

EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP: THEORY AND TEACHING PRACTICE

Session 3: Dialogical learning and teaching practice

Title: Transformative teaching for democratic learning within Physical Education Teacher Education

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Higher education's role in creating a just and democratic society is fundamental. For the least 30 years or more, numerous scholars have been calling for university structures and curricula that focus on critical dialogue towards the creation of a socially just world. Sharing power and engaging in dialogue with students - rather than lecturing – are important attributes of teacher education courses that are designed to prepare future teachers to incorporate democracy values in their teaching agendas. Indeed, neophyte teachers should be given multiple opportunities for reflecting on their own educational and moral values, before they come in contact with school classes and programs. Early socialization influences and professional community norms or expectations are usually identified as barriers to using democratic teaching, reinforcing the suggestion that there is a need for transformative pedagogies to move higher education forward.

Transformative pedagogies are instructional approaches that enable future teachers to scrutinize their educational, moral, and political commitments, while encouraging them to enact a disposition for social justice, as part of their professional careers (Ukopokodu, 2009). Within the field of Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE), the notion of transformative pedagogies is gaining great attention. PETE scholars' vision for democracy features in their academic writings, challenging established standards relevant with the purpose of teaching Physical Education (PE).

According to Ovens and Powell (2011), PE practices of the 20th century have reduced the body to an anatomical object that is unfinished and needs to be improved physically, before holistic development is achieved. PE curricula have for years focused on the promotion of sports skills, fitness or physical activity, paying great attention to the regulation, normalization and discipline of body skills and abilities. However, the issues faced by societies nowadays, call for more durable forms of education, ones that could enable young people to take responsibility for their health and needs (e.g. physical, socio-affective, etc.).

Notwithstanding, one of the key roles of PETE today is to prepare teachers to ‘make’ healthy citizens (Wrench, 2019). Since the ‘making’ of healthy citizens works in companion with the development of dispositions of criticality (both imply individual and social change), it is imperative that future PE teachers need to develop an increasing awareness of their pivotal role. Transformative PETE pedagogies with a democratic orientation should be employed within university curricula. Exposing higher education students to a range social justice of practices - that are designed to empower their activism - beyond the normative arguments of PE as sport, is a first step in initiating and sustaining change, which will support more democratic, equitable of PE learning for a social world.

Transformative Pedagogies in Physical Education Teacher Education

Within teacher education programs, curriculum documents and practices focus mainly on introducing future teachers to content knowledge and the discipline of teaching by training and assessing them in relevant skills. However, relative literature shows that, ultimately, PETE graduates return to familiar or experienced school/sport pedagogies as soon as they graduate. Indeed, how we teach is linked to who we are to (Fernández-Balboa, 2009), and thus it seems that current institutional-level practices (i.e. emphasis on standards, measurement and individualism, etc.) fail to empower preservice teachers to adopt or enact change.

Given this climate, possibilities for applying transformative pedagogies may be constrained. Indeed, transformative pedagogies are not readily recognized or adopted in PETE contexts in the same way that bio/medical/performance-based perspectives are. Their difference lies in their communicative nature and their conceptualization through the dynamics of the teacher-learner-context relationship. Further, their transformative potential comes as a consequence of two interdependent factors. The first factor concerns future PE teachers’ schooling experiences (as students) and the second factor the expectations placed on them by schooling contexts (as teachers). It seems that critically-oriented PE programs (both at a school and at a university level) are more facilitative in introducing and problematizing neophytes with ideas and ideals of social justice.

Transformative pedagogies use instructional practices such as negotiated learning, storytelling, peer teaching and cases studies to empirically examine core concepts and ideas related to equity and justice, which are pivotal in challenging students’ deeply rooted beliefs about teaching and learning, while simultaneously encouraging them to take professional action. In order to teach for social justice in PE we need to contextualize transformative



pedagogies in different instructional settings. Therefore, PETE courses should use movement, exercise, physical activity and sport to employ students with discourses on disability, gender, race, sexuality and religion. For example, new gender understandings related to the role of sport in society will be produced if during PETE courses students both learn content knowledge and discuss issues such as language use in coaching, dress codes and game rules in male and female sports, as well as professional opportunities for male and female athletes.

Scholarly readings, role-play within courses, field experiences and personal biographies are used by PETE pedagogues who wish to challenge the norms of university instruction and bring democracy in the forefront. Above all, the enactment of transformative pedagogy should be built on reflective thinking and social consciousness and not simply on telling (the lecture), modelling performance demonstrations), or apprenticeship of observation (the practicum) (Ovens, 2013). Transformative pedagogy is and has to be lived through the instructional practices and structures of a PETE course. This difference in configuration leads to the emergence of democracy learning cultures and outcomes.

The five principles of Transformative Teaching, as these were presented by Philpot and Ovens (in press) are presented in Table 1. The principles should be used as functional definitions and concepts that could help PETE pedagogues in their attempt to challenge the status quo in their institutions and quest for effective strategies to empower future PE teachers to teach for democracy.

1. Principle One: Transformative Pedagogies should provoke learning in the form of understanding through an embodied awareness.

Transformative teaching should enable PETE students to feel emancipated, expressive and creative through multiple opportunities of being heard and respected.

2. Principle Two: Transformative Pedagogies accept and work with diversity. PETE students need to understand diversity and experience what diversity is before they start to develop lesson plans that address injustice. In class discussions, lesson study and role-play according to real-life scenarios could be a good start for gaining experiences related to teaching for social justice.

3. Principle Three: Transformative Pedagogies give students opportunities to work as co-contributors to course design.

The subject of pedagogy, in order to be meaningful and relevant for students' lives should come as a product of within class negotiations, judgements and suggestions.

PETE pedagogues have to understand what learning is important for students, how

such learning will best occur and how its outcomes will be assessed and made explicit.

