Four Popular Pedagogies and Multicultural Social Justice Education

Carl A. Grant
University of Wisconsin-Madison

At universities and in p/k -12 schools, when many educators discuss teaching and learning, it is not uncommon for them to use the word *pedagogy*. In this paper, *pedagogy* is used to refer to the art, science, or profession of teaching, especially academic subjects or theoretical concepts (Collins Dictionary: Oxford Dictionaries, n.d.).

There are different pedagogies (e.g., teaching practices) available for teaching students, pedagogies that compete for educators' attention. Such teaching practices, or pedagogies, that include suggestions and activities about teaching and learning experiences (e.g., how to write learning objectives, present ideas and concepts to students, lead class discussion, group students, select materials, and develop assessments). In addition, there are pedagogies that address how educators should use text books, subject matter learning kits, and computer disks. Simply put, there are many different pedagogies designed to guide what we teach and how we teach. Further, some pedagogies or teaching practices are guided by ideologies or philosophies about teaching and what students should learn.

Often within these pedagogies, attention to multiculturalism and social justice education lacks focus or is absent. The term "diversity," or language that supports a colorblind ideology, are employed, accompanied by statements from author(s) declaring the pedagogy is designed for All students.

The take-away from this observation is that educators should examine the pedagogy that they plan to use or are using to ascertain the commitment to multiculturalism and social justice.

Questions that educators may include in the examination of the pedagogy include the following:

Do the author(s) of the pedagogy…

>…define social justice and multiculturalism or are the definitions left to the reader's understanding?

>…define democracy? Are examples in discussions about democracy more than about voting and possibly writing a letter to a government official?

>…use code words that obscure a clear understanding of cultural identity (e.g., at risk, color blind, etc)?

This paper continues with an examination of four popular pedagogies: critical pedagogy, problem-based learning pedagogy, cosmopolitan pedagogy, and place – based pedagogy.   At the outset, however, I note a limitation to the examination. The limitation is that the field or universe of the examination was restricted to four pedagogies that were available to students on the web. The restriction was imposed because students from the elementary level through college use the web as a major resource for conducting research. There is dwindling use of scholarly information from books and journals articles. Experience, Inc.'s 2006 Media Perception Survey recently surveyed college students and graduate students' use of the internet. Experience polled over 350 students and recent graduates nationwide. Results indicate that 43 percent of the students that completed the survey spend 10 hours or more a week on the internet. Google, Yahoo, and Face book are the sites that receive most attention. Mitra et al (2005) argue that access to the Internet is becoming ubiquitous in institutions of higher education. This is true of countries in the developed world and is becoming so in developing countries as well. Mitra et al (2005) contend that most institutions of higher education in developed countries make access to the World Wide Web (Web) almost as easy and transparent as access to phone lines. Furthermore, they claim

students coming out of the high school systems in those countries are increasingly aware of the opportunities offered by the Web, and are often already frequent Web users prior to entering the university.

Burton and Chadwick (2000) report on the internet research habits of students and observe that, although some students do depend solely on internet resources in writing research papers, a majority of the students in the study used a combination of library and online resources. This, Burton and Chadwick (2000) contend, does not mean that students are necessarily choosing the best or most pertinent sources relating to their research topics. Instead, they point out that students depend upon "access, access, access," and that they give the most positive ratings to sources that were "easy to understand, easy to find" and "available" (p. 321). In addition, Pascoe, Applebee, and Clayton (1996) discovered that ease, convenience, and accessibility are major factors influencing academic internet use.

This past week, my daughter Alicia, who is returning to college to earn a teacher certification, had to write a paper on "instructional strategies." Her choice was to write on computer technology. While most of the content of her paper is not pertinent to my paper; what is important to my paper is the conclusion statement in her paper. Alicia argued that the use of the internet, web-based definitions, etc is meaningful because of accessibility, convenience, and the many articles on the topic from which to choose.

