

The Odd Couple: Freire and the INTASC Teacher Education Standards

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Introduction

The climate of education in the 21st century has become one of accountability and standardization. In this climate, teachers are expected to not only be experts in their content, but they are also expected to understand the needs of all learners and how to differentiate instruction to meet those needs. Herein lies the paradox: Teachers are expected to differentiate while at the same time preparing learners for standardized assessment in a standardized curriculum that supposedly measures educational “success.” As Agnello (2008) suggests, this “testing craze, although illustrated amply to be detrimental to education and many learners, has been normalized” (p. 113). The normalization of this one-size-fits-all educational model poses a great challenge for teacher educators. There are decisions being made by policy makers and legislators over which teachers have no control. Therefore, it is important that teachers find some semblance of control in implementing best practices in an effort to counter-balance the detriment that standardization brings through such policies as No Child Left Behind (NCLB).

Teacher educators can respond to this challenge by preparing future teachers to embrace this paradox. Teachers are under pressure to ensure that their students meet the standardized expectations of education. The standardization of education begins at the national level with the Four Pillars of the No Child Left Behind Act (U. S. Dept. of Education, 2004). In order for states to receive federal funding for schooling, they

are required to adhere to the cumbersome demands outlined in the four pillars of NCLB: Stronger Accountability for Results, More Freedom for States and Communities, Proven Education Methods, and More Choices for Parents.

An example of the reality of standardization at the state level comes from a program called “Race to the Top,” in which states compete for federal funds in an effort to improve schools. In this program, states are invited to submit proposals that seek to implement significant improvements to schools. Although the award in this competition is federal funding, it is the state that submits the proposal, and within the state, then, education is standardized according to the tenets of the proposal. Unlike NCLB, where the federal government mandates educational policy, “Race to the Top” provides federal funding to states that propose their own policies, which school districts are required to carry out, despite their lack of input in the proposal itself. Tennessee, one of the first two states to receive such funding, was awarded \$501 million. On paper, the state of Tennessee was a clear winner; however, one year later, when schools were required to implement the proposed changes, it became evident to teachers and principals that this award came with many strings.

For example, one of the policies requires all teachers of all content areas to prepare students for standardized testing in math and language arts. As noted in an article in the *New York Times*, “Because there are no student test scores with which to evaluate over half of Tennessee’s teachers—kindergarten to third-grade teachers; art, music and vocational teachers—the state has created a bewildering set of assessment rules. Math specialists can be evaluated by their school’s English scores, music teachers by the school’s writing scores” (Winerip, 2011). The article also reports on the frustrations of teachers and principals alike in implementing the new changes mandated by the state, especially in terms of how teachers are evaluated based on these new policies.

Tennessee’s new policies require that all teachers be evaluated based on student standardized test scores, even if their content area or grade level is not tested. For instance, a first grade teacher will be evaluated on the scores of a 5th grade test. At the high school level, an art teacher will be evaluated based on math and/or English/Language Arts test scores. Winerip describes this situation as

... a bit like Vegas, and if you pick the wrong academic subject, you lose and get a bad evaluation. While this may have nothing to do with academic performance, it does measure a teacher’s ability to play the odds. There’s also the question of how a principal can do a classroom observation of someone who doesn’t teach a classroom subject. (pp. 2, 5)

What does this mean for pre-service teachers and teacher educators? Most teacher educators would agree that pre-service teachers, when first entering their professional preparation program, have idealistic, almost fantastic, visions of what teaching will be. It is the responsibility of the teacher educator to have honest conversations about the reality of teaching without discouraging pre-service teachers from continuing in their professional preparation. While pre-service teachers are good at parroting notions of differentiating instruction and meeting the needs of all learners, they live in blissful ignorance of what this means in practice. Nonetheless, as teacher educators we must help them to find this balance between standardization and best practices. We maintain that one approach to this balance is adopting Freire's ideology to fill in the gaps.

One might question how Freire's views on education could even be remotely connected to educational standards and standardization. In truth, Freire would, without a doubt, be opposed to the standardization movement. However, this does not preclude teacher educators from using his theories to support pre-service teachers in their quest for balance. We contend that in reality one is not that far removed from the other. The core principles of Freire's pedagogy are grounded in freedom, democracy, and critical participation (Gadotti & Torres, 2009, p. 1260). Based on these principles, Freire rejected the traditional banking approach to education in favor of collaborative dialogue between teacher and student, where the role of the teacher is that of facilitator and where the curriculum is learner driven.

