Conceptual/Philosophical – 3 items
  - “whose culture?”
  - “relevant to whom?”
  - there is a difference between a curriculum that is relevant and one that is culturally relevant

- ANOVA showed no differences between groups
- Correlation showed some positive relationship among the groups

# Conclusion 1

- Most teacher respondents were in general agreement with views expressed by other stakeholders - concerned citizens, artists, academics, and curriculum officers.
- There was general agreement also between different groups of teachers on culturally relevant curriculum

# Research Question 2

- What examples of students' culture do teachers suggest as useful for curriculum development?

# Findings 2

- Responses to item: State 3 cultural beliefs or practices which you think can impact on the teaching/learning interface
- A significant number of respondents omitted the item as follows:
  - MEd: 60%
  - Dip Ed T'dad: 59%
  - Dip Ed T'go: 33%
  - BEd: 48%

# Findings 2

- Traditional practices/beliefs
  - It's not that simple, but identity, heritage and music/folklore/art/religions/diversity to appreciate inclusion and one-ness (Dip Ed T'dad No. 19)
  - Food fallacies in the Caribbean- difficult to dispel wrong beliefs e.g. green bananas contain iron (Dip Ed T'dad No. 42)
  - Sou Sou (Dip Ed T'dad No 61)

# Findings 2

## Traditional practices/beliefs

- Tobago Heritage Festival; Carnival (costuming and calypsos); superstition (deleted) (Dip Ed T'go No. 4)
- calypso music, festivals, reinventing old time activities (BEd No. 4)
- Traditional methods (BEd No. 22)
- Festivals and religious practices
  - fasting; prayer (Dip Ed T'dad No 34)

# Findings 2

- Contemporary culture
  - Digital culture among youths allow them to learn differently; Students are more outspoken about their beliefs (Dip Ed T'dad No 51)

# Findings 2

- Beliefs about students and student learning
  - All children can learn; children learn differently; children learn by doing (MEd No 24)
  - Children must listen to learn; the best teacher is experience; common sense come before book sense (MEd No 29)
  - Students are passive learners; talk/chalk, lecture type teaching strategies; traditional forms of assessment- paper and pencil tests. (MEd No 10)

# Findings 2

- **Social values**
  - children from lower social background cannot succeed; academic studies unimportant as not everyone will get work; curriculum is not relevant to needs of students. (MEd No. 30)

# Research Question 3

- What significant issues must be considered when developing culturally relevant curricula in the context of Trinidad and Tobago?

# Findings

## **Teachers' personal bias**

- The results revealed that the issue of Carnival is controversial and its selection for inclusion in culturally relevant curriculum is based on personal biases. For example, one said
  - “I am not in favour of it because of what pertains. Do they really need to know about this?”
- Another member of the focus group intervened to state
  - “But education is about choice. They must be provided with information and allowed to make a choice.”
- Another respondent summed up this attitude in the following manner “Carnival has its detractors”

# Findings

## **Inability to articulate views**

- Two persons indicated the challenge experienced as they tried to express their ideas about culture and curriculum. They stated respectively
  - “It is difficult to verbalize”
  - “I did not get to formulate an answer”

# Findings

## **Teacher uncertainty: The role of cultural beliefs**

- The culturally relevant curriculum should include examples of students' cultural beliefs but
  - “it would not make much of a difference in students' performance if it [cultural beliefs] was not included.” She felt that there was a need to include it, but not really sure. She felt that the students' mindset was on passing exams whether they could relate to the concepts or not.

# Discussion

- Issues of levels of cultural retention
- Issues of confidence in revealing cultural beliefs which might be perceived as of low culture or indigenous culture
- Review of some items to determine validity- whether they assess what they are meant to assess

# The way forward

- Interviews to be held with teachers to clarify views expressed on the written questionnaire
- Interviews to be held with teachers of subjects within focus group sessions to determine their views on developing culturally relevant curricula with specific examples identified

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