

Towards a Philosophy of Education for the Caribbean

Exploring African Models of Integrating Theory and Praxis

Canute S. Thompson

The University of the West Indies, Mona Campus

Sheron Fraser-Burgess

Ball State University

Thenjiwe Major

University of Botswana

Abstract

This article examines approaches to doing philosophy of education and critiques what the authors regard as overly theorized approaches which fail to take adequate account of the vexing issues and complex realities facing human society. The article posits that philosophy of education must engage the sites of human struggle and provide contextually relevant solutions for how these struggles may be addressed. The study uses as a point of departure the African concepts of *Kagisano* and *Ubuntu* and seeks to explore the usefulness of these concepts for the study and application of philosophy of education in the Caribbean. The article then invokes critical theory in conjunction with post-structuralism to relate critical pedagogy to the ethnic and social conditions of the Caribbean and Latin American context. The article purports to represent a departure from philosophical constructs which are defined by western and Eurocentric dominance to one that is contextual and original while at the same time being informed by a long history of philosophical ideas.

Keywords: Critical theory, praxis, critical pedagogy, Africa, Caribbean

Introduction

There is an overwhelming tide of resistance to what is deemed to be an overly theoretical focus in philosophical reasoning and a concomitant insistence that the ultimate value of this important discipline is its capacity to solve real-world problems. This article addresses the question: “What is the task of philosophy and more specifically, the task of philosophy of education?” Thus, the issue with which this paper wrestles is how to engage in philosophical discourse which at one and the same time takes account of various philosophical perspectives, and traditions, while imagining ways in which these perspectives and traditions may be relevant to the context of the Caribbean. This struggle may be characterized as seeking to bridge the divide between theory and praxis.

In our view, philosophy is intended to answer the complex questions of the purpose of life, the meaning of being, and the nature of humanity and to offer questions, considerations and norms concerning the human condition. In keeping with this broad aim of philosophy, we hold the view that through Philosophy of Education, there is the opportunity to explore the purpose of education and its relationship to the structures of society. In exploring this relationship, greatest attention is paid to the ways that education can lead to activism, engagement, and collective action that can improve the quality of life, enrich human relationships, deconstruct structures that are inconsistent with our view of humanity, and facilitate human happiness, well-being, and flourishing.

The Problem

Philosophers have agreed that the discipline of philosophy exists for the purpose of exploring the complexities of human experience. With respect to philosophy of education, Waghid (2014) contends that its primary role is to contribute to solving the problems related to advancing educational ideals in any society. He calls for the elimination of the distance of philosophy of education from the problems of society and suggests that African philosophy of education must articulate proposed solutions to the continent’s most pressing problems. Waghid lists poverty, hunger, disease, abuse, lack of accountability, and the prevalence of military dictatorships as among Africa’s most intractable concerns. Taking its cue from Waghid (2014), the problem with which this paper seeks to contend is whether philosophies of education exist that are responsive to the major challenges facing the Caribbean countries.

The Caribbean Islands and Latin American countries exist within similar geographical space and comparable socioeconomic context.

Indeed, in the global financial centers such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the US State Department, and the World Bank, the Caribbean and Latin America are grouped together for the purposes of defining foreign policy. A similar grouping is used in this article. The most pressing problems facing the Caribbean and Latin America are violence, measured principally in the rate of murder per capita, and continued under-development resulting in high dependence on aid and economic support from the hegemonic powers of the West and more recently of the East, namely China.

The 2018 rankings of the top twenty-five countries with the highest rates of murder per capita, countries in the Caribbean and Latin America account for seventeen or sixty-eight per cent of the twenty-five countries. Table 1 shows the countries and their place on the ranking.

