Teaching Resistant Novice Educators to Be Critically Reflective

Drawing upon our experience as university faculty in teaching novice educators, we explore the issue of resistance from students around learning that entails critical reflection. By novice educators, we refer to pre-service teacher candidates and graduate students in Education faculties, particularly graduate students in adult education/lifelong learning programs, who often do not have prior Education degrees or extensive experience as educators. We believe novice educators should be taught to be critically reflective, regardless of whether they teach in schools, government, the not-for-profit, or business sector. Our paper begins with a rationale for teaching students to be critically reflective, and then takes up reasons why students may resist this approach to learning. The paper then looks at a) resistance around learning to think critically about issues of globalization and diversity, b) the importance of having students work through difficult theoretical language and concepts, and c) the need to challenge the influence of neoliberalism that is undermining the ability of educators to teach criticality. The paper concludes with some practical strategies for faculty to engage novice educators in critical reflection.

Critical Considerations

The main goal for faculty teaching in Education should be to prepare critically reflective educators who can engage with learning in a wide range of contexts. Ideally, the capacity for critical reflection helps students develop higher order thinking skills so they can think at an abstract level while making connections from theory to practice. It increases the likelihood that students will continue to grow as educators and be open to

change. Since the world of educational practice is often more challenging than novice educators anticipate, they can foster skills, attitudes, and flexibility to adapt to unanticipated situations.

Critically reflective educators can consider their role in fostering democratic opportunities for learning and dialogical strategies for resolving conflict to develop an engaged citizenry. They are encouraged to develop a social justice orientation to create more inclusive learning environments for students from diverse backgrounds. Education is explored in broader and more complex ways to consider how social, political, racial, religious, ability, cultural and economic factors impact upon learning contexts. Learners begin to understand how power shapes their own teaching practices, providing insights into the limitations and constraints that all educators encounter, as well as strategies for addressing these concerns.

Despite these possible benefits, many learners prefer to ignore or minimalize contentious issues in education and are unwilling to invest time in learning theory, even at the graduate level. This paper identifies some reasons why novice educators may resist critical reflection, explores the power dynamics and tensions connected to these struggles, and acknowledges the challenges this creates for learners and university educators. Drawing upon existing research and our experiences, we consider strategies to encourage novice educators to take up the difficult work of critical reflection in their own teaching practices.

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Understanding Resistance

At the end of his book on critical theory, Stephen Brookfield (2005) wryly concludes that one thing that he can count on when teaching students about critical theory is that he will be met with resistance. Numerous research articles take up the issue of resistant learners, including those who question social justice oriented curriculum around racial issues (hooks, 1989; Ringrose, 2007), who minimalize feminist concerns (Tisdell, 2000; Hughes, 2000), or who challenge the value of learning about critical theory (Giroux, 2005, Brookfield, 2005).

In our teaching we have found that resistance comes in many forms: apathetic or sullen responses; unfinished readings; superficial revisions to written reflections; dominant students; silent students; reductive summaries of theory; unwillingness to interpret and apply theory to new situations. Certain kinds of knowledge may get marginalized, such as the detrimental effects of discrimination that a student wearing a hijab, a gay teacher, or an African-Canadian learner might face because students do not want to address where the personal and the political meet. Author 1 notes familiar

arguments made by pre-service teacher candidates and graduate students, especially with regards to diversity issues: (1) by generalizing bullying, no one feels centred out; (2) conversations about power relations leads to discrimination instead of allowing individuals to focus on peace; (3) critical theory leads to contentious discussions with students, parents, and administrators; (5) concerns that religious tenets and certain social justice issues conflict (such as sexual minority issues). Students often think about these issues in localized and individualized ways. It is difficult for them to conceptualize the intersectionality of issues such as race and sexuality, ability and religion, or class, race, and gender which can then be further contextualized in the larger framework of institutional and social-structural hegemony. Relatively few students have been introduced to alternative "ways of knowing" such as can be found in feminist, Africentric or Aboriginal pedagogies.