Although Freire would disagree with the direction that education has taken in recent years, this article proposes a way for contemporary educators to embrace Freirean ideas while still working within the limitations of the standards mandated by political, social, and religious bureaucracy. The reality is that teachers have two choices: They can "reinforce dominant and hegemonic value systems, or they can challenge them" (Jackson, 2007). We further this belief by arguing here that teachers can challenge oppressive education while working within the hegemonic structure that standardization has created.

InTASC Standards

Independent of NCLB and "Race to the Top" is another form of educational standardization. The Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) standards are designed to guide teacher education programs and uphold a certain level of expectation in the quality of K-12 classroom teachers. In this section we examine the recently revised InTASC standards through a Freirean lens, where we

seek to reconcile our professional philosophies with the reality of the field of education (i.e., standards and standardization). This discussion will show that despite attempts to standardize education, teachers and teacher educators can indeed turn to Freirean ideology to inform their current educational practices.

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), the author of the InTASC standards, asserts that

. . . these Model Core Teaching Standards articulate what effective teaching and learning looks like in a transformed public education system—one that empowers every learner to take ownership of their learning, that emphasizes the learning of content and application of knowledge and skill to real world problems, that values the differences each learner brings to the learning experience, and that leverages rapidly changing learning environments by recognizing the possibilities they bring to maximize learning and engage learners. (2011, p. 3)

These standards are organized into four contexts: The Learner and Learning, Content Knowledge, Instructional Practice, and Professional Responsibility. Within each of these contexts are several standards by which pre-service and in-service teachers are evaluated. These standards drive teacher education programs' curriculum, assessment, and accreditation. They also influence state licensure and renewal requirements, as well as district job performance for retention and tenure. Given these high stakes, it is imperative that teacher educators discuss these standards in terms of how they relate to the current field of teacher preparation and to Freire's pedagogy.

The Learner and Learning

In this first context, the CCSSO (2011) highlights the importance of the classroom teacher's ability to recognize individual differences and to utilize these differences in such a way as to establish a positive, effective learning environment for all students. This includes setting high expectations and designing and implementing classroom activities based on an understanding of child and adolescent development. Teachers are further expected to value collaboration with the learner, as well as with colleagues, family members, and the community stakeholders. Finally, a key component of this context is to encourage the learner to accept responsibility for his or her own learning. The expectations of InTASC are contrary to the four pillars of NCLB, which by definition, do not focus on the learners themselves, but on the outcomes of standardization, such as adequate yearly progress. Standardization fails to recognize the differences among learners. It is up to the educator to acknowledge and embrace learner differences where state and federal entities fall short.

This assertion by InTASC echoes Freire's (2005) own ideas when he wrote:

... the educator is a politician. In consequence, it is absolutely necessary that educators act in a way consistent with their choice—which is political—and furthermore that educators be evermore scientifically competent, which teaches them how important it is to know the concrete world in which their students live, the culture in which their students' language, syntax, semantics, and accent are found in action, in which certain habits, likes, beliefs, fears, desires are formed that are not necessarily easily accepted in the teachers' own worlds. (p. 129)

As Freire noted, becoming a teacher is a choice; it is not a career forced upon the individual. Central to this choice is the acknowledgment that teachers get to choose neither their learners nor the political environment in which they teach. Their learners come to them from a variety of backgrounds, experiences, worldviews, and orientations, some or all of which will be different from those of the teacher. In becoming a teacher, one is making the choice to accept, embrace, and value these differences, and to strive to meet the needs of all learners. In making this choice, teachers are also committing to hold all learners to high expectations. To reiterate the essence of this InTASC context, Freire (2005) exhorts educators to refuse to be

... tempted by the hypothesis that these children, these poor little ones, are naturally incapable ... educators must take neither a position of revenge nor of submission but the position of one who assumes responsible authority as an educator; nor ... may educators take a paternalistic or scornful attitude toward the lower-class children. (pp. 128-129)

Standard 1: Learner Development. The CCSSO (2011) emphasizes the importance of the teacher's ability to understand "how learners grow and develop, recognizing that patterns of learning and development vary individually within and across the cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical areas, and designs and implements developmentally appropriate and challenging learning experiences" (p. 1).