The centuries-old hegemonic control of the countries of the Caribbean and Latin America by Western powers, and China's similar pursuit of dominance represent a threat to the realization of true economic independence of the countries of the region. During the period of colonization these countries lacked political independence. While political independence has been attained, there remains subtle and sometimes

Table 1
Caribbean and Latin American Countries in the Ranking of Twenty-five Countries with Highest Rates of Murder per capita (2018)

#	Country	Region	Ranking	Murder-rate per 100,000 population
1	Honduras	Latin America	1	90.4
2	Venezuela	Latin America	2	53.7
3	Belize	Caribbean	3	44.7
4	El Salvador	Latin America	4	41.2
5	Guatemala	Latin America	5	39.9
6	Jamaica	Caribbean	6	39.3
7	St. Kitts & Nevis	Caribbean	9	33.6
8	Colombia	Latin American	11	30.8
9	Bahamas	Caribbean	12	29.8
10	Trinidad & Tobago	Caribbean	13	28.3
11	St. Vincent & the Grenadines	Caribbean	15	25.6
12	Brazil	Latin America	16	25.2
13	Dominica Republic	Caribbean	18	22.1
14	St. Lucia	Caribbean	19	21.6
15	Mexico	Latin America	20	21.5
16	Dominica	Caribbean	21	21.1
17	Panama	Latin America	25	17.2

overt economic threats to their national sovereignty and continued political colonization.

In addition to the problem of high levels of crime and violence, many countries in the Caribbean and Latin America face severe internal economic challenges that severely undermine the region's prospects of achieving sustainable development. High levels of crime are also a threat to sustainable economic development. Thus, the twin problems of high levels of crime and violence, on the one hand, and economic dependency represent among the biggest problems that Caribbean and Latin America countries face. Any philosophy of human flourishing which fails to tackle these fundamental and life-threatening challenges cannot be said to be applicable to the realities of the society.

Research Questions, Objectives and Significance of the Study

Against the background of the foregoing problem, this article seeks to answer the following questions:

- (1) What is the task of philosophy as it relates to the aims and purposes of education?
- (2) What models of philosophy of education may Caribbean educators and philosophers of education pursue?
- (3) To what extent should education be praxis-focused?

The objective of these questions is rooted in the consideration that the task of philosophy is to provide ways of making sense of the vexing and complex questions that face society. Thus, the study seeks to articulate a philosophy of education that is designed to contribute to addressing threats to well-being and flourishing being experienced by countries of the region.

This study is significant for at least two reasons. First, this analysis is the first of its kind in the last decade and a half that has sought to tackle the issue of philosophy of education and its meaning for the Caribbean. Secondly, this study is unique in its juxtaposition of the socio-economic issues and the normative mandate of philosophy of education.

Literature Review

While a comprehensive discussion of the purview of philosophy is beyond the scope of this article, it is worth noting the views of prominent modern thinkers in the field and relating them to education. McIntyre (2006) holds that the task of philosophy is to offer insight about the complexities that threaten the quality of life and limit the capacity of

human beings to experience happiness. Rodgers (2016), in seeking to provide an explanation for the task of philosophy, contends that Nietzsche's existentialism views the work of philosophy as intentionally revisionary. In this regard he suggests that philosophers should reconceive themselves as creators of value, and to own up to and embrace the cultural significance of this task. Political philosopher Rawls (1999) advances a profound social change perspective on justice and inherently outlines the task of philosophy. The task of philosophy, in Rawls' thinking, was largely to create the justification for, and facilitate the attainment of a new political arrangement. Weithman (2009) in his analysis of Rawls' thinking contends that Rawls conceived the necessity of creating new constitutional mechanisms for liberty and the possibility of achieving such new arrangements that are capable of a sustained commitment to justice. As such it was the task of philosophy to articulate that possibility. If the foregoing characterizations are representative of the task of philosophy, generally, it may then be asked: What is the task of philosophy of education?

The Relation of Philosophical Perspectives and Education

Philosophy of education brings to bear philosophical inquiry, reasoning, and ethics to the domain of educational theory and practice. Siegel describes the field as "the pursuit of philosophical questions concerning education" and that "This sort of dependence on the parent discipline is typical of philosophical questions concerning education" (Siegel, 2009, p. 4).

