



Activist orientation

Taking up an activist orientation

This fifth theme though is the most important for the enactment of a decolonising culturally responsive pedagogy. This theme is also the most confusing conceptually, and probably the most contested. From a CRP perspective, there is a radical disconnect between the official knowledge that is taught in schools and the challenges facing the communities that we all live in, and the nation. And this dissonance comes into sharp relief when we attempt to consider teaching across cultural differences. Against this dissonance, many versions of CRP demand that learning in class lead to some form of social action. In which case the purpose of classroom learning is not limited to knowing and identity work, but that the learning is translated into action or to raise the socio-political consciousness of students, to borrow from Ladson-Billings. In our research, this activist work manifests when teachers:

- provide opportunities for their students to be successful at school against historical failure;
- establish strong democratic relationships in their classrooms and hence co-construct learning with their students;
- use student research to educate a wider community about the issues being studied; and
- connect up learning with existing social movement struggle around social problems that matter to the communities the school serves.

By way of a final example, Zipin (2017) provides a recent variation of this activist logic that he calls a problematic-based curriculum approach. To quote one paragraph that gets to the point:

...what I call a problematic-based curriculum approach, in which students work with/on knowledge in relation to local lifeworld problems that matter (problematics). In the process, students and teachers extend curriculum work beyond school walls, engaging with diverse knowledgeable actors—‘lay’ and ‘expert’—in relation to mattering problems. (p. 67)

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995) Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal*, 32(3): 465–491.

Zipin, L. (2017) Pursuing a problematic-based curriculum approach for the sake of social justice, *Journal of Education*, 69: 67-92.

http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_abstract&pid=S2520-98682017000200004&lng=en&nrm=iso