To view this standard through Freire's eyes is to understand the importance of viewing students not as mere objects, such as an empty vessel in which to pour knowledge; this ultimately dehumanizes them. Instead, Freire would argue that students are subjects that require meaningful interaction, and that they become active participants in the learning process (Au, 2007). This idea of seeing students as subjects, rather than objects, also illustrates Freire's vision for teaching being connected to one's concern and love for learners as human beings (Stevenson, 2010).

Standard #2: Learning Differences. According to the CCSSO (2011), “the teacher uses understanding of individual differences and diverse cultures and communities to ensure inclusive learning environments that enable each learner to meet high standards” (p. 8).

Classrooms in the United States are becoming increasingly more diverse in terms of student population. However, the teaching profession is comprised primarily of members of the dominant cultural group: Barely 10 percent of teachers represent racially or ethnically diverse groups (Miller & Endo, 2005). Despite being members of the dominant culture, it is vital for teachers to understand the “concrete world in which their students live” (Freire, 2005, p. 129), including their marginalization within the school community. Teachers need to be aware of what it means to be part of the dominant group, as well as what it means to be part of a marginalized group, in order to fully appreciate the importance of ensuring that they meet the needs of all their students.

Marginalization is not absolute; it is sharing spaces through identification with the dominant group at times, and at other times with a marginalized group (Choules, 2007). For example, a gay, white, male student may represent the dominant group in terms of race and gender; however, in terms of sexual identity, he shares a marginalized space. Another example illustrates how marginalization may occur from more than one group. A White, North American, non-Spanish-speaking family adopts a young girl from Colombia. She has many physical features of the indigenous group from which she hails, setting her apart from the dominant culture. However, culturally and linguistically, she does not identify herself as Latin American, and is therefore also marginalized by that group, who expect her to speak Spanish simply because of the location of her birth.

Therefore, in order to love and care for learners as human beings, teachers need to recognize the various spaces that learners share in terms of identity with dominant and marginalized groups. Furthermore, teachers must understand how these shared spaces impact a learner’s motivation and self-efficacy in the classroom.

Standard 3: Learning Environments. The environment in which one is placed has a significant impact on learning. The CCSSO (2011) noted that “The teacher works with others to create environments that support individual and collaborative learning, and that encourage positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self motivation” (p. 8).

Despite this standard’s goal, students in the typical school setting are told when to go to the bathroom, when to speak, when to eat, what they are going to learn, how they are going to learn it, and what they

will get out of it. This approach clearly is designed to disempower the learner, whether she or he is from a dominant or marginalized group (Sleeter, Torres, & Laughlin, 2004). If the learner is from the dominant group, she or he accepts this institutional hegemony as what the world is, knowing that in the future she or he will have that role of authority. However, as a learner from a marginalized group, said hegemony only reinforces the social constructs that have placed her or him in that group from the start. This does not encourage learning or empowerment, but the opposite, to maintain one's place in line.

Content Knowledge

It goes without saying that teachers must not only be knowledgeable about pedagogy, but also experts in their content area. This expertise is defined by the CCSSO (2011) as not only being the knowledge of facts, concepts, and ideas, but also as the ability to present such information through a variety of instructional modes. Furthermore, this expertise extends beyond the traditional boundaries of one's subject to bring together a body of knowledge that encompasses a variety of content areas.

Specific content knowledge is truly a small piece of this puzzle. It is in fact pointless to be an expert in a particular content area if the teacher is unable to relate this information to other aspects of the students' lives in meaningful ways. For example, Freire (2005) posed the following question:

... how, from the theoretical context, distancing ourselves from our practice, do we separate our practice from our knowledge of our practice, from the science that it is based on? In other words, how, from the theoretical context, do we "distance ourselves" from our practice and how do we become epistemologically curious in order to then understand our practice in its reason for being? (p. 140)

This question challenges educators to look beyond their knowledge of specific content, and to become "epistemologically curious." To achieve this level of curiosity, teachers must take the initiative to find ways in which their specific content is part of a bigger picture and how it relates to their students' lives and experiences—past, present, and future. This will involve collaborating with students and colleagues to present a cohesive body of knowledge, to afford learners the opportunity to explore the many aspects of this multi-faceted context.

Standard 4: Content Knowledge. In this standard, the focus shifts from the learner to the teacher. "The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline(s) he or she teaches and creates learning experiences that make the discipline ac-

cessible and meaningful for learners to assure mastery of the content” (CCSSO, 2011, p. 8).