Historically, the development of the field of philosophy of education had a storied past in North America and in the United Kingdom as part of a vibrant engagement with significant and important issues related to educational practice and policy. Pratte (1979) states that:

The traditional view of philosophy of education was that of educationists engaging in speculation concerning philosophical issues in education. It was the heir of the philosophic tradition that took the affairs of the heart quite seriously, attempting to give the best possible interpretation of the world and its application in terms of 'implication' for educational policy and practice. (p. 146)

During the 1950s through the 1960s, there was systematic conceptual clarification about education policy and practice (Pring, 2007). In North America in the 1950's, 60's, and 70's work in philosophy of education was infused with Deweyan progressivist influence, confronting critical theoretic challenges in Neo-Marxism and relating philosophy to philosophical thought through "-isms." These early conceptions of the "isms"

(e.g. perennialism, essentialism, experimentalism) proposed a framework of philosophy of education in which there were schools of thought with which philosophical views about education can be associated. According to Pratte (1979):

One segment of educational philosophy turned from the traditional “ism” to the alleged more relevant “isms” of progressivism, essentialism, perennialism, and reconstructionism, teasing out of these their “implications” for practical educational problems. . . . Thus, in the 1950s the function of philosophy of education in teacher education programs was either to provide students with a directive for life and its connection to the schoolroom or to be relevant to the problems or issues of everyday classroom teaching. (p. 148)

In addition to the teacher education strand, Soltis (1966) details the analytic focus that emerged and flourished in the latter twentieth century. These philosophers of education examined the “technical language of educational theory and practice seeking clarity and precision of meaning.” It was their goal to get beyond “the surface of philosophizing about education in an attempt to locate underlying assumptions; and they search beneath educational arguments and ideas for their logical underpinnings” (Soltis, 1966, p. 526).

In more recent decades, the relation of philosophy to education has been a continuous one. However, there is the prevailing view that the status of the field of philosophy of education is in a period of steady decline in its standing with respect to both educational practitioners and professional philosophy. The seminal 2002 summer edition of the journal of *Educational Theory* devoted an entire issue prompted by Arcilla’s (2002) complaint in an earlier issue that philosophy had become irrelevant to the very field from which it derives its impetus. Bredo (2002) writes of the two horns of the central dilemma, one of which he regards as being important to practitioners across the spectrum of policy makers to teachers versus the other being of academic significance. The various sides of the issue fall into two categories. One, which can be labeled the purists, argues for philosophy of education to reside closely within its parent discipline. In this case, philosophers of the Enlightenment, such as Locke, Mill, and Kant, and the logical empiricists of the early twentieth century are most relevant to its discourse. For example, Siegel (2009) views doing good philosophical work as foremost in developing the philosophical dimensions of education. The crux of purism lies in a fidelity to a uniquely philosophical perspective; there is the belief that such an approach can help elucidate, interrogate, and make more rigorous current trends in educational theory and practice. It is a task that Pring (2007) describes in a particular case of conducting an extensive educa-

tional review as asking “deeper questions about the aims of education, within which such evidence acquires or does not acquire significance. It is concerned not simply with the facts and figures on participation, but with the broader educational value of participation” (p. 329).

The other view, the integrationists, which relates to Soltis (1966) fourth dimension seeks to understand philosophy in light of changing education theory, socioeconomic, and sociopolitical contexts. Johnston (2007) contends that its goal has always been that of providing philosophically informed educational practice. Johnston concludes that there are two constants in the North American debates and discussions of what constitutes the philosophy of education. On the one hand is the focus on educational practice and on the other philosophy of education is in the service of social reform and improvement. As a result, he recommends a situated philosophy of education, according to which philosophy is subsumed under educational questions.

While, integrationism is application-focused, it is also concerned to bring a particularly philosophical lens to practice. On prima facie reading, purism and integrationism as arguments for defining philosophy of education are incomplete analyses. In order to achieve full treatment of the functional and institutional factors that hinder dissemination and influence of the philosophical approach it will be important to take into account the practitioner’s perspective.

Education, Teaching, and Philosophy

Vilson (2015) argued that professional educators share one overarching obligation namely that of ensuring that all students receive a rich, well-rounded education which prepares them to become productive and engaged citizens. As philosophy of education was being defined as a field, Stanley (1958) offered an opening gambit for educational practitioners regarding its significance for their work. It is the seminal question, “Is the philosophic position of professional educators in need of revision?” The positions of Vilson are aligned to that of Stanley (1958) who claimed that reexamining the nature of philosophy of education will not be achieved merely by the study of pure philosophy.

