

Critical Revolutionary Pedagogy Spiced by Pedagogical Love

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Abstract:

The latest incidents demonstrating human beings' inhumanity to their fellow human beings have given impetus to dissect the connection between critical revolutionary pedagogy and the idea of pedagogical love. In this essay we attempt to answer the following questions: How do these two pedagogies complement each other? What can they offer for today's education curriculum? Education can become a feel good factor through the profound internalization of pedagogical love that speaks for interdependence—the recognition and acceptance that we need others. Teachers have to believe in their work as educators and endeavor to build a nurturing environment and a more humane world. Finally, radical educators and teachers will need to seek a new way of doing education, starting with “educating the educators”. As a conclusion, the need to discuss the practical implementation has also been recognized: the need for defining an action oriented critical revolutionary pedagogical theory spiced with pedagogical love.

Key words: critical revolutionary pedagogy, pedagogical love, pedagogy of the heart, well-being

Introduction

According to Bertrand Russell (1938), a liberal education should

give a sense of the value of things other than domination, to help to create wise citizens of a free community, and through the combination of citizenship with liberty in individual creativeness to enable men to give to human life that splendor which some few have shown that it can achieve (p. 305).

Russell's notion of giving children a sense of value that does not include aspects of domination over other human beings and other living species is certainly not new and yet, it

seems more pertinent now than ever before (see also Horsthemke, 2008; Storh, 2009). Human creativity and human splendor are paramount for children to learn at home and in school but not just to learn but also to do within their life process.

It is disconcerting that more and more expressions of violence and malaise take place in schools and youth camps (see also Horsthemke, 2009)—even in the form of extreme violence such as happened for example in Norway (July 2011) and in Finland (November 2007) traditionally considered as “lands of milk and honey” when lone gunmen began a rampage of death and destruction, killing scores of young people in cold blood. Also, suicidal behavior is one of the negative outgrowths of today due to hopelessness and marginalization (Kilpimaa, 2008). We need to ask important questions: Have today’s upbringing skills run amok? Can education plant a wholesome seed inside a child so that they can experience life in all its wonderment and enchantment? We need to come to an understanding that something is not right in western society.

These incidents listed above demonstrate a human being's inhumanity to their fellow human beings. Furthermore, we certainly seem to be living in harsh times where the human being is becoming more devalued as a living, creative species. The media is saturated with news reports of people suffering the effects of the economic recession that has plagued the social commons. (West, 2004.) We seem to be connected to lives of tragedies as humans continue to navigate through personal calamities brought on by a system of what Naomi Klein termed “disaster capitalism”—a particular form of capitalism that depends on shocking a human being into a seemingly drug imposed coma as it leaves no prisoners in its quest for privatization and cuts in social spending. It seems that the focus is turned away from the individual well-being, kindness, and solidarity. Ed Diener and Martin Seligman (2004) state:

Policy decisions at the organizational, corporate, and governmental levels should be more heavily influenced by issues related to well-being—people’s evaluations and feelings about their lives. Domestic policy currently focuses heavily on economic outcomes, although economic indicators omit, and even mislead about, much of what society values. We show that economic indicators have many shortcomings, and that measures of well-being point to important conclusions that are not apparent from economic indicators alone. (p.1)

What Diener and Seligman (2004) talk about is not just separate individuals but the communal, societal (institutional) well-being. Furthermore, research on well-being consistently reveals that the characteristics and resources valued by society correlate with

happiness (Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005). Yet, the role of narcissism in promoting the self at the expense of the other seems to be the norm in today's schooling and home environment as people are encouraged to seek self-gratification and individual gain. Russell (1970) stated that

Those whose lives are fruitful to themselves, to their friends, or to the world are inspired by hope and sustained by joy: they see in imagination the things that might be and the way in which they are to be brought into existence (p. 124).

Russell's words need to be taken to heart because our collective humanity depends on creating the learning environment where joy, inspiration and imagination can become realities for children, if we want children to invent and reinvent wholesome living realities for the human being. In this, we need a viable alternative to the current socio-economic order that puts profit before people at center stage and begin to focus more on a renewal program where education can become a more life-affirming learning experience. Thus, we stand for a more real-life alternative to capitalism in schooling practice by focusing on a revolutionary critical pedagogy that is located in the socialist project: critical revolutionary pedagogy creates "a narrative space set against the naturalized glow of the everyday" and is dedicated to the praxis of transforming knowledge through reflection (see McLaren, 2001, p. 122).

