

Conceptual Territory III: Change Essay

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Education has a changing theme: may it be change's impact on literacy educators and citizens' social positionality, and the "contrasting lanes of reform" signatred by (de)centralizing roles and the determining of curriculum, instruction, and school organization (Waff, 2020). It is an evolving on pedagogy for learners, and on reform for institutions. As critiqued by the Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire, the "banking" concept and oppression in education is the counterpart of a dynamic "flow" of change as we continuously examine, analyze, reconsider, and synthesize both theoretical and practical knowledges (Freire, 1972). Literacy and education are never neutral, and such a change mindset urges us to keep examining the "social and ideological weights" in our education and teaching efforts (Waff, 2020).

As a typical reform endeavor, in 1999 the Congress convened the National Reading Panel for the "readiness for application in the classroom" (National Reading Panel et al., 2000). The Panel was created to review the research on reading to determine the affectiveness of approaches of teaching children to read. This was crucial effort, as it brought in constituents of researchers in psychology and education, parents, school teachers, administrators—all in the concern of the approaches of teaching reading. The constituents of the Panel worked toward reform and change, and prepared for the better design of reading instruction approaches and techniques; with the leverage of what science and research had told us about reading instruction, the Panel identified in their report a set of criteria for affective reading instruction, which includes phonics, phonological awareness, fluency, and beyond. In the chapter "Alphabetics", for example, phonemic awareness is pointed out to have "contributed evidently to reading effectiveness". From recognizing phonemes, namely the sounds of the forty-one letters in English, to phonics, the production of sounds normally to "make a word", a reader forms the miniscule level of skills

to unravel texts. Further, by aiming at fluency we would be talking about speed, accuracy, and proper expression (National Reading Panel et al., 2000). Although this set of criteria might be a little narrow, it demonstrated an aggregated effort toward reform in curriculum design and teaching approaches in this important part of reading education, and had a major impact on it for the years onward. The Panel was a shift and an opportunity that more deeply impacted literacy educators' and citizen's ongoing practice in their lives and work.

In literacy education, change is usually pushed through with critical dialogue, and interrogating and engaging conversations. In the Reading/Writing/Literacy program it is salient that interrogation of ideas and text helps teaching practices be centered on social justice and antiracism. Critical dialogues are about and across differences of social identities and inequalities (Nagda and Roper, 2019), which would be a pathway to change equity, unraveling the hierarchies among the student group. It is “needed more than any time in our past” to establish critical dialogue in literacy classroom (Fecho et al., 2012) where students can “lay claim to their educational experience” by engaging in dialogue, and to “reclaim the classroom through dialogue” the authors suggested not to create generation of passive learners upon passive teachers. Besides, scholar Hilton (2013) explored critical dialogue in online education settings, providing a theoretical framework discussing critical dialogue as a “consciousness-raising action” and virtual learning spaces as sites where critical dialogue can take place (p. 602). In comparison, additionally in mathematics education, scholars Alrø and Johnsen-Høines (2010) suggest that although much mathematics education is predominantly and “evaluating approach”, about right and wrong and what could be done differently and better, dialogues such as inquiry about equality and risk-taking foster critical teaching and learning.

In the change toward transformation and social justice in education, literacy plays a major role as one of the core approaches. Nyachae (2019) described the literacy experience of students of color in their out-of-school social justice literacy workshop, as compared to in-school experiences with the English language arts (ELA) classrooms. The participants achieved social transformation through analyzing “power dynamics and social construction of race, language, culture, gender, ability, and social class”. Scholars Rogers and her colleagues explored the relationship between literacy and social justice, and they found that many marginalized students have been denied full access to literacy instruction and are oppressed by racially segregated environments (Rogers et al., 2005). They continually thought at the link between classroom practice and social actions as their research group met twice a month in an adult learning site in the city. Scholar North from the University of Maryland elaborated democratic literacy practices in classroom (North, 2009) which relate to social justice, with a broader concept of literacy as “competencies needed to achieve academically, and positive personal and social change” (p. 557). For education, literacy is a powerful means for and convergence to social justice and equity, breaking down barriers of biases and inequalities and helping to bridge the equity gap in education through engaging students in reading and accessing materials.

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