

Teacher Educators: Transforming a Classroom of Practice through Critical Pedagogy



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Purpose

To share the experiences of teacher educators in Jamaica, by reflecting on teacher preparation practice in the postcolonial context.

Their experiences are indicative to who they are as teacher educators.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Teacher Educators' recognize that teacher preparation practice is framed against the backdrop of their colonial past, and so teacher preparation for this context is not without complexities.

These complexities include the challenges they face in their classrooms, the adoption of new approaches and the changes they envision in their teacher preparation program.

Methodology

Framed on a qualitative research design, using a phenomenological perspective to uncover the lived experiences of fourteen teacher educators.

Phenomenological approach :

Describing the participants experience through their world.

Methods

- In-depth interviewing
- Focus Group
- Observations

SAMPLE

- A purposive sample of **14 teacher educators** from three teacher training sites in Jamaica.

Cross-Case Thematic Analysis

analysis—grouping together answers from different people to common questions. (Patton, 1990)

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What do teacher educators understand to be the impact of colonization on education and their teaching (teacher education) ?

How do teacher educators describe their practice?

THEMES

Four themes were explored:

- **Banking Education**
- **Educational Shift**
- **Core Educational Beliefs**
- **Teaching Philosophy**

Findings: Theme Banking Education

What do teacher educators understand to be the impact of colonization on teacher education ? How do they evaluate this?

Teacher educators understood the impact as:

- **An Inherent value**
- **historically and socially embedded**
- **reproduced**
- **fostered dependency**

Theoretical Framework

Said (1979)

Postcolonial theorist Said's notion of Orientalism (*Othering*) provided interesting perspectives to understand how colonialism impacted education and teacher education in Jamaica.

ORIENTALISM

- The power the West (England, France, United States) hold over the Orient, rather than about the Orient itself. Orientals were stereotyped as lazy and a problem to be solved.

THE COLONIZED

the British, the governing authority, held all the **power** and **authority**, over the natives, who are (Othered). I argue, Western Education (British) created a dichotomy in the classroom, where the teachers are positioned as having the power, and the students the **Other**.

Banking Education

Training colleges in Jamaica in the late 1930s were dominated by Europeans, mainly the British.

“Missionaries recruited teachers who were knowledgeable of the British system and the ability to teach, with power of government over children and men” (D'Oyley & Murray, 1979, p. 13), imparting their ways of knowing and thinking and attempting to create a culture and history reflective of the governing authority (the British).

Winnie's NARRATIVE: Banking Education, An Inherent Value

While colonization is nonexistent, I saw value in it because I saw then that teachers recognized the importance of developing values. They represented the kind of attitude that we needed to have, we need to develop, in the sense that we are important. Even how the students are going to learn; they learn by looking at me, and therefore I need to exhibit those kinds of behaviors and attitude, so in that sense that may have been a positive.

While we move away from these teacher centeredness approaches, the “stage on the stage” and move towards where the students become the major players, my concern is that we are not too far off on the side and allowing students to just do their own thing with me here as the real guide.

I find that students are quick to blame teachers because they like to say “teacher didn't teach me this.”(**p. 79**)

NARRATIVES: Banking Education

Masa explained that, “because of the country’s historical past, where education was framed on the banking education model, students expect the teacher to pour out knowledge to them, the recipients.”

Jessie expressed similar views and said “teachers taught the way they were taught, as they were exposed to the traditional method of teaching, writing notes, and following in their textbook, and so students who enter the teacher’s colleges expect the same thing.”

Narratives: Banking Education, fostered Dependency & Reproduced

Teacher-centered approach is the one area I would really like to comment on, where the teacher in a real sense is the sole authority. How has it affected our learning? Firstly, dependency, the inability to think independently stifling of creativity, lack of initiative, and mediocrity. These are some of the consequences that I find we inherited, and it is disturbing. I see evidence of that here . . . and the students I teach.

(Stacious, p. 82)

The students, when they become teachers, they go out there and do the same things that we do. It's coming from the colonialism system where I am master, you are slaves, as Paulo Freire described when he spoke about "banking education." Banking education is where I pour into you, and you just take the information. The students, when they become teachers, they go into the classroom, and they do the same thing. They do not engage critical thinking with their own students. They do not try to understand their students or meet students where they are and take them to where they need to be. So it becomes the same thing where the teacher just believes that I come to the class; I write the content on the board, therefore I taught you. **(Jane, p. 82)**

Findings

How have they evolved?)