This article is a contemplation of two independent researchers: the first author's main interests in critical revolutionary pedagogy (see FitzSimmons, 2004) are spiced by the second author's studies of human flourishing and success and the use of love in education (Uusiautti, 2008; Uusiautti & Määttä, 2012; Määttä & Uusiautti, 2011). Thus, the purpose of this article is to dissect the connection between critical pedagogy and the idea of pedagogical love. How do they complement each other? What could their offering to today's education be?

Critical revolutionary pedagogy

Critical revolutionary pedagogy claims to offer an alternative vision for education practice in capitalist societies because the vision centers itself inside a Marxist-humanist theoretical approach. This vision is generally cooperative and offers teachers and educators a socially just and humane perspective for human development where human beings can critically view their own life-world. In addition, the pedagogy stresses a critical dialogue where ideas and understandings can be challenged, debated and deliberated within an open and democratic framework. Toward this end, the pedagogy is anti-capitalist and seeks to offer a different

ideological foundation for education. Rather than viewing education through the eyes of the market, it seeks to view education through social, cultural and political constructs. One key objective for critical revolutionary pedagogy is to embrace a genuine critical consciousness where people can confront free market-sponsored upheavals and act as controlling agents to fight against harmful influences that directly impact their social, cultural and political world. Hence, critical revolutionary pedagogy becomes a problem seeing and a problem solving pedagogy that does not just focus on schooling practice but also on community within a given set of socio-historical and political contexts. (See FitzSimmons, 2004; McLaren, 1999; 2010.)

One common belief that has been confronted by critical educators is the notion that social conditions are permanent or unchangeable (Giroux, 2009; McLaren, 2009). In critical pedagogy, it is distinctively maintained that capitalism and its educational formations cannot be taken for granted, but needs to be critiqued, confronted, and ultimately changed. Of course, this is easier said than done for, as Kincheloe and McLaren (2005) have pointed out, “capitalism has been naturalized as common reality—even as part of nature itself.” Examples of this are many. One is an acceptance of the lack of public initiatives in capitalist schooling where citizens do not have a meaningful voice in educational discourse. This lack of public participation can lead to authoritarian practices where a select few of the managerial class can have a dominant position in implementing policies that directly affects students, the learning environment, and teaching practice. The Finnish educational experience offers an apt example of this as the basic nature of Finnish educational practice has changed from a social democratic model into a more lean managerial neoliberal enterprise. What has been paradigmatic in this transformation is the lack of public knowledge on how the political change has happened, and how the change has been naturalized within the educational structure through every day experiences, policies, and curriculum implementations. The situation is perhaps no different in other countries where neoliberal changes have occurred, turning former educational models upside down, and certainly inside the former Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact countries, the Friedmanist influence has also been underscored and implemented without public awareness or intervention, thereby, giving the impression of a lack of alternative discourses.

Thus, critical revolutionary pedagogy seeks to supply a challenging discourse for the public to contemplate—a discourse that would offer competing educational possibilities for the

public to reflect upon. Peter McLaren (2010) defines the purpose of critical revolutionary pedagogy in the following manner:

Critical revolutionary pedagogy, as I have been trying to develop it, attempts to create the conditions of pedagogical possibility that enables students to see how, through the exercise of power, the dominant structures of class rule protect their practices from being publicly scrutinized as they appropriate resources to serve the interests of the few at the expense of the many (p. 5).

Concepts such as class, gender, equality, and race are important but also, marginalization, alienation and exclusion become a focal point for a critical pedagogy with a revolutionary intent (cf. Ellsworth, 1989). Ellsworth (1989, p. 298) argues that key critical pedagogy terms such as “empowerment,” “student voice,” “dialogue,” and even “critical” are repressive myths that sustain relations of domination and exacerbated “banking education”. In addition, there is an interlocking of issues that directly affect the citizen’s ability to comprehend their preconceived reality but there is also a direct bearing on public trust as neoliberal education becomes mystified in the public’s mind. For example, alienation is related to work and to the worker’s relationship to the work process. Fromm makes clear that work is “alienated because work has ceased to be part of the worker’s nature” and therefore the worker has “a feeling of misery rather than well-being does not develop freely his mental and physical energies but is physically exhausted and mentally debased” (Fromm, 2004, p. 39). However, what needs to be recognized within the public sphere is that work life can be only one form of alienation. When we think in terms of education, schooling, which takes on a work orientation with forced productivity, can also take a student away from their own student’s nature and into a feeling of marginalized poverty as the student is subjugated into the so-called capitalist “free market system” with its lack of serious alternative discourses within the classroom. Likewise, an educational system based on high test results to the exclusion of the student’s humanity may also lead to a forced alienation.