Learning to be critically reflective is harder than many students anticipate because it often entails a combination of painful self-exploration and difficult academic learning. As Brookfield (2005) acknowledges, this can be both emotionally and cognitively challenging. We have found that many students express discomfort with the realization that addressing power issues also means having to reflect on one's own location and privilege (or lack thereof) within the broader society. Novice educators often believe that the role of the educator is to focus explicitly on teaching content. They might justify their resistance as a practical necessity because of time constraints or see diversity as a social science domain. It is disheartening that when presented with various project options, the majority of students may not choose to engage in topics that address diversity issues. Alternatively, students frequently want to focus only on diversity issues that relate to

their own location and experiences (ie. around social class or gender) but resist taking up other concerns (ie. sexual orientation or religious differences).

It is only in recent years that issues of social justice have been made a more explicit and a mandatory element of pre-service teacher programs, and knowledge of critical theory is often not perceived as being integral to curriculum in education programs. There is still much work to be done. Surely if our own programs do not systematically address critical theory as crucial to a novice educator's entry into the field, this knowledge will remain marginalized. Novice educators and the faculty who teach them need to think critically about what is *not* being taught.

Hughes (2000) notes that adult education often a focuses on "widening participation" instead of "resistance" since adult learning is usually a voluntary activity. However, Author 2 finds that issues of resistance with adult educators may still arise when addressing difficult theory or issues around diversity and inclusion. Developing the capacity for critical thinking and reflection involves time and patience, as well as diligent effort to engage with abstract theoretical writing that many learners find difficult. There is often discomfort in taking up radical ideas or in assessing how power plays out in educational contexts, thus challenging taken-for-granted assumptions that education is a "neutral" enterprise. Once students understand critical theoretical concepts, they may find it demoralizing to realize the extent of the barriers and challenges that educators must address to teach from an emancipatory framework. Exploring the concept of resistance raises issues around power relationships between learners and educators as well as within educational and social systems. Hughes argues that "there is a need to generate a level of

critical literacy that enables learners to recognize multiple discourses" (p. 58) and to consider their own (often complicated) roles and positions.

Moore (2007) explores several research studies to explain that the "roots" of student resistances "may arise from a wide range of social positions, not just from privilege, not just from identity rebellion, not just from entrenched cognitive stages of development" (p. 36). Student resistance is often seen as either overcoming the passivity of less motivated learners or having privileged students confront their own sense of entitlement.

While this certainly happens, in assessing her findings from an ethnographic study on diversity education, Ringrose (2007) notes "resistance" often focuses on the teacher's perceptions rather than student's learning experiences. The emphasis is often on the unwillingness of white learners to critically take up racism, which as Patricia Hill Collins (1998) notes, perpetuates the centring of "whiteness" instead of addressing needs of non-white students. "Assumptions about whiteness and about resistance and the pairing of these vague concepts in educational accounts have been unable to account for the complexity of the subjective struggle to learn about racism" (Ringrose, 2007, p.339).

If novice educators are to address important issues of power, equality and inclusion, they require critical literacy skills to question, investigate, reflect, and act upon these concerns within their own teaching contexts. They must develop a more sophisticated understanding of social, cultural, racial, religious, political, and economic structures that impact upon their teaching and learning situations.

Globalization and Diversity

In a world increasingly shaped by globalization and diversity, educators need to understand the complexity of different cultures and impact of the global marketplace on learning contexts. In discussing their three year study on praxis inquiry for teacher educators, Gudjósdóttir, Cacciattolo, Dakich, Davies, Kelly, & Dalmau note that "current global visibility of ethnic, ideological, and social intolerance accentuates the need for teacher education programs to focus on the preparation of educators who can build inclusive student-centred learning communities that are based on an appreciation of diversity and openness to the world" (2007, p. 165). Diversity in terms of ethnic, linguistic, cultural and class backgrounds is understood here as the positioning of groups within societies, recognizing the historical colonization of certain groups by others in bids for power. Other groups that may be in the majority in numbers, such as women, continue to experience discrimination and inequality. In addition, educators need to consider other groups that experience challenges and barriers to full social, economic, and political inclusion because of age, sexual orientation, ability, or religious issues.