Stanley suggests that the first reason for this is that (then) current trend in academic philosophy in the United States was to limit the scope of philosophy to linguistic analysis. This school of thought was linked to the idea that rather than seeking to be relevant to the educational field, philosophy and practice constitute two different domains. This tendency Stanley suggested while having its place, had the effect of diverting energies from the more important task of formulating philo-

sophical systems that address contemporary intellectual, moral, and emotional concerns. Among the systems that should be formulated are those that could lead to the pedagogies that can produce well-rounded students, with a generative vision of their role in the world and who become productive and engaged citizens. This task is as urgent today as it was when Stanley posed his provocative statement

The second element of Stanley's answer to his rhetorical question relates to the relationship between educational policy and philosophy of education. The import of this relationship is that philosophy of education can influence the making of educational policy. Yet as Stanley argues, educational policy is not merely a deduction from a philosophical system but an engagement with the context of one's reality in ways that seek to transform those realities such that the context approximates more closely to the ideals which support collective and comprehensive human wholeness. McLaughlin (2000) maintained that educational policy is shaped by a variety of complex interrelated factors and that it is a virtual truism to argue that educational policy cannot be based on philosophical considerations alone.

Thus, educational policy must ask questions concerning inequity, access, community, assessment, and be informed by history, psychology, sociology, various traditions of empirical research and the practical pedagogic experiences of people working in the field. Other areas that must be considered in the making of educational policy are the social and psychological complexities of multimodal selfhood which has been defined by the social media establishment in ways that are so potentially confusing and intricate that they would defy attempts at cross-situational consistency as developed by Bem and Allen (1974). That educational policy is not merely a deduction from philosophy, but relies on history, psychology, and the experiences from the trenches, leads logically to the view that philosophy of education must be praxis focused. Any system of thought which restricts philosophy of education to the narrow confines of theory does a disservice to philosophy generally and the discipline of philosophy of education more specifically.

The Task of Philosophy and Philosophy of Education Revisited— An Ethical Curiosity

In a compelling piece entitled *Community Work as Critical Pedagogy: Re-envisioning Freire and Gramsci*, Ledwith (2001) argued that the period of rapid sociopolitical change which characterizes the context in which we now live (a context Anderson describes as the "postmodern condition"), requires critical pedagogy. Describing this era as a complex one, Ledwith

contends that pedagogy must be concerned with social difference, justice and social transformation. In response to this condensed historiography of philosophy and its relationship to education, this work argues that a pedagogy of transformative change, one concerned with liberation, is rooted in praxis, and located in educational sites of resistance.

The educational sites of resistance, Ledwith argues, are found in community work, youth work, and community education. Community work as critical pedagogy is the very essence of people's lives and places the educator and the philosopher at the intersection of liberation and domination. Education practitioners who choose the path of liberation, must challenge the oppressive systems in the philosophical underpinnings of their work. They must be about making plain the vested interests of the powerful minority over the development and survival interest of the dispossessed majority who are assigned to playing a minimalist role in the creation of knowledge and accordingly perpetuates imbalances in the economic system.

Evidence that education systems produce learners who are minimal knowledge contributors is present in the area of assessment. Savonick (2015) examines this problem in a post entitled *From Critical to Creative Pedagogy: Re-imagining Assessment*. Among other things, Savonick calls for modes of assessment that catalyze and proliferate learning, rather than punishing or shaming students for not learning enough, or not learning the right things in the allotted time. While this assertion cuts in many directions, one of the underlying insights is the fact that pedagogy has the potential to be repressive, in that it blunts and disparages the voices and views on the learner in response to the need; however, learning should not only liberate, it should also produce or contribute to happiness. Much of the history of pedagogy, especially pedagogy delivered to the marginalized and informed by the dictators of the capitalist system has served to dehumanize.

