

Pedagogical Content Knowledge and Social Justice Pedagogical Knowledge: Re-Envisioning A Model for Teacher Practice

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Abstract	Article Info
<p><i>The nature of teacher knowledge and preparation has incited many significant debates over the years. The major point of contention being what knowledge do teachers need for effective practice? Research have presented arguments distinguishing between declarative knowledge and procedural knowledge. A key study on teacher knowledge is Shulman’s (1987) study on Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) where he defines teacher knowledge as knowledge which integrates the knowledge of a specific subject and the pedagogical knowledge for teaching that particular subject. I question however what other knowledge component can contribute to effective teaching? Shulman’s model has been criticized for its non-inclusion of social justice knowledge. I argue Social Justice Knowledge can support Pedagogical Content Knowledge especially for teacher preparation practices in postcolonial Jamaica. Social Justice Pedagogical Content Knowledge empowers teachers to illuminate their voices inside and outside of the classroom. Hence, the purpose of this conceptual paper is to explore the relationship between Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) and Social Justice Knowledge as a model for teacher practice in the Jamaican context. What are the benefits to teacher practice? And how can it inform a stronger model</i></p>	<p>Article History: <i>Received</i> September, 30, 2018</p> <p><i>Accepted</i> September, 30, 2019</p> <hr style="width: 50%; margin-left: 0;"/> <p>Keywords: <i>Pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), Social justice knowledge, Teacher preparation, Colonization.</i></p>

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Introduction

One major goal of education is to shape an individual and by extension the nation. It is therefore important that teacher preparation be viewed as the conduit to equipping teachers with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behavior required to effectively impact change in behavior. What then is required of the teacher? Essentially, what knowledge is needed for effective teaching? And what is effective teaching? To answer these questions, we must reflect on what counts as effective teaching. Therefore, the pedagogical and epistemological foundations of teacher education must be examined. According to Kaplan and Owing (2002), effective preparation of teachers should include a focus on Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) development.

Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) is a knowledge base for teaching that exists at the juncture of content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge (Shulman, 1986). Teachers who possess PCK can effectively create representations for concepts, recognize student preconceptions and misconceptions of content, and sequence curriculum to enhance student learning (Shulman, 1986). Albeit



Shulman's model significantly shifting the landscape for thirty years, the model is interrogated for its lack of inclusivity of a social justice agenda. Dyches and Boyd (2017) note that the paradigm fails to delineate a space for social justice teaching. Hence, they propose a teacher preparation model which segments three knowledge domains: Social Justice Knowledge, Social Justice Pedagogical Knowledge, and Social Justice Content Knowledge (SJPACK). This knowledge shapes the practice of PCK in the teaching and learning environment.

The purpose of this conceptual paper is to explore the relationship between Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) and Social Justice Knowledge as a model for teacher practice in the Jamaican context. What are the benefits to teacher practice? And how can it inform a stronger model for teacher preparation; essentially supporting a teacher preparation model which is not siloed from social justice knowledge.

Background

Shulman's (1986) PCK model has been predominantly critical to classroom teaching and learning. The model requires an amalgamation of content and pedagogy required for the enactment of teaching. The PCK model embodies:

the personal attribute of a teacher and is considered both a knowledge base and an action... [it is the] knowledge of reasoning behind, planning for, and enactment of teaching a particular topic in a particular way for a particular reason to particular students for enhanced student outcomes. (Gess-Newsome & Carlson, 2015, p. 36)

PCK is one of the most basic forms of knowledge used in teacher preparation. Albeit its importance, there are critical elements to teacher preparation that should be addressed. I argue that in addition to academic instruction Social Justice Pedagogical Knowledge should be a complement. The teacher's role is not only content driven but also to guide students to develop the skills necessary to foster a better society. Delivering content knowledge should not be the only focus, there must be a space for enabling conversations about social justice knowledge. Social Justice Knowledge empowers students to voice their concerns and question unjust situations in their lives or in the lives of those around them. Ultimately, social justice can't be taught in one lesson. It should be integrated into the teaching philosophies and actions of teachers. Teachers can lead students to ask questions that are meaningful and purposeful which will lead to productive classrooms. Social Justice Pedagogical knowledge is framed on the use of activist strategies (active learning) which can raise awareness of an issue and build support for positive change. This is particularly important to the education context of Jamaica.