Before I leave this point about the web and internet resources, the following statement is significant. The print edition of *Encyclopedia Britannica* is ending in 2012. That said, University of Wisconsin geography professor William Cronon contends that *Wikipedia* is a more comprehensive and detailed replacement (Stacy Foster, 2012).

Critical Pedagogy

According to *Critical Pedagogy of the Web,* "Although there is no static definition of "critical pedagogy," as the term has undergone many transformations as educators have deployed new strategies to confront changing social and historical contexts, the term has traditionally referred to educational theory and teaching and learning practices that are designed to raise learners' critical consciousness regarding oppressive social conditions. In addition to its focus on personal liberation through the development of critical consciousness, critical pedagogy also has a collective political component, in that critical consciousness is positioned as the necessary first step of a larger collective political struggle to challenge and transform oppressive social conditions and to create a more egalitarian society. As such, critical educators attempt to disrupt the effects of oppressive regimes of power both in the classroom and in the larger society.

Critical pedagogy is particularly concerned with reconfiguring the traditional student/teacher relationship, where the teacher is the active agent, the one who knows, and the students are the passive recipients of the teacher's knowledge (the "banking concept of education"). Instead, proponents of critical pedagogy believe the classroom should be envisioned as a site where new knowledge, grounded in the experiences of students and teachers alike, is produced through meaningful dialogue . Here, the works of such scholars as Augusto Boal, bell hooks, Deborah Britzman, Henry Giroux, Ira Shor, Joe Kincheloe, Norman Denzin, Peter Mc Laren and, of course, Paulo Freire, are used (Critical Pedagogy on the Web).

Problem-Based Learning (PBL)

According to t Problem-based learning web site it is an "approach that challenges students to learn through engagement in a real life problems. It is a format that simultaneously develops both problem solving strategies and disciplinary knowledge bases and skills by placing students in the active role of problem-solvers confronted with an ill-structured situation that simulates the kind of problems they are likely to face as future managers in complex organizations." Problem-based learning is student-centered. PBL makes a fundamental shift--from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning. The process is aimed at using the power of authentic problem solving to engage students and enhance their learning and motivation. There are several unique aspects that define the PBL approach:

- Learning takes place within the contexts of authentic tasks, issues, and problems--that are aligned with real-world concerns.

- In a PBL course, students and the instructor become co-learners, co-planners, co-producers, and co-evaluators as they design, implement, and continually refine their curricula.

- The PBL approach is grounded in solid academic research on learning and on best practices that promote it. This approach stimulates students to take responsibility for their own learning, since there are few lectures, no structured sequence of assigned readings, and so on.

- PBL is unique in that it fosters collaboration among students, stresses the development of problem solving skills within the context of professional practice, promotes effective reasoning and self-directed learning, and is aimed at increasing motivation for life-long learning.

Problem-based learning begins with the introduction of an ill-structured problem on which all learning is centered. Most of the learning occurs in small groups rather than in lectures. The teacher's role is changed from "sage on the stage" to a "guide on the side," becoming more a facilitator and coach of student learning, and acting as a resource person, rather than as knowledge-holder and disseminator. Similarly, students are more active as they engage as a problem-solver, decision-maker, and meaning-maker, rather than being merely a passive listener and note-taker.

Cosmopolitan Pedagogy

The Cosmopolitan Pedagogical approach demands a shift in educational institutions to address the immediate consequences of life in the 21st century, primarily through increased interaction with other people and other cultures in ways that permeate everyday experiences. It takes as its base an understanding that teachers are central to addressing the challenges students face and that to bring about the necessary changes needed for students to meet both academic and personal goals (e.g., flourishing life) demands a rethinking of pedagogical practice that are needed to create means for students to learn to perceive others and their otherness in ways that allow for them to acknowledge and embrace the difference of other people.

Rostislav Roznosh (2011) argues that a cosmopolitan pedagogical approach situates the teacher not as an isolated and sterile part of an educational system but rather it stresses that teachers are people before they are teachers and are not free of their own personal biases, histories, and experiences. "Thus, teachers are in a position in which they can influence the larger forces dictating daily, lived experience" (Roznosh, 2011).