THEME: Educational Shift

- Adopting student centered approaches & constructivist classrooms
- Reflective practitioners
- Curriculum and policy Changes

NARRATIVES

The teacher is the authority and the wealth of everything; I think we are moving away from that. That had its place, and we are moving away from that by making teaching and learning more student-centered, where the students participate and take responsibility for part of their education. So you find that no longer are students going to sit there, and the system is not going to allow teachers to be the oracle to have all the wisdom. **(Heidi, p. 83)**

I also see that teacher education is evolving where I work. We are becoming creative **reflective practitioners**. We do not see our self as imparting knowledge to just dispatch to the students, but recognize that we are so powerful in terms of helping the students to be themselves and to be reflective. **(Rabina, p.86)**

I am very impressed that principals have to present reports of what is happening in their schools, and they are assessed and they are monitored. I am very impressed that teachers are required to go back to school and to be licensed. **(Stacious, p. 88)**

How do teacher educators describe their practice?

THEME: Teaching Philosophy

- Loving and Structured
- Preparation for life
- **Sharing Experiences**
- **Constructivist Teaching**

Narrative: Sharing Experiences and Constructivist teaching

I go out there, and I share my experiences with them. I am not afraid to share with them so that they understand. I always say to my students, you see us as lecturers and say wow. I say it never all started here. I share my background with them; for example, I tell them there are times when I never had books and teachers provided them, so they see me as a person. **(Rosina, p. 98)**

I research. I make sure I research what I teach, and I teach what I research. I make sure that whatever I am teaching, I model that behavior. Take, for example, in my Instructional Methodology class; if I am teaching the various teaching strategies, I make sure I demonstrate those strategies to the students so that they can emulate it. I strongly believe however, that no student is a blank slate; they come with something, so the teachers who is the facilitator is there to ignite a fire to draw out of the students. So for the most part, I am a guide on the side, and so I engage in constructive approach and corporate learning strategies. **(Masa, p.99)**

Theoretical Framework: Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy: centers its argument on a society divided by power relations. **It** Directly concerns enabling citizens to resist an unjust status quo (Burbules & Berk, 1999).

Based on data It was evident that teacher educators are articulating a much broader perspective or concern, of which I connect to Critical Pedagogy.

Critical Pedagogy

Bubbles; goal for her students is for them to understand their setting(context) so they can impact students' lives. She says even with working with a framework, they should not be a slave to it.

A central message in Freire's work is that of developing critical consciousness; he states, one can know only if he problematizes the natural, cultural and historical reality in which he is immersed.

Rosina: noted she wanted students to be teachable regardless of the climate they are going to be faced with; they will be strong enough, they will be resilient enough to say that this is what is right, and this is what I am going to do. There are challenges teachers will face when they go out to teach.

Paulo Freire

We must dare to teach so that we can continue to teach for a long time under conditions that we know well: low salaries, lack of respect, and the ever-present risk of becoming prey to cynicism. We must dare to learn how to dare in order to say no to bureaucratization of the mind to which we are exposed to every day. (1998, p. 3)

Teacher educators rejected the banking education model, as they believed it framed an oppressive society. Freire (2009) argued that individuals cannot be truly human based on a banking education process.

The banking concept rests on the notion that a gift is being given to those who are not knowledgeable—this is a perception of the colonizers as they held the power of knowing and others as ignorant.

“Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world and each other” (p. 72)

What does this practice look like?

- **Innovative** (Teacher as developer/initiator)
- **Facilitative** (model/doer, sharing experiences, problem posing)
- **Structured** (guided and controlled)
- **Consultative** (Teacher as advisor)

Four Roles were being represented by the teacher.
Key to these classroom approaches were:

- **Questioning, self-evaluation, problem solving, reflection, and teacher as guide.**

How do Teacher Educators see themselves in their practice?

Conclusion

- **Teacher educators see themselves as moving from being authoritative and closed to now being facilitative and open.**
- **Though it is expected that teacher educators prepare student teachers to teach critically, and be professionals in the classroom, teacher educators are articulating a broader perspective, which is critical pedagogy.**
- **Despite their educational struggles, teacher educators demonstrate pride, resiliency and a passion for teaching. Their educational roots have influenced their vision for their students. Essentially, their overall goal for their students is to develop that same passion and drive for teaching.**