Historically, education in Jamaica is framed on a British model which is teacher centred, content driven, and requires high stake testing, and recall. The curriculum maintained an academic curriculum conception. This model fostered an ideology of the 'haves and have not' those students who could pass the test and matriculate from primary school to secondary high school; thus, perpetuating an ideology of inequity. This created a hegemonic construct of power and dominance within the school community. Some schools are categorized as elite while others are non-elite. Within these power



constructs, schools on the far end of the spectrum contend with behavioural issues, low performance and low self-esteem. This issue undoubtedly negatively affects the teacher's delivery of PCK. I posit PCK and social justice knowledge must frame the practice of teacher preparation in Jamaica given its colonial past. In light of how the country has evolved from slavery and colonialism, it is still impacted by an education system fashioned after the British model which is teacher-centered, and fosters inequity and a division of class. It now begs the question; how do we situate or resituate an education system framed on an ideology of oppression?

Cesaire (1972) described colonization as being equal to "thingification". This is where the colonizing man is depicted as a classroom monitor, an army sergeant, a prison guard, a slave driver (superior), and the indigenous man (colonized) is an instrument of production. He stated: "I am talking about societies drained of their essence, cultures trampled underfoot, institutions undermined, lands confiscated, religions smashed, magnificent artistic creations destroyed, extraordinary possibilities wiped out" (Cesaire, 1972, p. 21).

What then do our teachers need to do for effective practice? Whose knowledge becomes important in the status quo? The ability to organise content knowledge around key concepts is an essential component of what teachers need to learn in order to teach effectively. This however must be supported by knowledge which informs the teachers' understanding of social justice. This is particularly important to the Jamaican education system as they seek to embrace inclusivity and diversity in the education system. The Ministry of Education Youth and Information seeks to implement a

curriculum that prepares all children for 21st century learning. Therefore, teaching and learning must reflect real life situations and a problem based methodology.

Literature Review

Social Justice Knowledge

Dover (2013) notes teaching for social justice draws on five conceptual and pedagogical philosophies which include: democratic education, critical pedagogy, multicultural education, culturally responsive education, and social justice education. Each has its own contribution, he notes, teaching for social justice stems from these conceptions. Democratic education is framed in Dewey's (1916) participatory pedagogy which draws on experiential learning. Paulo Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy model aims to develop critical consciousness through co-investigation and problem posing dialogue. Multicultural Education, emerged during the black civil rights movements of the 1960's (Sleeter & Grant 1999). Banks (1995) describes this movement as the restructuring of school structure to facilitate equity and empowerment. Culturally responsive education, allows for teachers to give much attention to hegemonic classroom practices and reflect upon their own social, educational and political identities (Irvine & Armento, 2001; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Social justice education, integrates democratic education, critical pedagogy, multicultural education and culturally responsive education (Adams, Bell & Griffin 1997).

Dover (2009) in his research on a multistate study examined how English Language Arts teachers conceptualized social justice in a



standard's base context. The findings revealed that English language Arts teachers described social justice as education which meets the needs for all students, celebrates diversity and multiculturalism and is culturally responsive. Others noted that social justice curriculum should be locally designed to meet the needs of local students in each classroom; content should reflect community concerns, and children's lives.

Giroux (1985) notes that one major threat facing prospective and existing teachers is the increasing development of instrumental ideologies that emphasize a technocratic approach to both teacher preparation and classroom pedagogy. He further notes that teachers are preoccupied with mastering how to teach a body of knowledge, managing and controlling classroom and organizing day to day activities. He argues for a rethinking and a restructuring of the teachers' work where they are viewed as transformative intellectuals. The teachers' work should be seen as intellectual labour rather than purely instrumental and technical. Teachers must take active responsibility for raising serious questions about what they teach, how they are to teach, and what the larger goals are for which they are striving (Giroux 1985). Essentially, he contends teachers must take a responsible role in shaping the purpose of schooling.

Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK)

Shulman (1999) notes that "Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) should frame the knowledge base of teachers. This is blending content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems or issues are organized, and should be represented and adopted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners"

(Shulman 1999, p. 64). He notes, the teacher should conceptualize the subject matter knowledge with the ability to adapt information that enables him/her to transform knowledge into “forms that are pedagogically powerful and adaptive to the various backgrounds of students” (Shulman 1987, p. 15). Therefore, PCK should focus on strategies which fosters the best experiences suitable for the learners.

Veal (1999) notes however, that making the transition from personal beliefs about content to thinking about how to organize and represent the content of a discipline in ways that will facilitate student understanding is one of the most difficult aspects of learning to teach. This is demonstrated in a study by Ballantyne and Packer (2004) who investigated the content knowledge of pre-service music education teachers. The study revealed that despite having a strong background in music content, many of the pre-service teachers were unable to apply that content knowledge and related skills to their classroom instruction. Thus, as Hashweh (2005) and Nilsson (2008) suggested, experience in the field is one of the most effective ways to develop content knowledge. They further noted that without a framework for continuous guidance however, teachers may not be equipped to continually develop and refine this knowledge.

Effective Preparation of Teachers

Effective preparation of teachers should include a focus on PCK development. The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, CAEP (2015), list PCK as the first standard teacher candidates should attain:

Teacher candidates are expected to develop foundational content knowledge in their particular discipline and cultivate ways to best present that knowledge to



their students, which includes knowledge of instructional strategies, learner development, learner differences, assessment, and application of content, among others. (CAEP, 2015, para. 2)

In a quantitative study of elementary teachers, conducted in Peru, teachers' mathematical content knowledge positively predicted student achievement in mathematics (Hill, Rowan, & Ball, 2005), demonstrating the importance of a strong content knowledge base for mathematics teachers. Content knowledge while recognized as an imperative knowledge base by researchers, is not the only type of knowledge teachers need to be effective (Baumert, Kunter, Blum, Brunner, Voss, Jordan, & Tsai, 2010). Transforming content knowledge for student understanding requires teachers to use their PCK (Halim & Meerah, 2002).

Shulman (1986) noted that when a teachers' pedagogical content knowledge is weak then it will be hard to address any misconceptions and errors derived by the students. It is also imperative for teachers to understand their students' thinking. The transformation of subject matter knowledge (SMK) into pedagogical content knowledge should be a significant focus in teacher education (Graeber, 1999; Leinhardt, Putnam, Stein, & Baxter, 1991). In New Zealand, a report from the Education Review Office claims that 23% of the teachers have low pedagogical content knowledge (Education Review Office, 2006). The findings show the importance PCK among teachers and that a lack of PCK will influence teachers' effectiveness in carrying out the teaching and learning process within the classroom environment.

The Professionalization Agenda

Liston and Zeichner (1991) in their critique of teacher reform in the United States, describe the professionalization agenda, formerly known as the social efficiency teacher tradition, as grounded in producing high quality education for all children. The objective of the tradition is to establish a profession of teaching through the articulation of a knowledge base, centred on educational research. The goal is to raise the status of the teaching profession and generate higher quality teachers through standards. Some problems with this agenda, however, are that it ignores what is known about research on teacher education; for example, culturally responsive teaching and social justice. Standards do not adequately incorporate a curriculum which emphasizes equitable teaching.

Teaching in the professionalization agenda rests on the following criteria: the teachers' abilities to demonstrate required competencies, as this will determine their teaching ability; strategies and processes of teaching determined by scientific study of the nature of teachers' work; and teacher education courses designed around teacher competencies. Teachers are prepared for the realities of the teaching world. This is clearly stated through outcomes or objectives of a teacher education program. Those outcomes related to teacher learning are the skills needed to be an effective teacher, while student learning is achieved through test scores. Quality teaching is then judged on the effectiveness of the teacher and student outcomes.