Education models have moved away from the notion of the teacher assuming the role of knowledge giver to that of guide and facilitator, where students become active, participatory learners through experiential journeys. This type of model is clearly supported in the above standard, but is also an important message seen through much of Freire’s work, especially in his concept of “banking” (Bartlett, 2005; see Freire, 1993, pp. 72-77). In this model of banking, the teacher possesses knowledge and the learner is merely the recipient. However, both Freire and this InTASC standard promote just the opposite, where the learner is actively and critically engaged in epistemological curiosity through meaningful, relevant collaborations with the teacher.

Standard 5: Application of Content. Taking content knowledge one step further, “the teacher understands how to connect concepts and use differing perspectives to engage learners in critical thinking, creativity, and collaborative problem solving related to authentic local and global issues” (CCSSO, 2011, p. 8).

With the idea of education as a political act, Freire supported the strong tie between the classroom and the real world. He challenged educators to engage students in critical comparison of their lives with society (Jackson, 2007). It is in light of this ideology that, as Sleeter, Torres, and Laughlin (2004) suggest, educators might consider engaging learners in “this type of inquiry for conscientization” (p. 83), where learners not only gain knowledge, but they learn how to apply this knowledge in order to achieve social justice.

Instructional Practice

Instructional practice involves assessing student learning and using the results of these assessments to inform instructional design and implementation. The previous contexts focus on a knowledge and understanding of learners and their needs. Instructional practice, however, is the praxis where the knowledge of learning and student needs are realized in the classroom (CCSSO, 2011, p. 9). It is here that teachers create a safe, positive learning environment that will, in essence, push the students’ comfort zone in order to challenge their thinking to more profound levels.

Instructional practice is driven by both theory and experience. This is a challenge for teachers, especially new teachers, who may be bound by curriculum, textbooks, and administrative limitations. In order to liberate themselves from these constraints, teachers must take into

consideration the lives and the experiences of their students in planning instruction. They cannot allow themselves to be bound, rather they must find ways to break through these barriers to meaningful dialogue with learners. In support of this argument, Freire (2005) suggested that

. . . the preparatory teaching work cannot be realized in a context in which one thinks theoretically but at the same time makes a point of staying very far away from and indifferent to the concrete context of immediate world of action and of sensitivity to the learners. To think that such work can be realized when the theoretical context is separated in such a way from the learners' concrete experiences is only possible for one who judges that the content is taught without reference to and independently from what the learners already know from their experiences prior to entering school. (p. 129)

Of course, ultimately instructional practice is nothing without consideration of the learner. Therefore, instructional practice is the culmination of the actual dialogue that takes place between teacher and students, linking the theoretical with the experiential. Freire insists that

To study is to uncover; it is to gain a more exact *comprehension* of an object; it is to realize its relationship to other objects. This implies a requirement for risk taking in venturing on the part of a student, the subject of learning, for without that they do not create or re-create. (2005, p. 40, original emphasis)

Standard 6: Assessment. In terms of assessment, the CCSSO (2011) states that “the teacher understands and uses multiple methods of assessment to engage learners in their own growth, to monitor learner progress, and to guide the teacher’s and learner’s decision making” (p. 9).

According to Keesing-Styles (2003), although traditional views of assessment may not appear to correspond to Freirean ideas, it is possible to adhere to InTASC and other conventional modes of assessment while still upholding the values of critical pedagogy. This is done when “the roles of teacher and learner are shared and all voices are validated” (p. 41), and where “authentic dialogue” takes place. This suggests that Freire would fully support the contemporary practice of authentic assessment that takes into account the lived experiences of the learners in multiple contexts.

Standard 7: Planning for Instruction. The CCSSO (2011) posits that teachers plan “instruction that supports every student in meeting rigorous learning goals by drawing upon knowledge of content areas, curriculum, cross-disciplinary skills, and pedagogy, as well as knowledge of learners and the community context” (p. 9).

Planning is an important part of being a teacher. However, planning should always center on the role of the learner. It is expected that the teacher, as the pedagogue, must maintain some level of authority in the planning process. Nonetheless, it is crucial that the teacher avoid exerting authority to the point of stifling the learner's creativity and engagement in inquiry. As Shor and Freire (1987) assert, the teacher is "*Not* directive of the *students*," but is instead "directive of the process" (p. 46, original emphasis, as cited in Au, 2007). Therefore, during the planning process, teachers must be mindful to foster dialogues that are learner centered and that encourage the development of creativity.

