


Chapter-4

DEVELOPING CRITICAL PEDAGOGY IN HIGHER EDUCATION: MOVING FROM THE CONCEPTUAL TO HANDS-ON IMPLEMENTATION WHILE NAVIGATING NEOLIBERAL REALITIES

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ABSTRACT

Critical Pedagogy has been discussed in higher education for over five decades at this stage, but it has always been examined mostly as content, within courses specialized in Education, and rarely has it been genuinely envisaged as a modus operandi for academia more generally. More recently in the last few years, sociological trends focused on social justice and equity have brought back Critical Pedagogy more firmly to the forefront: the 'decolonizing the curriculum' and Truth and Reconciliation Recommendations, Black Lives Matter, and the #MeToo movement have had a significant impact on higher education, and increased calls for a reform of the post-secondary sector towards social justice education. Critical Pedagogy appears, once again, as highly relevant in this landscape. A difficulty lies, however, in the fact that when its implementation is envisaged in academia, the organizational and strategic hurdles faced by instructors are not realistically considered. This chapter argues first that any effort towards implementing Critical Pedagogy must acknowledge the inherent tension that it creates with the predominant Neo-liberal agenda of the academy. The second part of the chapter examines the author's phenomenological experiences with the adoption of Critical Pedagogy in the classroom, and explores the challenges related to this process. The final part of the chapter considers the repercussions this reflection has on leadership in the post-secondary sector, within the wider context of the tension highlighted between goals that are polarly opposed.

Keywords: Critical Pedagogy, Higher Education, Learner Diversity, Neo-liberalism, Social Justice, Curriculum Co-creation, Leadership.

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

Critical Pedagogy (CP) has been gaining in popularity in higher education (HE) over the last decade. Freire's key concepts have of course been discussed conceptually for over fifty years in this arena, but these efforts have always focused on CP as academic content, within a few key faculties, rather than as best practices in teaching and learning more generally, across campuses. It is only in the last decade, as post-secondary pedagogy finally reached its 'crise de conscience', that CP has become a possible tangible lens for best practices in the classroom. The 'decolonizing the curriculum' (Jaber et al., 2024; Takhar, 2023), Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call for Action (Koehler, 2024; Tupper & Omoregie, 2024), Black Lives Matter (Stone-Sabali et al., 2024; Watson, 2024), and the #MeToo (Gertsberg, 2024; Keddie & Wilkinson, 2025) movements, in particular, have had a significant impact on HE, and CP has appeared as an appealing

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