The Inadequacy of Mainstream Western Philosophy

One clear affirmative case for such a revision would be in the extant relationship of the philosophy of education field to Western white patriarchal dominance and British colonialism and empire building. As discussed above, traditional philosophy of education scholarship of the mid-twentieth century originated from North American and British analytic roots. To the extent that contemporary views on philosophy of education are beholden to these concepts they may reflect these assumptions.

Mills (1997), in *Racial Contract*, notably posited white supremacy

as the most influential political system in modern history. He argued that this ideology tainted Western philosophical reasoning in being a hidden general premise of Rousseau's, Lockean, and Hobbesian social contract theory and Kantian ethics. The more contemporary Rawlsian political philosophy also by its omission of racism exemplifies this Western, philosophical blind spot in its reasoning. The idealizations on which philosophy is predicated perpetuate this bias. Associated methodologies include formulating inquiry into the human conditions in a way that is distanced from the facts of human history and positing the idealized rational subject as the basic ontological category. Philosophical theory building in terms of ideal conditions has contributed to the perpetuation of a global system of Anglo-European hegemony and economic domination, and resulting atrocities of war and poverty.

Traditional philosophy of education presupposes ideal theory in the similar relationship in which it stands to philosophy proper. This commitment to ideal theory is most evident in the analytic tradition and to a lesser extent in the -isms in which there is a philosophically purist view of the relationship of education to philosophy. Purism's claims to fidelity to philosophical methods and areas of inquiry can fail in acknowledgement of the situatedness of the discourse within cultural or identity contexts. There is the belief that such an approach can undertake most fittingly a philosophically rigorous study of the educational concept and ideals and their implications.

What would it mean then to frame a philosophy of education that presupposes non-ideal theory? Mills (1997) asserts that the racial contract is the derivative conclusion of non-ideal political theory that calls into question the ontological and epistemological prescriptive norms of global white supremacy. We would argue that this task offers a direction for imagining a philosophy of education that is similarly construed. It assumes that racial contract holds as being a global system that preserves Western and Eurocentric dominance.

Models of African Philosophy of Education as Precedents

One precedent for a philosophy of education that does not presuppose ideal theory exists on the African continent. It is argued that an indigenous philosophical interpretation of education to achieve praxis can provide a model for a comparable original conception derived from the Caribbean context. The dominant narrative of Africa characterizes its countries and societies in terms of deficits with respect to the leveraging of its vast resources in comparison to the West. For example, Waghid (2016) laments that it is the disjuncture between the knowledge

which universities produce and the problems of society that account for the insufficient development of Africa. Waghid makes a passionate case for the elimination of disjuncture between philosophy of education and the problems of society, framing the discussion in the larger context of the knowledge-producing role of a university and the particular social, political, and economic context in which the university operates.

An African philosophy of education, he contends, is embedded with an energy and drive to change undesirable situations and conditions. UNESCO supports this view and contends that understanding of philosophy is a continuous act of working for peace. In keeping with this mission, UNESCO sees the teaching of philosophy as an undeniable keystone of a quality education for all. A similar position is expressed by Waghid (2016), which states that African philosophy of education involves engagement in action for a larger purpose. This larger purpose, Gyekye (1997) suggests involves responding to the problems generated by experience and Letseka (2000) argues involves interrogating the notion of Ubuntu which articulates the importance of service and community within the context of seeking to advance human wellbeing and human flourishing. Letseka thus contends that philosophy of education constitutes of socio-ethical engagement in which the objective is to establish parameters for acceptable standards of human conduct. These standards create the conditions of the advancement of human society and must involve interpersonal and collaborative skills. Letseka's contention is that characteristics such as interpersonal and collaborative skills have been foundational to African culture and African philosophy of education. It is instructive that these two skills are among those which Soffel (2016) of the World Economic Forum, Gurria of the OECD, and Jules of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States and previously of the Caribbean Examinations Council include their lists of 21st century skills.

As a national exemplar, it can be argued Botswana's establishment of Kagisano, or social harmony, as the all-encompassing construct for primary and secondary education policy that is inclusive of Ubuntu provides such a model. The notion of social harmony as the primary aim of education provides an alternative non-Western nascent ethic; depicts reasoning, in which the moral community rather than idealized rational individual is the basic unit of analysis; and proposes a non-Western conception of democratic principles that its history exemplifies. The pre-independence form of education and immediately post-independence reflected the British educational system. Colonial influence and control were evident in that English was the only official language in schools. Students were taught the culture of the colonizer and were made to believe that their own African, Botswana culture was barbaric and inferior.