Ulrich Beck argues that a challenge in dealing with issues created by globalization is that it is "a kind of organized irresponsibility" (2001, p. 84) as there is not one entity or person in charge. We all must deal with the consequences of globalization and pluralism, without having clear-cut mechanisms for doing so. Within this context, Beck (2004) advocates the development of "cosmopolitanism," whereby diversity becomes a strength to motivate people to work across differences to create alliances to resolve problems that cannot be solved by isolated individuals or nation-states. From this perspective, the

positive effects of globalization can be seen in opportunities for active citizenship and collective movements towards social change.

At the same time, we need to understand the sometimes detrimental impact of global capitalism in shaping our social and economic contexts. Beck (2001) notes that global corporations have as much "fire power" as nation-states at war, but this "fire power" is felt most keenly within localized contexts when corporations choose to take their business elsewhere. The recent downturn in the economy has created a heightened sense of vulnerability that makes both academics and learners more susceptible to the influences of neoliberalism which encourages individualism and competition. Neoliberalism devalues a focus on criticality, considerations around diversity, and education that is centred on social justice, elevating instead the perceived “needs” of the marketplace in shaping educational agendas.

As Beck (2001) argues, although globalization seems to play the role of being an oppressive force, it also has the potential to address oppressive forces. Contrary to traditional perspectives on marginalized people being viewed as disenfranchised, Giroux (2005) perceives an opportunity in their very difference. He argues “critical educators must give more thought to how the experience of marginality at the level of everyday life lends itself productively to forms of oppositional and transformative consciousness” (2005, p. 25). Even if educators are working in a primarily white environment, many of the students they work with at other points in their lives will go out to live in more diverse milieu. To be an educator requires not only greater sensitivity to people’s imagined and real cultural anchorings, but also the ability to see diversity as an asset. In Canada, for example, theory’s influence on practice has led many teachers to re-evaluate

how they engage English Language Learners; they now realize that preserving cultural identity and treating multiple linguistic knowledge as an asset may benefit everyone.

Author 2 has found that discussing issues around globalization such as Beck's (2004) concept of cosmopolitanism challenges novice educators to think beyond their own personal experiences and localized contexts and may help them to address diversity issues more positively. Regardless of whether or not it is immediately apparent, globalization and diversity impact upon all of us. For even in physical isolation from centres of diversity, in every product we consume, in every media forum, and in all business transactions, there is the impact of trade occurring on the world stage creating both opportunities for growth and challenges around potential harm.

Learning Critical Theory

A way to facilitate critical reflection around diversity, plurality, and globalization, is to explore the philosophical and analytical work of critical theorists, who explore these issues in more depth. Philosophers such as Zygmunt Bauman, Jürgen Habermas, Karl Marx and Michel Foucault look at whole systems of knowledge in relation to historical paradigms and critique attitudes most individuals normalize. As globalization becomes more prevalent, educators should have a role in understanding, and to some extent shaping, conceptual shifts and the impact of globalization on people's lived experiences. Feminist, postcolonial, and Africentric scholars such as bell hooks, Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Molefi Asante and Patricia Hill Collins address patriarchal and Eurocentric biases that have informed educational discourses, challenging learners to question their own assumptions around the value of different kinds of knowledge. Critical theories offer

tools to analyze the complexities of intersecting relations between globalization and diversity, helping learners to critically assess their educational contexts and the broader society they live in.

Yet we have found that students rarely anticipate how much work it takes to develop a good grasp of theory. When first introduced to critical theory, students are often overwhelmed by the language and complexity of the readings. They may struggle with expectations around writing and developing the ability to grapple with abstract concepts and theories.

Brookfield (2005) notes that despite signing up for a course that explicitly focuses on critical theory, students are often resistant to engage with the material. He suggests reasons for this, including:

> the emphasis on Marx, the critique of capitalism the theory entails, the questioning of democracy (particularly the identification of the tyranny of the majority), the difficult language used by critical theorists, and the radical pessimism induced by constantly reading analyses that emphasize the power of dominant ideology and the way it effectively forestalls any real challenge to the system (pp. 358-359).