Social Justice and Teacher Preparation

Kilpatrick (1933) as cited in Liston and Zeichner (1991) argued that education should prepare individuals to take part intelligently in



the management of the conditions in which they live; thus, they should be provided with the tools that will lead them in this direction. Teachers should foster cooperation, not competition, by developing critical thinking and becoming transformative intellectuals, in an effort to advocate for counter hegemonic teaching and a democratic ideal in the teaching and learning environment.

The major debate in this tradition was the extent to which teacher educators should indoctrinate students with socialist or collective values or emphasize experimentalism and reflective inquiry to lead to social improvements. Social Reconstructionist criticized traditional forms of teacher education for not emphasizing the broad purposes of education, and they insisted the role of teachers is to cultivate leaders for societal reconstruction. Dewey was also critical of a traditional form of teacher education, and felt that education should emphasize broader purposes (Liston & Zeichner, 1991).

Re-envisioning a Model for Teacher Preparation

Re-envisioning a model for teacher preparation in the Jamaican context should be responsive to preparing teachers to become transformative intellectuals (Giroux, 1985). "Transformative intellectuals develop a language of critique which enables them to speak out against social injustices within and outside of school; essentially leading students to view the world through the democratic ideal. The practice of critical pedagogy should also be included as it does not transfer knowledge but rather create the possibility for its production." (Giroux, 1985, p. 4).

The traditional teacher preparation paradigm prepares teachers to emphasize content knowledge in their delivery. What is observed as good teaching is the teachers' ability to deliver content. This is observed by the high demand for immediate academic performance outputs. The major problem associated with delivering pedagogical content knowledge however is the teachers' own understanding of the content knowledge and finding appropriate strategies to deliver. Teachers must find a balance where they advocate content knowledge delivery while promoting a social justice agenda. Knowledge in the classroom should create an environment where students' voices, opinions and ideas are valued and respected by their teacher and peers. The teacher must teach students to share their ideas and respond to the ideas of others in a way that allows for disagreement and at the same time valuing each other's perspective (Giroux, 1995).

Giroux (1988) stated that a major threat to education reform is teachers' inability to provide intellectual growth. Current reform debates ignore preparing teachers to become critical citizens. They limit teachers to the status of high-level technicians, who execute a required set of objectives decided upon by experts rather than on the realities of classroom life. This way of thinking about teacher preparation disempowers teachers in that it deskills the teacher in the classroom (Mayne, 2014).

A deliberate attempt must be made to include social justice practice as this prepares teachers to take part intelligently in the management of the conditions in which they live, foster cooperation not competition, develop critical thinking, and become transformative intellectuals, in an effort to advocate for counter



hegemonic teaching and a democratic ideal in the teaching and learning environment (Giroux, 1988).

There is the call for a new paradigm of teacher preparation where teachers are not slaves to any one method which forces them to be submissive to any one framework; they should be able to question what is given to them. The culture of the “modernist” positivist paradigm, which shaped the field of teacher education, cannot answer questions about the realities teachers now encounter in their classroom. The positivist perspective focuses only on test scores and ignores the classroom environment. It views teachers as transmitters of knowledge and not creators of knowledge. It devalues teachers and positions them as surrendering to institutional arrangements (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1998).

Conclusion

Pedagogical Content knowledge, while recognized as an imperative is not the only knowledge teachers need for classroom practice. Both pedagogical content knowledge and social justice knowledge are essential for effective and efficient teaching. How we define good teaching must not only be instrumental and technical but also transformational. To become a transformative teacher, practice must be embedded in a social justice agenda. Social Justice teaching includes social justice knowledge, critical pedagogy, multicultural learning, cultural responsiveness, and democratic education (Dover, 2013).

The practice of social justice in the classroom is not prescriptive but rather must come from a philosophical orientation of the teacher. Social justice thinking must be deliberate and intentional therefore a

third space should be explored in the teacher preparation model. How teachers perceive and incorporate social justice practices in the classroom should be explored in the Jamaican context. Regrettably, not much research has been done on teachers' understanding of pedagogical content knowledge and social justice knowledge.

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