The educational system did not address, embrace or reflect the culture and values of the Batswana people; therefore, it failed to address the needs of the Batswana people.

The country's leaders established the National Commission on Education with the goal "which had the mandate of formulating the country's philosophy of education and setting goals for the development of education and training" (Davies, 2007, p. 147). Out of this work emerged the Education for Social Harmony or Education for Kagisano. The report maintained that adherence to democratic principles was most efficacious for social harmony. The philosophy of Kagisano (1977–1996), in conjunction with the other national principles of democracy, development, and self-reliance, formed the framework for national guiding principles for education. In 1996, a fifth principle, Botho (Ubuntu), was added to guide the entire educational system of Botswana. Botho refers "to one of the tenets of African culture—the concept of a person who has a well-rounded character, who is well-mannered, courteous, and disciplined, and realizes his or her full potential, both as an individual and as part of the community to which one belongs" (Botswana Government, 1997). Kagisano is rooted in a narrative of struggle, unity, and community in which their history (including the fortuitous discovery of diamonds in the mid-70's after ending British rule) provides ample evidence.

Considerations for Caribbean Counterpart

What are the possibilities for translating the indigenous relationships between the African values and philosophical norms to countries of the Caribbean in the African Diaspora? One aspect of the backdrop of this vision of what students should become is the continued oppression and disparities which characterize large sections of Caribbean society in the wake of colonization. As a consequence of this lack and given the limits in the education systems, it is reckoned that the home needs to be brought more into the learning space; thus, a pedagogy of community-building is fundamental to reinforce with each new generation cultural assets of a postcolonial people.

Hegemonic global powers continue to pursue control of the Caribbean but largely via economic rather than political means, given that most countries of the Caribbean are now 'independent'. Thus, while political colonization is now longer operative, economic colonization is front and center, and the competition between former and more recent colonizers is potent. One of the fronts on which this economic colonization is taking place is social media, which may be characterized as space for the surrendering of selfhood and personal sovereignty. However, viewing the

national context as the potential from which a home-grown philosophy of education can emerge, the notions of roundedness, courtesy of discipline which are emphasized in the philosophy of Kagisano are also embedded in the philosophies of Caribbean education systems. Like Botswana, it can be said that schools in the Caribbean highlight the need for students to become socially aware, responsible, conscious, caring, and spiritually mature citizens who contribute to national development while advancing their own economic interests (Thompson, 2019).

Philosophy of Education as Praxis

It has been the argument of this work that the purpose of philosophy of education is embedded in the two important activities and duties of philosopher, namely that pedagogue and advocate is better conceived in the context of the schools and society. The claim that these two conceptualizations are not separate and discrete but intertwined and mutually supportive returns this paper to Stanley's (1958) seminal question: "Is the philosophic position held by professional educators today in need of revision" (p. 11)? This intertwining of advocacy and pedagogy has been patterned in various works.

Freire (1968) in his seminal work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* articulated the need for an alternative approach to schooling. Freire had contended that the popular and practiced approach to pedagogy was an instrument of oppression rather than an instrument of liberation. He suggested that the relationship between teacher and student was one that presumed the superiority of the teacher who possessed a bank of information which was made available to the ignorant student. He proposed as an alternative a pedagogy based on dialogue designed to awaken the critical consciousness of students through investigative thinking. This approach was based on the notion that students possessed insights that were relevant to learning and by giving credence to the ideas and experiences of students, the teacher was opening the door for them to critically examine their realities, and thus see how they may liberate their thinking from predetermined ideas that have been fashioned to keep them subjugated to the interests of the oppressive economic agenda of the powerful.