This can perhaps be seen in the PISA rankings as Finland scores high in academic achievement but scores low in student well-being and happiness (see e.g., Kupiainen, Hautamäki, & Karjalainen, 2009). Could one reason for this general feeling of unhappiness be centered in how students are taught and for what purpose is knowledge given? We believe so. Eric Fromm (2004) stated that for Marx

socialism meant the social order which permits the return of man to himself, the identity between existence and essence, the overcoming of the separatedness and antagonism between subject and object, the humanization of nature; it meant a world in which man is no longer a stranger among strangers, but is in his world, where he is at home (p. 56).

Fromm comes right to the point. Also for critical revolutionary pedagogy, the student needs to discover their humanity and connectedness to the other. They need to discover *how to love*. Furthermore, the pedagogy seeks to see human nature as a learning possibility for humanization in the world where the global community becomes a place where the human being has a loving and caring village community. Thus, the pedagogy seeks to nurture the positive in our social being—the joy of cooperation, human responsibility for the other, generosity, compassion, joyfulness, kindness, enthusiasm, forgiveness, friendliness, gentleness, idealism, peacefulness, justice, tact, unity, and assertiveness.

Because of the lack of public initiative and response, educational reform becomes a paramount objective for radical educators where social justice and education come together to form polar attractions and not opposites. Gutmann (1987) states that “when citizens rule in a democracy, they determine among other things, how future citizens will be educated. Democratic education is therefore a political as well as an educational ideal” (p. 3). This statement is perhaps true; however, citizens cannot rule without knowledge of how education is being implemented in their society (see e.g., Allman, 2001; Hook, 1927; Levidow, 2002; Moss, 2007). Education is not a reality television program where participants attempt to win a prize. Education is an ideological weapon that can seer into the youth a way of being and acting in the world. Once the public understands that education is politics in praxis and just how education is an ideological tool for the elite, the public can perhaps see the possible role they can play in offering a more democratic vision for the way people are educated. If we look at the social upheavals from the right or from the left of the political spectrum, education is usually the first to be affected by the sea change occurring in society. Because of this there needs to be public discussion about what knowledge is required in today’s life-world and this discussion needs to be deliberative involving the various sectors of society and not just a top/down discussion of what is and why it is. If democratic schooling is to succeed and if citizens will be taking an active role in its decision making process, they will need the skills necessary not just for public debate but also for public influence. And this will need to be focused not on naked self-interest but rather in the collective and communicative realm of human behavior.

Toward this end, Dorothy Day, co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement, posed a simple and yet, a good question. She asked: “But how to love?” (Day, 2005, p. 94) For Day, the sense of love is found in the “transcendence in community.” She states that we love because we want to love—love becomes a desire of the heart—“for love for union, for communion, for community.” Furthermore, love becomes “an act of will, an act of preference” (Day, 2005, p. 175). What we can perhaps see today in our schooling and work practice is a lack of love—an absence of human spirit instead of having love of neighbor and love of life bringing the spirit of joy and happiness to each individual. And there is a role to play for the radical educator to bring this to pass. Why is this important for educators? If love is something learnable, it can be employed in enhancing others’ well-being and therefore, it concerns everyone and especially the educators of today when the main emphases in schooling practice seem to be in efficiency, competitiveness, and individualism. All of which lead to increasing insecurity in a constantly changing world (Uusiautti & Määttä, 2011).

A radical educator can gain insight into the human condition by embracing the heart of Day’s words (Day, 2005). Critical Revolutionary pedagogy can play a vital role in implementing Day’s vision for humanity and in answering her simple question. The pedagogy should not only be about scientific theories or educational research. There also needs to be heart and human emotion engraved into the educational fabric. Students should not be strangers to their own heart and neither should the general public be alienated from their own moments of being.

A vision for hope

At this moment, radical educators are confronted with a neoliberal ideology of less state intervention and more corporate sponsorship in learning institutions. We can now see this occurring in Finland as the state begins to separate itself from direct funding of higher learning institutions. The buzz words are private and corporate sponsorship as each higher learning institution is left to navigate the new system in gathering much needed funds. In such a system there are winners and losers, favorites and not so favorites as each higher learning institution struggles for support and sponsorship.