A cosmopolitan pedagogy is an exploration of, "Globalization particularly the dynamics that

deals with the increasingly frequent contact that societies have with others. It explores the

competing dynamics of globalization as a homogeneous force and globalization as a

heterogeneous force, and concludes with an understanding that Cosmopolitanism is a challenge

that can and should be addressed in our classrooms" (Roznosh, 2011)

Some question cosmopolitan pedagogy seeks to ask include the following:

> "Is everything determined by necessary causes so that any idea of freedom is illusory?

> How is it possible to unite an education as an independent individual with an education as a society?"

> What does society actually want to achieve though education? Should the aim be to meet the various needs of young people to discover the diversity of life and develop their skills and satisfy their own needs, or to ensure the most differentiation of society into professional and technical function?

> How to educate to freedom?

> How to define freedom?

> Should the pedagogical relationship be maintained as care and personal guidance or a dissemination of knowledge and attitudes?"
> http://whataretheseideas.wordpress.com/2011/05/19/towards-a-cosmopolitan-pedagogical-practice/

Some curriculum proponents of cosmopolitan pedagogy argue that 25 to 40% of the

curriculum should be key problems of the modern world, and that curriculum should consider

key problems of the modern world and form a common core of content of international education

http://whataretheseideas.wordpress.com/2011/05/19/towards-a-cosmopolitan-pedagogical-

practice/

Place Based Education

Exploration of this approach led to the present writing assignment. Sometimes called *pedagogy of place*, *place-based learning*, *experiential education*, *community-based education*, *education for sustainability*, *environmental education* or more rarely, *service learning*, it is developed out of the Orion Society education philosophy (Soebel, 1993; http://dirt.kent.edu/?page_id=161) Educators in the Orion Society coined the term "place-based education" and have applied its principles for decades**.** Place-based education seeks to help communities through employing students and school staff in solving community problems. It differs from conventional text- and classroom-based education in that it takes into account students' local community as one of the primary resources for learning. Place-based education promotes learning that is rooted in what is local—the unique history, environment, culture, economy, literature, and art of a particular place--that is, the students' own "place" or immediate schoolyard, neighborhood, town or community. According to this pedagogy, grade school students often lose their "sense of place" by focusing too quickly or exclusively on national or global issues. This is not to say that international and domestic issues are peripheral to place-based education, but that students should first have a grounding in the history, culture and ecology of their surrounding environment before moving on to broader subjects. Place-based education is often hands-on, project-based, and always related to something in the real world.

Looking Across Four Pedagogies

All of these pedagogies are teaching practices for the Twenty-First Century. They are concerned with the art, science, and profession of teaching. They range from raising critical consciousness, focusing on personal liberation, challenging and transforming social conditions to challenging students to learn through engagement with real problems. Students are taught to become problem solvers. Some of the pedagogies necessitate a shift in our educational institutions' ways of doing - to address the immediate consequences of life in the 21st century. Here the intention is to increase interaction with other people and other cultures in ways that permeate students' everyday experiences, and to help communities by employing students and school staff in solving community problems. The approach is to promote learning that is rooted in the unique history, environment, culture, economy, literature, and art of a particular place: The students' own "place" or immediate schoolyard, neighborhood, town or community.

As we look across the pedagogies, we see a great deal that is academically effective for learning. The ideas outlined are consistent with the four practices Sleeter and Grant (2009) identify as unique to multicultural social justice education:

> First, democracy is actively practiced in the schools; second, students learn how to
>
> analyze institutional inequality within their own life circumstances; and third, students
>
> learn to engage in social action so they can change unfair processes. On this point,
>
> advocates of multicultural social justice education do not expect students to reconstruct
>
> the world, but they do expect the schools to teach students how to do their part in helping
>
> the nation achieve excellence and equity in all areas of life. Fourth, bridges are built to
>
> establish relations with various oppressed groups (e.g., people who are poor, people of

color, and White women) so collectively they can work together to advance their

common interests (Sleeter and Grant, 2009).