Freire's critique of the education system remains relevant to the Caribbean almost fifty years since he articulated them as shown in Thompson (2019) who argues that there is a need for Caribbean educational systems to develop a collective consciousness and the capacity to push back against the continuing hegemonic tendencies of economically more powerful countries. Thompson contends that the need for this

collective consciousness is also based on the objective to instill in Caribbean students a new self-understanding located in the confidence that they can challenge the ideas and perspectives of others. This confidence to challenge inherited ideologies is necessary, Thompson argues, as the failure to do so will result in the absorption and eventual non-identification of Caribbean culture and consciousness into the globalized world. Thus, the education system of the Caribbean should become the bulwark of the resistance to conscription and sublimation into dominant global cultures and systems of thought. This sublimation is sometimes aided and abetted by government officials who are responsible for curricula and who wittingly or unwittingly adopt curricula that are crafted in foreign contexts and seek to impose same on a sometimes-unaware populace.

Ramphall (1997) argues for the need for this collective consciousness which he describes as the “WI” (for West Indian) consciousness but which he emphatically pronounces as “we” to emphasize the importance of common values and a common resolve in rebutting and disputing global hegemony in the educational and economic affairs of the Caribbean.

The notion of a Caribbean collective consciousness as argued by Thompson and Ramphall is consistent with the African notion of ubuntu, which is predicated on the view that human community is the space within which people grow and develop and that it is the existence of the one which makes possible the existence and growth of the other. This concept of reciprocal existence gives another layer of meaning to the conception of existentialism as argued by the early existentialists who describe consciousness a person’s encounter with self.

In contrast to this European characterization of existence which locates the human being face to face with self, African and Caribbean existentialism locates the human being face to face with his or her neighbor as the defining quality of self-discovery or consciousness. A central element of Freire’s analysis of the oppressive nature of the classroom was its emphasis of the singular rather than shared learning experience of the student as he or she confronted the process of assimilation into a world in which he or she is a passive vessel in which the thoughts and ideas of others are poured.

A novel counter-position to Freire’s pedagogy of the oppressed is Muhlhauser (2005), pedagogy of disease. Muhlhauser submits that there are some students who are the ‘victims’ of privilege and wealth and for whom the notion of oppression would be an idle and distant, if not unthinkable notion. He suggests therefore that the pedagogy relevant to people in these contexts is the pedagogy of disease. This pedagogy is designed to awaken consciousness to the diseased stated of their existence, which is a function of having been born into wealth and by virtue

of the modes of their upbringing are unable to see both the limitations and dangers of their own circumstances, as well as alternative realities in the world around them.

Beckett, Glass, and Moreno (2013) speaking in the mode of Freire and exposing some of the inequities that are characteristic of many societies, advance a pedagogy of community-building. This pedagogy focused on the disparities in the support for quality education to schools that serve minority and immigrant communities in California. They contend that the path to overcoming these disparities, which have continued to produce unacceptable academic outcomes, is found in strengthening the ties between school and home and promoting greater parental involvement in the academic life of students. This pedagogy of community-building is somewhat similar in character, even if not articulation, to the pedagogy of a just society which is advanced by Bozelek and Zembylas (2017). Bozelek and Zembylas lament the continued inequities in higher education in post-apartheid South Africa which has led to movements such as #FeesMustFall.

David Gruenewald (2003) suggests that critical pedagogy must, of necessity, emphasize decolonization. He asserts that pedagogy must seek the twin objectives of decolonization and “re-inhabitation” through synthesizing critical and place-based approaches. He further asserts that a critical pedagogy of place challenges all educators to reflect on the relationship between the kind of education they pursue and the kind of places we inhabit and leave behind for future generations.

This argument provides insight for the interpretation and application of pedagogy in the Caribbean context at two levels. In the first place, it seems to suggest that the context in which pedagogy takes place is presumptively one that is affected by hegemonic control and the narrative of what is to be taught and how it is taught, are influenced by powers who though external to the context have control over the context. Gruenewald’s views are supported by Noroozi (2019) who sees philosophy as being held hostage by colonial interests.

The second layer of insight is the argument that the current generation has a duty to reshape the context and content of pedagogy for the present and future. The suggestion that the context of pedagogy is under hegemonic control is indeed true for the Caribbean. As former Spanish, French, and British colonies, and with some countries still formal colonies of the Europeans, the education system that was left behind was one that emphasized preparation of the local population for minimal participation in the economy, and more specifically as manual laborers. The dominant view was that a good student was one who was capable of grasping ideas constructed by others and follow instructions.