Although the "knee jerk" resistance to Marxism may be more reflective of American than Canadian culture, the tendency to equate democracy with capitalism is a strongly taken-for-granted assumption many learners are reluctant to challenge. We find that once students begin to make sense of concepts such as "ideology" or "hegemony," different

reactions can be observed. For some students, insights provided by feminist, anti-racist and social justice oriented scholars resonates with their own experiences of being marginalized, allowing them to articulate and name the barriers that they face. Some students decide to take a more radical approach towards initiating change, feeling that they now have insights into practices previously observed but never understood. We have observed some inspired novice educators take on local community projects with an eye to the larger political dimensions of their work and a desire to change existing inequities. Others, however, like Brookfield (2005) mentions, become overwhelmed and sometimes despondent in contemplating the multitude ways in which power infuses learning contexts. More idealistic notions about being an educator are challenged as they struggle to see how they can "make a difference" in positive ways.

In addition to the emotional issues, students may resist dedicating time and energy to understand difficult theory. There is an inherent conflict in the circuitous nature of reading theory and the foundations of capitalism founded on the premise of “time is money”. Reading theory is in part difficult because it is non-linear to a large extent. The best way to understand theory is to read a lot of it because theorists often include numerous references to broader theoretical frameworks. Authors usually expect a minimal familiarization with a history of educational theories that many students do not necessarily come equipped with. Furthermore, because of the density of the prose and the difficult conceptualization of ideas, to really understand theory often requires returning to it to read and re-read. To come back to a theoretical viewpoint several years later (now with the context of having read other theorists) can allow for great insight.

This commitment to reading requires a substantial amount of time. There are no shortcuts. Reading the "readers" that have been created to simplify theorists' work can help an individual better understand the overall arguments, but of course one has to be wary of the bias of the author who has now simplified the theorist. It may be hard to persuade students this is a worthwhile investment of their time given they live in a neoliberal society that constantly reinforces the capitalist notion that time must be utilized only in efficient ways. Theory cannot be characterized as "efficient." If anything, it is cantankerous, slow, and bendy. Even the institutions we teach in seem to abide by a capitalist mode whereby students are charged for the amount of time they take to get a degree. Condensed programs are in vogue, especially for online degree programs that fit around people's work schedules. In Habermasian terms, this emphasis on expediency in education can be understood as an example of colonization of the lifeworld by the system, whereby the values of industry gain ascendancy in everyday realms such as the academy, even when these values are not appropriate. Thus "applied" learning that can be readily transferred to marketable skills is valued more than abstract learning around theory, even within the context of graduate studies.

Critical theory is also challenging because of its dense vocabulary. As Terry Eagleton observes about literary theory, "there are some who complain that literary theory is impossibly esoteric – who suspect it as an arcane elitist enclave somewhat akin to nuclear physics" (1983, p. vii). Yet, as Giroux points out, language is crucial to human agency: "For it is in language that human beings are inscribed and give form to those modes of address that constitute their sense of the political, ethical, economic, and social" (2005, p. 11). The language used by theorists portends to develop a new vocabulary,

which is crucial to challenging dominant modes of thinking. Words such as "heteronormativity," "sustainability," and "Eurocentrism" force us to see the world differently. Since our very thoughts are affected by our diction, an accompanying vocabulary is a necessary element of theory if it is to successfully revise traditional modes of conceptualization.

Developing the capacity to read, work with, and understand critical theories provides students with the ability to continuously learn and to question their understandings of the world. Novice educators come to see the familiar in unfamiliar ways, wrought anew through a process of questioning their own worldviews and what was previously assumed as truth. It is only once power systems are acknowledged and critiqued as social constructs that it is then possible to suggest alternative models that may challenge the norm around effective teaching practices. For example, Author 2 notes many of her Jamaican students become more critical of their educational experiences when introduced to Freire's concept of "banking education," as they begin to question their underlying assumptions around how learning should occur. Indeed, Bonnycastle (1996) argues that to know theory is empowering for any individual because "it helps you to discover elements of your own ideology, and understand why you hold certain values unconsciously. It means no authority can impose a truth on you in a dogmatic way – and if some authority does try, you can challenge that truth in a powerful way, by asking what ideology it is based on" (p. 34). This is important given that students go out into the field where their ability to theorize the everyday requires doing so independent of a classroom environment. They must learn how to resist the colonization of "naturalized" perspectives

of ways of knowing and critique current power dynamics in their work and learning contexts.