That said, I am uncertain about educators' attention and the attention inherent within these pedagogies about students' identity and how the role of self (student's self esteem or self-concept) is constructed and to what extent are historical materials and artifacts from the students' cultural background included. It could be that my concern has no ground or very little ground. For certain, it seems plausible that pedagogies that deal with oppressions use students' local community as the learning site and encourage the use of social action that deals with students' self esteem. But such does not have to be the case. Pedagogies can use colorblind examples to do everything from limit discussions of oppression in a democracy to purging voters' eligibility (See, for example, Terry Frieden (2011) "Feds Sue Florida Over Voter Purge") or use pedagogies that teach the dominant group in host countries to be more friendly to immigrant groups, as they demand or strongly encourage immigrant groups to shed their culture and identity. Such pedagogies do not make a point of connecting to the self-esteem, self-concept, or identity of the people who have immigrated. They are treated as a collective and, as such, individual qualities such as disability, sexual orientation, and socio economic status and group qualities such as language, ethnicity, and religion are not recognized.

Regarding identity, Hoover (1997) contends it, "is a thread that binds self and society" (p. 46). In the case of African American youth, and youth I have met in many different countries, Oyserman and Harrison (1998) state, "[A]nswers to the 'who am I?' question are likely to include both distinctive, unique features of the self one will become and also representations of oneself as a black person in America. That is, the self-concept is likely to contain both personal identity and also racial identity - a sense of what it means to be both American and of African

heritage" (p. 282). To what extent do the pedagogies pay attention to "identity" therefore becomes a problem of major significance. Not much discussion about identity is available in the on-line information examined for this paper.

I am also troubled by the lack of attention given to the history of the students. Yes, the above pedagogies argue for "engagement in real life problems" and "pay attention to students' identity" and acknowledge others' concerns, but the history of people of color is often underdeveloped, inaccurate and omitted (Grant & Grant, 1981; Wynter, 1990). Southgate (2000) argues, "[H]istory-–the memories of things past--is of supreme importance in maintaining a sense of identity" (p. 4), while Holt (1994) contends, "Historicity is crucial both in the sense of personal and collective memory and in terms of the constructs of the 'non-self' that takes shape with its space. One cannot conceptualize an individual consciousness, a self continuous from one time point to another, without a concept of history or memory" (p. 9). Also, speaking about history, Baldwin (1965) says the following:

> For history … is not merely something to be read. And it does not refer
>
> merely, or even principally, to the past, on the contrary, the great force of
>
> history comes from the fact that we carry it within us, are unconsciously
>
> controlled by it in many ways, and history is literally present in all that we
>
> do. It could scarcely be otherwise, since it is to history that we owe our
>
> frames of reference, our identities, and our aspirations (p.47).

My argument in that we must make certain that students' history is taken into account as we consider our instructional pedagogy. We must both acknowledge and show appreciation for students' cultural, social, and political histories. Continuously, we must ask the following: Are

cultural contributions, social and political events significant to students' history included? Does the development of a critical consciousness and personal liberation use students' cultural, social and political history to support and encourage their learning? Does challenging students to learn through engagement with a real problem include historically locating the problem in students' cultural, social and political history in a way that not only presents the problem in the here and now, but also relates it to prevailing problems that previous generations (i.e., great-grandparents) have had to deal with?