Standard 8: Instructional Strategies. In order to begin the dialogue, the CCSSO (2011) requires that the teacher understand and implement "a variety of instructional strategies to encourage learners to develop deep understanding of content areas and their connections, and to build skills to apply knowledge in meaningful ways" (p. 9).

In an interview with Leistyana (2004), Freire talks about his views on a continuum of approaches to teaching. He first describes a "bureaucratic" approach where the teacher simply recites information to a group of disengaged learners, unaware of its ineffectiveness. Freire then discusses what he calls the "progressive educator," whose approach is to ask questions and "engage" the learners by allowing them to answer these questions. Freire maintains that this form of teaching is equally devoid of substance. Finally, in this interview, Freire's ideal approach is a real dialogue where the students engage "in epistemological uneasiness in a way that inspires them to revisit the knowledge that they already possess in order to get a better understanding of, expand upon, or rewrite, it. And that is why it is not easy to be dialogical; it requires much work" (pp. 19-20).

Both Freire and the InTASC standards promote the importance of meaningful instruction that goes beyond surface knowledge of facts, and also engages the learner in a profound understanding that leads to real life applications. Furthermore, both Freire and InTASC require that teachers engage in a constant state of reflectivity in which they ask themselves, "Is this meaningful to my students?"

Professional Responsibility

Being a teacher is more than understanding students, planning, and instruction. It is also a commitment to establishing and maintaining safe learning environments, engaging in reflective practices and continuing to grow as a professional educator. These things are not done in isolation; they are done in the context of colleagues, parents, students, and the

greater community. It is also about recognizing one's role in advancing the school's mission and goals, through ethics and leadership, in order to bring about social change.

Completing one's teacher preparation program is not the end of the journey, but it is the beginning. It is not an indication of mastery or perfection in teaching. It is difficult to acknowledge, after all that one has accomplished in order to become a teacher, that there is still much to be learned. The reality is that this knowledge can only be learned through experience, direct interaction and collaboration with learners and colleagues, through the active participation in a school community. Teachers' personal and professional development is dynamic; it is an ethic within oneself that requires care and nurturing. As these standards indicate, and as Freire (2005) affirms, teachers are not expected

. . . to be perfect saints. It is exactly as human beings, with their virtues and faults, that they should bear witness to the struggle for sobriety, for freedom, for the creation of the indispensable discipline of study, in which process educators must take part as auxiliaries since it is the task of learners to generate discipline in themselves. (p. 105)

When one chooses to become a teacher, one accepts the responsibility of becoming a model citizen both in the classroom and in life outside of the classroom. While Freire states that teachers do not need to be saints, society does have certain expectations of teachers, like it or not, that in today's day and age, one accepts as part of the profession. In recent years, there have been a flurry of cases of teacher dismissals for comments they have made, related to teaching or not, on social networking sites. This has become an issue to the point that the Ohio Education Association has even publicly declared that "Unfortunately, school employees do not have the same free speech rights as the general public" (Ohio Education Association, 2009). Along with this responsibility comes a commitment to self-improvement, both professionally and personally, as well as improving the lives of students through challenging the inequities brought about by social injustice. As Freire (2005) reminds us,

The more we respect students independently of their color, sex, or social class, the more testimony we will give of respect in our daily lives, in school, in our relationship with colleagues, with doormen, with cooks, with watchmen, with students' mothers and fathers, the more we lessen the distance between what we say and what we do, so much more will we be contributing toward the strengthening of democratic experiences. (p. 161)

Standard #9: Professional Learning and Ethical Practice. The CCSSO (2011) establishes the expectation that "the teacher engages in ongoing

professional learning and uses evidence to continually evaluate his/her practice, particularly the effects of his/her choices and actions on others (learners, families, other professionals, and the community), and adapts practice to meet the needs of each learner” (p. 9).