Where is the human heart, soul, and spirit? Questions such as: Can humanity be found inside a corporate structure of brick and mortar and can humanity be found inside a learning

institution take on primary importance. We believe that genuine human-centered hope does not exist for the made for profit corporation but we believe that there can be hope for the learning institution, if learning can be hope centered and vision oriented. But this hope cannot be centered in empty uplifting slogans on school walls without a genuine vision for hope in practice. Hope is an action word of practical importance for human development when the word is not grouped in abstractions but in concrete measures to create a more humane social environment (cf. Rantala & Määttä, 2011).

We have found a good example for this vision of hope in Paulo Freire. Freire attempted to bring hope into the classroom through the learning engagement with social reality. Freire described himself as a progressive educator who did not just want to teach “technique or content” to the students; rather he also wanted to bring “a critical understanding of reality” (Freire, 1998, p. 44). As with Dorothy Day, Freire was not satisfied with just giving definitions to hardships in real life. He wanted students to dialogue about the ills in society and their “reason for being” (Freire, 1998, p. 45). His teaching concept was focused not on indifference to human hardship but on connecting students to social reality so that they would not be “indifferent to the pain of those who go hungry” (Freire, 1998, p. 45). But we can also include other hardships that plague the human condition at this moment and put these hardships also into a Freirian context.

We do not want to sound cynical or skeptical or even critical. Rather, we want to discover hope in a revolutionary pedagogy that can not only influence schooling but also to change schooling practice. Marx and Engels stated in *The Holy Family* that working people “cannot abolish the conditions of its own life without abolishing all the inhuman conditions of life of society today which is summed up in its own situation” (see Gus Hall in Political Affairs, April 1977). We believe that one central focus that revolutionary critical educators need to assess is the inhuman conditions of human life. Also, such educators or teachers need to prepare students to deliberate with real situations within classroom settings because our world is in the continuing process of change, and during the last two decades, our world has changed beyond all recognition due to the fall of communism because of the onslaught of the free market to influence the life-world.

From our experiences in Finnish educational practice (especially when we consider the PISA rankings), we realize the important role the heart can play. Nor does the understanding that

education needs to be about human capital development—where students learn the skills necessary to be productive in the workplace. There needs to be something more than just ‘making it’ in the world.

Pedagogical love as a means of pedagogy of the heart

Love as emotion and action creates hope and boldness. Love influences the direction and intensity of people’s action. Felicitously, Wilkerson (2001) not only captures the strength of hope but also the inner passion of children to seek for a just and loving world if they are giving the opportunity to do so. Our vision for education focuses on the natural elements that students need to do life and to see life as a ‘shock and awe’ experience. Radical pedagogy attempts to put such deliberative silence into "language and action" so that students can possess the cognitive skills necessary for challenging the seemingly small oppressions that make up everyday life and to break loose from the bondage of silence (cf. Lorde, 1984).

We see the need for an educational ‘shock doctrine’ but not one that focuses on market designs and market revolutions but rather on the wonders of our planet and the beautiful life that our planet contains. Students also need to embrace and enhance the global perspective of caring for and giving back to the earth and to embrace the positive in our human nature as defined earlier. This is not a complete list and it certainly can be added to but these character building words are just some examples where education can play a primary role in stressing the gifts inherent in our human nature for character enhancement—skills that will be needed not just for the human community both on the local level and on the global level but also for creating a foundation for a sustainable world. Seligman et al. (2005) call them civic strengths that underlie healthy community life. We claim that adding love in education will be the key to make these strengths to bloom. And on a more humane personal level, grant students the happiness and security that they desire when they attend school.

Education can become a feel good factor because students are engaged not just in the learning process but also in the living process. And we put emphasis on this living process because we are very much aware of the high numbers of young people who commit suicide in Finland, especially with the under twenty-four age group and the tragedies that this has in our society. What we are calling for is an educational system that keeps hope alive inside a holistic care-given educational system that puts people before profit and market imperatives and addresses the “feel-bad” factor that can exist within the learning environment.

The educator's task is to provide pupils with such stimuli and an environment where students are guided to limit their instincts by controlling enjoyment and vital-based values, in order to be able to achieve higher values and skills (Solasaari, 2003). Pedagogical love speaks to interdependence—the recognition and acceptance that we need others. Love appears in teaching as guidance toward disciplined work, but also as patience, trust, and forgiveness. The purpose is to create a setting for learning where pupils can use and develop their own resources eventually proceeding at the maximum of their own abilities. (Määttä & Uusiautti, 2011.)