In addition, in order for students to have positive interaction with people from other cultural groups demands that they first know the person in the mirror that looks back at them. Farther, they need know about the people that make up their community - their history, culture and contribution to their community way of life. Such is significant throughout the world, as the movement of people from one country to another for a better life is on an upswing. In addition, the migration within a country from one area (rural) to another (urban) is increasing. . Starting in kindergarten, pedagogies need to be employed that help students to enter engagements with others with a positive understanding of (first) who they are. This understanding hopefully will enable students to feel less threatened or not threatened (socially, economically, politically) when engaged in discussions about ethnicity, social justice, race and other human qualities that all students bring with them when they engage with others. That said fundamental to students' learning is that they receive and education that will enable them to do their part in helping the nation achieve excellence and equity in all areas of life

References

Baldwin, J. 1965. Unnameable objects, unspeaklable crimes. Blackstate.com. http://www.blackstate.com/baldwin1.html (accessed December 9, 2009

Batson, Trent (2011). The Problem of 'Pedagogy' in a Web 2.0 Era Campus Technology. http://stephenslighthouse.com/2011/06/25/the-problem-of-pedagogy-in-a-web-2-0-era. Retrieved 9/1/11.

Burton, V. T., & Chadwick, S. A. (2000). Investigating the practices of student researchers: Patterns of use and criteria for use of Internet and library sources. *Computers and Composition, 17* (3), 309-328.

Critical Pedagogy on the Web. *What is Critical Pedagogy?* http://mingo.info-science.uiowa.edu/~stevens/critped/definitions.htm. Retrieved 9/1/11.

Collins, English Dictionary http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/pedagogy [Retrieved 6/14/12].

Foster, S. (2012). Brave new Reference: A UW scholar weighs the credibility of Wikipedia. On Wisconsin, Summer, 113,2, p. 14.

Frieden, F. (2011)Feds Sue Florida Over Voter Purge. San Diego News. CNN http://www.10news.com/news/31184558/detail.html. [Retrieved].

Hoover, K. 1987. *The power of identity*. Chatham, NJ: Chatham House.

Grant , C. A. and Grant, G. W. (1981). The multicultural evaluation of some second and third grade textbooks : A survey analysis. The Journal of Negro Education 50, no. 1:63-74.

Lowe, Veroncia (2006). Study: College Students' Internet Use. http://www.imediaconnection.com/news/10466.asp. Retrieved 9/2/11.

Mitra, Anadra,Willyard, Jennifer, Platt, Carrie A. & Parsons, Michael. Exploring Web Usage and Selection Criteria Among Male and Female Students. http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol10/issue3/mitra.html. Retrieved 9/2/11.

Mc Williams, Erica and Lee,   The Australian Educational Researcher Journal 33, 2 http://critical-pedagogy.org/2011/08/the-problem-of-%E2%80%98the-problem-with-educational-research%E2%80%99/. Retrieved 9/1/11.

Oyserman, D. and Harrison K. 1998. Implications of Cultural Context: African-American Identity and Possible Selves. In J.K. Swim and C. Stangor (Eds.) *Prejudice: The Target's Perspective*. 281-300. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

Obama, Barack (2006). The Audacity of Hope. New York: The River Press. pp. 99-100. (Our emphasis

Oxford Dictionaries http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/pedagogy [Retrieved on 6/14/12 from http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/pedagogy].

Pascoe, C., Applebee, A., & Clayton, P. (1996). Tidal wave or ripple? The impact of Internet on the Academic. *Australian Library Review, 13* (2), 147-153.

Problem-base Learning. http://userwww.sfsu.edu/~rpurser/revised/pages/problem.htm. Retrieved 9/1 /11.

Rostislav Roznosh(2011). Toward a cosmopolitan pedagogical practice. http://whataretheseideas.wordpress.com/2011/05/19/towards-a-cosmopolitan-pedagogical-practice/ [Retrieved 6/13/12].

Sleeter, C. E. and Grant C. A. (2009). Making choices for multicultural education: Five approaches to race, class, gender. 6th Edition. New York: Wiley.

Sobel, D. (1994). *Place-based education: Conecting classrooms & communities.* Great Barrington: The Orion Society.Wynter, S. (1990). 'Do not call us Negroes': How 'multicultural textbooks perpetuate racism. San Francisco:ASPIRE.