As such critical thinking was not emphasized, neither were innovation and creativity and the future place of students was to work on farms or in other industries. In the immediate post-independence period, most jobs in the civil service were held by expatriates; so were most posts in schools and the university.

Conclusion: Towards a Caribbean Philosophy of Education

Using the Freirean notion of dialogue as the centerpiece of the pedagogy required to resist oppression, Gadotti (1996), asserts that pedagogy of praxis is inherently a pedagogy of consciousness. The consciousness emerges out of dialogue/dialectics which he says is both a method of inquiry as well as the texture of the reality of human beings, culture, and society. Culture he contends is always the result of the accumulation of human actions and reactions, thus the artifacts of civilization are intertwined with the moral, spiritual, ethical, and material elements of human existence. The upshot of Gadotti's position is that philosophy of education must confront, reflect, come to terms with, and expound upon the texture of human reality and seek to make meaning of the elements of human civilization, not merely using linguistic beauty or intellectual proficiency but also seek to undertake a pragmatic reorientation of the human condition to address the elements of civilization that are destructive and unsustainable. Gadotti, who is influenced by the Hegelian-Marxist theory of dialectical materialism, predicates his position on the assertion that human history is the product of the struggle of men and women against oppression and inequality. In this regard, with the artefacts of civilization possessing textures of the destruction of some peoples by others, and with the continuation of institutional inequality as the examples from Bozelek and Zembylas (2017) highlight, philosophy of education as praxis is expected to contribute to the amelioration, mitigation, and removal of structures of inequality and oppression.

Thus, we contend that any philosophical system or discourse that fails to explore or show how existing destructive or unhelpful elements of civilization can be neutralized or contained, is less than relevant to human development, and to use an expression from the Pauline tradition, such high-sounding articulations may be likened to sounding brass or tinkling cymbals. The sound they make may excite the senses, but they do not alter the temperature or transform the reality. In other words, philosophy of education should be construed as an engagement in which the educator not merely learns philosophy, understood as acquiring abstract concepts, but does philosophy in the Deweyan sense of learning through action.

Torres (1996) in writing the foreword to Gadotti's (1994) work, relies on Wartofsky in providing a comprehensive summary of the case being made for philosophy to be viewed as praxis rather than merely scholastic and linguistic elegance. Torres recounts a time when the study of philosophy was largely analytic and linguistic in focus and formalist in character. He further comments that philosophy was notable for its rigor and paid close attention to details and to clarity in the logic of argumentation (Torres, 1996). Torres delivers, what may be regarded as the most telling body blow to the preoccupation with analytical and linguistic formalities and forms, as the mode of doing philosophy versus undertaking a project to transform the human condition. Torres (1996) argues that while the linguistic preoccupation with philosophy was commonplace, it was ahistorical, asocial, and impractical. He further suggested that insofar as it was normative, the norms were methodological rather than substantive.

This position supports our overall and original contention that philosophy ought to be focused on solving problems of human society. With a focus on solving the problems of human society, philosophy, and by extension, philosophy of education must ask questions concerning inequity, access, and community. These questions must be informed by history, psychology, sociology, and the practical pedagogic experiences of people working in the field as McLaughlin (2000) argues.

Botman (2014) unearths the struggle that philosophy of education faces in making itself relevant to teacher education. She argues that teacher education must be rooted in Freirean philosophy and articulates a pedagogy of hope which is rooted in praxis. She posits that a pedagogy of hope involves the unleashing of the transformational and emancipatory potential of a teacher as an agent of democratic change, authority and reflectiveness. She highlights the pragmatic implications of this pedagogy of praxis-based hope and suggests that it such a pedagogy must contribute to the attainment of South Africa's National Development Plan and the Vision for 2030. The construction of teacher education and educational policies must make an impact on society she insists, and this she contends can only be realized through an approach that seeks to create spaces for the masses of the people to participate in dialogue designed to re-orientate current teacher education policy.

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