One of the key attributes of being an ethical teacher, according to Freire, is in developing several virtues not only in herself or himself, but in her or his students as well. These virtues are:

humility (the ability to respect the views of the other), lovingness (the ability to communicate a sense of care and connection), courage (the ability to be able to teach while facing your own fears), and tolerance (making space for the expression of difference, but not accepting discrimination). (Stevenson, 2010, p. 79)

For many, developing these virtues is a struggle, requiring some level of vulnerability. Fostering these virtues, however difficult, must take place at the local level with both teachers and learners, but these virtues must also be embraced by administrators, policy makers, and the greater community. In order to transform education for all students, it is also vital for teachers to challenge the educational system. This includes “emancipating systematically entrenched attitudes, behaviors, and ideas, as well as instigating structural transformations at a material level” (Weiner, 2003, p. 93).

Standard #10: Leadership and Collaboration. Finally, the CCSSO (2011) asserts that the teacher seek “appropriate leadership roles and opportunities to take responsibility for student learning, to collaborate with learners, families, colleagues, other school professionals, and community members to ensure learner growth, and to advance the profession” (p. 9).

One of the major leadership roles a teacher might take, through Freirean eyes, is to unite in solidarity and collaborate with the oppressed in order to engage with them and others in dialogue (Gottesman, 2010). This dialogue can afford the educational community the opportunity to partner directly with one another, as well as the community outside the school walls, to promote learner growth as well as to bring about social change.

Being a teacher is a commitment to educational and societal transformation. This is a commitment to edifying the oppressed as well as challenging the oppressor through leadership. This “transformative pedagogical leadership is anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-homophobic, and responsive to class exploitation. These positions should be understood as ethically defensible on democratic grounds and it is the responsibility of the transformative leadership’s authority to make this known both in

and outside of class” (Weiner, 2003, p. 100). The teacher recognizes and acknowledges that his or her job is not finished when the students go home. He or she has an obligation to be an activist through participation in the governing and decision-making bodies offered to teachers in their school and in the community.

Conclusion

Modern teacher preparation and education are shaped by a plethora of governing bodies that are not always in sync with one another, yet are instrumental in the development and implementation of policy and standards, and accountability. These governing bodies impose significant limitations, as we have discussed. The reality is, teachers must take measures to satisfy these imposed constraints, but can employ critical pedagogy as a subversive means to challenge the status quo. This is not to say that such a task will be easy, for it requires reflection, diligence and constant vigilance in challenging the oppressor. It is important to keep in mind that “difficulty is always in direct relation to an individual’s capacity to respond to it, in light of his or her own evaluation of the ability to respond (Freire, 2005, p. 50, original emphasis).

Throughout this article, we have demonstrated how Freire’s critical ideals do not stand in isolation. In fact, they are very closely aligned with the InTASC standards that are widely used across teacher preparation programs in the United States. In particular we have argued that the InTASC context of *The Learner and Learning* is explicitly connected to Freire’s ideas of choice and lovingness, where the teacher recognizes that students are subjects, not objects, and are accepted for who they are and what they have to offer. In terms of *Content Knowledge* Freire urges educators to hone the epistemological curiosity of learners, through inquiry, to conscientization, thereby going beyond surface knowledge, to create and re-create knowledge through meaningful dialogue. The *Instructional Practices* that teachers adopt must represent the praxis of theory and implementation, through authentic dialogue and epistemological uneasiness. It is by these means that teachers maintain authority without becoming authoritarian. Lastly, *Professional Responsibility* marks a commitment to transformative leadership, where teachers collaborate with learners, colleagues, administrators, and the community at large to promote learning that leads to democratic experiences.

As we have discussed, there are many agents of standardization, including InTASC, NCLB, and Race to the Top, which represent a host of similar stakeholders seeking to influence educational policy. Ironically, while these agents promote standardization, there is little standardiza-

tion to be found among them. Their definition of standardization varies from entity to entity. Therefore, the constant in today's educational environment is the teacher. Through transformative pedagogy and a commitment of Freire's notion of lovingness, educators can fulfill the demands of political agents and the needs of their learners.

As Kincheloe (2008) reminds us, "Educators in the Freirean sense are learned scholars, community researchers, moral agents, philosophers, cultural workers, and political insurgents" (p. 164), an expectation that might seem overwhelming. However, one must remember that the teacher who engages in transformative pedagogy is not alone; the crux of this battle is through engagement and collaboration. Although this battle is neither quickly nor easily won, we must remain hopeful in knowing that "if an obstacle cannot be overcome right away, one must determine what steps to take toward becoming better capable of overcoming it tomorrow" (Freire, 2005, p. 50).

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