Impact of neoliberalism

Plumb, Leverman & McGray (2007) argue that "learning is the unproblematic (and 'inescapable') answer to the difficult prospect of thriving in a knowledge economy. It is the shining way forward offered by neoliberalism" (p. 43). Lifelong learning is valued because it provides skills and expertise for learners to compete in the marketplace. Within an individualized meritocracy that screens out consideration of structural forms of inequality, educational credentials are perceived to be essential for success.

Novice educators may be resistant to critical theory because it is not easily commodified. Unlike, for example, instructional strategies, which can be easily adapted for immediate classroom use or discussed in a job interview, critical theory does not lend itself to career promotion. In the context of a Canadian professional pre-service teacher education program, teacher candidates are understandably focused on attaining a position. Their desire to enter the ranks of the school boards makes them reticent to critique the broader powers they hope will want to employ them. Similarly, they are busy trying to comprehend and navigate through Ministry of Education documents rather than evaluate if these documents are founded on critical pedagogy.

Within the university sector, there are constant demands for "accountability," often narrowly prescribed by a quantitative assessment of teaching scores and refereed publications. Like their students, academics are often discouraged from taking time to engage with difficult theoretical texts and deep intellectual ideas because of the incessant

demand for publications where “quality” is determined by calculating rejection rates of academic journals. The term “knowledge mobilization,” commonly used by research funding agencies in Canada, conjures images of scholars in troops ready to commandeer knowledge for society’s immediate utilization. Feigenbaum argues that “students and teachers yearning to develop critical consciousness must work through the political economic conditions of neoliberalism together in order to explore and experience possibilities for escaping the confines of corporatized education” (2007, p. 347).

Lip service may be paid to notions of criticality, but often, “proponents of the neoliberal discourse posit a highly individualized and cognitive notion of human learning” (Plumb et al., 2007, p. 44). Learning is part of a delivery process whereby the role of the educator is to transmit knowledge efficiently to the learner. Olssen (2006) explains that within a neoliberal context

> learning is best guided by a teacher or curriculum developer – an expert possessor of knowledge, to a learner – someone who is a novice and who may not yet be positioned to determine what knowledge is most important to learn (p. 44).

Novice educators then aspire to become the experts, rather than seeing their role as learning how to create a context for critical reflection and questioning.

Olssen uses the work of Michel Foucault to explore mechanisms by which neoliberalism shapes educational discourses. Foucault (1972) points out that power is not only manifested as an oppressive force, it is also continually productive, producing speaking subjects that align themselves with a discourse that will serve their own interests. Olssen explains that “for Foucault, power is not an *entity*, but rather *a relation*

of forces" (2006, p. 215). Power exists in all educational and learning contexts, often exerting its force at an unconscious level.

A neoliberal approach to globalization promotes a colonization of our thoughts and even our imagination that aids in individuals unconsciously self-regulating their own behaviours to benefit from economic waves of growth. Using a Foucauldian critical framework, Kellie Burns critiques Appadurai's (1999) model, which argues that the imagination is a site of resistance that gives agency to individuals to shape the forces of globalization. In her analysis on young women and learning, Burns contends the imagination is only one of several tools deployed in a neoliberal economy that becomes a self-governing technique to groom girls to desire greater consumption as a form of success. As Burns posits, "girls and young women are encouraged to *imagine* themselves as active agents within an increasingly global world by acquiring a range of entrepreneurial and self-management skills that position them as lifelong learners and as cosmopolitan global consumer-citizens" (p. 355). The imagination is colonized for the purposes of a neoliberal discourse, but the shifts are subtle, sometimes imperceptible, which makes it less likely that individuals will recognize their real and imagined thoughts and actions as part of a larger undertow of changing social mores.