Teachers have to believe in their work and endeavor to build a nurturing environment and a more humane world. At their best, teachers help pupils—children or adults—to experience their own potentiality and see what life can offer. Pedagogical love may guide a learner to consider the better world as achievable. (Määttä & Uusiautti, 2011.) Without pedagogical love, teaching and learning may remain “as a form of effective management of learning and become a means only because it is presumed to offer a link between the intentionality of curriculum designers and the actual learning outcomes which are developed in learners” (Webster, 2009, p. 44).

Karen Storh (2009) has combined love with the concept of “minding others’ business”. She (Storh, 2009) concludes: “My flourishing depends on the flourishing of others. That makes it all the more important to permit wise intervention in others’ affairs, for in minding others’ business, we are also often minding our own” (p. 136). Transmitting this kind of an attitude in our students could be the main guideline in education. We, as educators, have to set an example by directing our mindful and loving action in students and other people as well.

We also see value in focusing revolutionary critical pedagogy in the practice of love. McLaren states that a Freirean theory of pedagogical love punches through the cynical nature of education. He states that Freire’s understanding of love set him “apart from most other leftist educators” and Freire’s belief in that power of love was a “political project” since love and politics must be connected for the liberation of humankind (McLaren, 1999, pp. 53-54). We believe that revolutionary pedagogical love has a very important place to play in critical pedagogy and that without such a love commitment, an educated humanity can only suffer a disconnection from the heart. Finally, as McLaren (1999) aptly stated: “anchored in narratives of transgression and dissent, love becomes a foundation of hope” (p. 54).

Conclusion

Critical pedagogy as a particular theory with a particular point of view of love was discussed. According to Saevi and Eilifsen (2008), pedagogical reflection is oriented toward understanding the significance of pedagogical events and relations to children and their lifeworld. Indeed, the ethics of caring concerns teaching and education and it has even been argued to be the central aim and method of education (see Burns & Rathbone, 2010; Noddings, 1988). Seidl and Friend (2002) point out that

teacher education continues to struggle to find experiences sufficiently powerful to support students in deconstructing the messy tangle of racism, classism, poverty, sexism, and opportunity and is much less successful in helping students reconstruct maintainable positions within a commitment to social justice (p. 421) and therefore, “it is important that prospective teachers begin to understand the political context of education” (p. 428).

Didactic issues are subordinate to pursuing a pedagogically good practice. The practice of pedagogy, the direct everyday encounter with students, is itself an immensely complex experience with extensive theoretical and practical implications (Saevi & Eilifsen, 2008). It is now time to bring the classroom into a new life affirming shock and awe learning experience, a learning possibility that would bring an organic whole to the classroom and bring education into a more human centered life affirmation. Critical revolutionary pedagogy can play a positive role in dissecting human issues for a better humanity. The art of deliberation (see Parker, 1997) can be one way in which students begin to face real life issues with respect and dignity in the classroom.

For this to happen, radical educators and teachers will need to seek a new way of doing education and they will need to begin “to educate the educator” since it is the educator that creates the motor for transformation in schooling. Freire (1998) commented that faith for a better world is needed—a world with virtues that can enhance the planet’s well-being. Critical revolutionary pedagogy could be put into active practice by offering insights for teachers and educators in applying an everyday *pedagogy of the heart* for classroom involvement. Consequently, it seems that there is need to discuss its practical side as well: an action oriented critical revolutionary pedagogical theory. Finally, we can look to Eric Fromm (1979) when he stated: “If love is a capacity of the mature, productive character, it follows that the capacity to love in an individual living in any given culture depends on the influence

this culture has on the character of the average person” (p. 72). We need to begin to critically reflect on our own cultural influences when it comes to the art of love and look into the possibility of forming new love pedagogies for our pupils and students, if we wish to transform our own societies into a more caring, loving and giving community.

Furthermore, McLaren (2010) has given us a good definition of revolutionary love when he stated that “recognizing that love can only exist between free and equal people who have the same ideals and commitment to serving the poor and the oppressed. It is this moral affinity that constitutes the conditions of possibility of love” (p. 10). This definition can give us a starting point for creating a curriculum where the pedagogy of revolutionary love can take precedence over the alienating character of a market centered education. The goal should be linking critical revolutionary pedagogy with the a genuine pedagogy of revolutionary love so that students can gather the skills necessary to critique and transform how humans co-exist with each other and with other sentient species (see McLaren, 2010).

Finally, we want to put the words of Ernesto “Che” Guevara into active curriculum practice when he stated: “Let me say at the risk of seeming ridiculous, that the true revolutionary is guided by great feelings of love.”

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