Burns' argument can be borrowed to discuss how educators are encouraged to imagine themselves in their new role as they are also shaped by a discourse that utilizes individuals' imaginations for its own means. There is not any one person or group in charge purposefully manipulating the language that aid in this shift of the colonization of the imagination. Foucault argues there is no place "outside" of power; power resides in discourse. Power and knowledge can be understood as different points on a grid in which

there are points of concession or resistance constantly being reconfigured. Novice educators expect their training will focus on the acquisition of practical knowledge and teaching strategies. Pre-service programs, for example, ask teacher candidates to formulate in writing their evolving teacher identities, and to imagine themselves in that role. Teaching is not just a classroom performance. The performative element of personal identity – how individuals present themselves in society and how they envision themselves in that role – gains a nuanced layer when they feel their every thought and gesture both in and outside the educational setting comes into relation with their selves as educators. This follows Foucault's (1972) belief that an individual speaking subject not only acts as a mechanism for the system but as well the individual's very sense of "self" must also be attributed to his or her relations to language and society.

Unless novice educators are taught to be critically reflective, they may not realize how their ability to imagine themselves as teachers is prescribed with only a small amount of flexibility so that their conceptualizations of self have effectively been colonized. Canadian teachers' roles are often outlined through Ministry of Education documents which lay out not only curriculum but also attitudes to be embraced by teacher and pupils alike. On the surface, the documents appear to advocate democracy and claim to promote critical thinking. But critical thinking is interpreted as high performance problem-solving skills. It must be distinguished from critical theory, which uses an epistemological approach.

Educators self-regulate what they teach by working within the boundaries of prescribed curricula and self-censoring from a fear of public censure. The term "critical thinking" ironically has become a sort of steam valve inside the mechanisms of a

neoliberal discourse. When educators feel the constraints of social norms delimiting their range of choices in how they will pursue topics with students, they can fall back on the comforting belief that they have promoted critical thinking, which in turn confirms their sense of free choice. Their imaginations are utilized to form a sense of teacher identity that educators internalize. But this identity positions them as part of the state apparatus to disseminate hegemonic beliefs more so than to explore in depth the assumptions upon which the education or broader social systems are founded. Sensitive topics such as diversity and inclusion may be “covered” in a superficial manner, without ever questioning the underlying economic, political and cultural factors that create inequalities. Yet while higher education is often commodified, it can be a means to engage in dialectical discussions with educators to examine these broader social systems, and thus motivate them to critique how the colonization of imaginations transpires – privileging certain kinds of knowledge over others – and must be resisted.

Critical Pedagogical Practices

Critical educators need to acknowledge the difficulty of what they are asking their students to do. Talking about the challenges of developing critical reflection may help to alleviate some of the anxieties and sense of isolation that learners may feel when given a difficult task. As Brookfield (2005) notes, particularly at the graduate level, many students feel a sense of being an academic "impostor," whereby one feels that everyone else deserves to be there, and they need to hide how inadequate they are in comparison to others.

To reassure students that feelings of impostorship are common, but can be overcome, Author 2 often shares a story about returning to graduate school after being at home raising children. During her first class, she wrote her lecture notes on one sheet of paper, and on another page, she wrote down every word the professor said that she did not understand to look up afterwards. At the end of the class, there were twenty-seven words on that list. She wants students to realize it is normal to struggle with new terminology but understand that their studies will get easier as they develop their vocabulary and discuss new concepts. She uses different exercises to help with readings such as having students select a sentence from a text that they find difficult. Within small groups, students exchange sentences, look up the words in sociological and regular dictionaries, discuss the ideas, and then share their findings with the larger class.

Author 1 uses a variety of strategies for introducing students to theory to make it more accessible. Using a short story or non-fiction article, students are asked to utilize the different lenses afforded by distinct critical theories to pursue different readings of the same work. A feminist versus a Marxist versus a postcolonial reading will all yield different insights and simultaneously limit others. It works well to first familiarize the students with the general tenets of each theory. The instructor gives each group four or five questions. All the groups have the same piece of writing, but the sets of questions are different. Only once each group has worked through their answers do they read aloud their questions to the other groups and identify which school of theory is represented by the questions and how do they know that is the case. This shows educators that all questions have ideological roots. Author 1 in all of her courses uses literature and theoretical articles that address political issues of race, gender, class, religion, and ability

to model for students that this material is the norm, not an addition to the course, with the hope that students will do the same when they have their own classrooms.

Students also require support around emotional as well as cognitive challenges that create anxiety for novice educators, particularly around sensitive topics such as gender or race. In her research on adult women learners, Tisdell (2000) draws upon hooks (1989) to note that educators can never guarantee safety for their students. Author 2 encourages students to talk about ground rules to avoid hurting other people, but points out that students could encounter painful moments if someone makes an (even if unintentionally) inappropriate comment, or is indiscreet outside of class. By raising these concerns with students, however, they can consider how to address their own issues around safety and communication.

An activity that Author 1 uses to explore difficult concepts involves giving the class a sheet with five key quotations from the readings. Students select one quotation and write their appraisal. This activity gets students to do a close reading prior to discussing larger concepts embedded in the quotations. Double entry journals are also effective, whereby students read a short passage from the assigned reading in class, respond to it personally in writing for ten minutes, and then discuss it with the larger group. After re-reading what they wrote initially, they write about how their opinions have changed or become more nuanced through conversation.

If educators do not understand that every question is shaped by larger schools of theory, then they run the risk of never formulating questions that go beyond their own narrow perspectives. It is only by claiming a space for discussions that includes questions around historical narratives, queer or gendered readings, class tension, and cultural mores

and race relations – to name a few key topics that come up in critical theory – can an educator hope to extend and deepen students' insights into themselves and the world we live in. In a qualitative study on service learning, Lucas (2005) observes that Education students going out to field placements, who have never worked with people from diverse backgrounds distinct from their own, may become even more entrenched in their personal biases unless they are taught within a social justice framework and provided with "structural opportunities for ongoing critical reflection" (p. 178). Classroom discussion and journaling provide opportunities for students to express and reflect upon their learning experiences.

Similarly, Thorpe's study on nursing students explores benefits of journaling to encourage students to assess their learning experiences. She describes critically reflective learners as "active learners who seek out the why of things, who acknowledge a current set of beliefs and values behind their action, who critically review assumptions, presuppositions from prior learning, and who readily change their position" (2004, p. 337). These, then, are characteristics we hope to foster in novice educators graduating from our Education programs.

Conclusion

Studies such as Thorpe's (2004) research on using journals as a way to foster reflective practice, Lucas's (2005) exploration of service learning, and Ringrose (2007) and Tisdell's (2000) analysis on student interaction in feminist classrooms help to provide insights for faculty committed to fostering critical reflection amongst novice educators. Nevertheless, there is a need for more empirical research to explore the

effectiveness of different strategies for teaching novice educators to become critically reflective. In our own work we have recently been awarded a SSHRC (Social Science and Humanities Council of Canada) grant, which takes up ways in which writing fiction and using literature can help students to explore challenging identity, cultural, and diversity issues. We are interested in exploring how learning around citizenship can be connected to fiction writing, and how educational programs can foster these learning experiences and develop the capacity for critical reflection. Research on topics such as this can provide faculty and students with insights into developing practical strategies within their own teaching contexts to encourage learners to be critically reflective.

It is a lot to ask of novice educators to immerse themselves in new bodies of theory that are not always easily relatable to their immediate lives. But if they are charged with the responsibility of inciting their own future students to consciously take up their roles as citizens in society, then educators themselves need to be cognizant of political and social mores that frame their experiences. It is a good use of academic freedom to foster critical reflection in students by getting them to read and discuss theory, and moreover, to provide them with opportunities to anchor theoretical insights in practical applications. There is often discomfort in doing this kind of analysis, but there are also opportunities for students to become more effective, compassionate, and engaged teachers. All educators need to take risks to become more educated themselves, and critical reflection is a worthwhile risk.

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