4. Principle Four. Transformative Pedagogies are enacted by pedagogues who question their own practice.

PETE pedagogues will best set social justice and democratic learning concepts and ideas, if they enact them through the instructional practices and structures of their courses. Practices such as peer marking panels (students and teachers gather as a group for assessing and providing feedback on learning), negotiated grading contracts (within which students explain what they will do to get a grade for their course), personal narratives open to critical dialogue (for the purpose of reintroducing novices to the ethics, moral values and commitment in teaching/learning), are indicative practices of Transformative Teaching.

5. Principle Five. Transformative Pedagogies address oppressive mechanisms and their consequences.

The goal of every transformative teaching endeavor that has a democratic orientation should be the taking of action. Within PETE course, the taking of action could mean the breaking down of biases and barriers in teacher-student communication, the finding of time (either virtual or in person) to go deep in discussion about pedagogical issues, the use of appropriate language to express thoughts and feelings, the provision of formative evaluation and feedback, the collaboration with colleagues on social issues, the organization of workshops and seminars for practitioners, etc.

Prerequisites for enacting Transformative PETE pedagogies with a social change orientation

Transformative Pedagogies cannot be reduced to a set of teaching methods, but on the contrary require ‘engagement with contradictions and uncertainties, and a willingness on the part of the teacher to open up and sustain pedagogical tangents and unresolved discussions’ (Fitzpatrick & Allen, 2019, 12). Therefore, PETE programs should strive to prepare future PE teachers to overcome three categories of barriers that may hinder their aspiration of transformative learning and practice:

1. Taken-for-granted socio-cultural and institutional standards and norms related to PE and sport as schooling and cultural subjects.

Being closely connected with sports, health-related exercise and active leisure, PE has for years now legitimized its position within education as a subject within which



students unquestionably process physical conditioning guidelines and become trapped by convention in terms of judging successful learning and performance. Ability-based notions and individualistic performance practices (i.e. performance indicators, ability-related testing and conceptualizations of competence, etc.) merge with formal curriculum policies, as mandatory texts, limiting school administrators' and PE teachers' potential for socio-critical action. Therefore, it is not surprising that PETE students, who have been raised and nurtured in such a school culture, cannot perceive and counteract to its harmful logic. According to Ovens (2020) "...redefining success involves striving for internal factors such as happiness, personal fulfilment, integrity, and peace..." (p. 14). Redefining success in PETE would mean get students to think, criticize and contemplate the above issues, so as to help them acquire a different view of the nature and purpose of PE teaching. Experiential learning, microteaching and action research are fundamental practices to this end.

2. Unclear and fragmented understandings of their personality (i.e. feelings, dispositions, values, beliefs, attitudes related to teaching).

An inquiry approach to teaching appears to be a useful strategy for helping novice PE teachers to develop a contextualized understanding of their teaching, in ways that deep thinking about their use of democratic practices is promoted. teaching-as-inquiry (see Figure 3). Within this approach, inquiry has to focus on three areas:

- Questioning, applied to knowledge and concepts that are important for students to know (focusing on inquiry)
- Questioning, in the form of strategies that will help students learn (teaching as inquiry), and
- Questioning, in the form of evaluating what learning is taking place (learning as inquiry).

The idea of applying such a framework in PETE is shown in Figure 1. An important aspect is that inquiry should be perceived as an ongoing and not a static process, which will emphasize on the involvement of students and student communities, as way of developing agency and better identifying with the issues that appear in their future teaching environments.



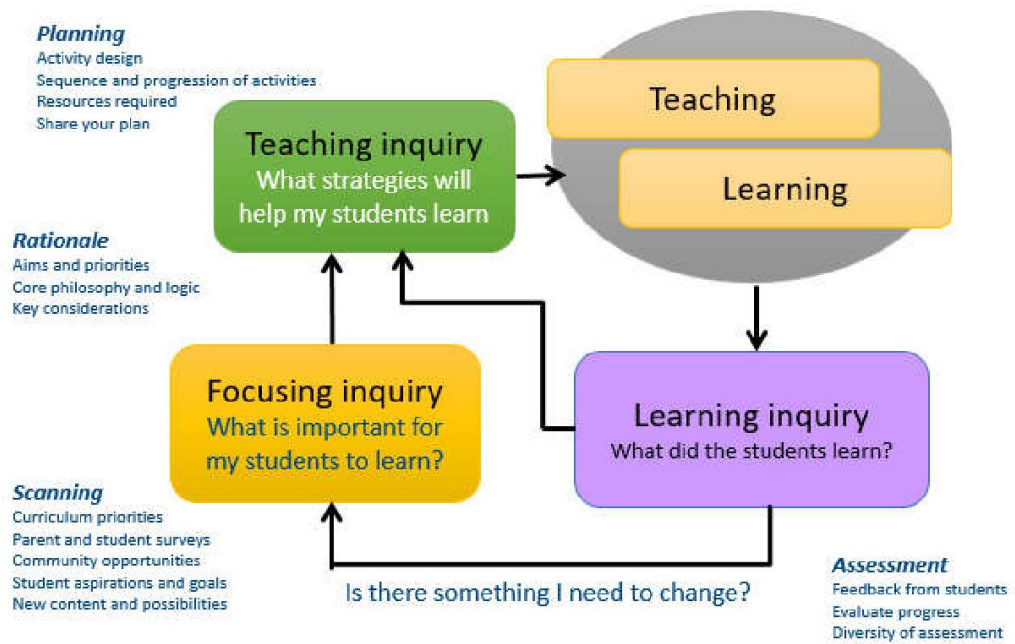


Figure 1. Transformative pedagogies in Physical Education Teacher Education

3. Inability to self-identify with a 21st century concept of Physical Education

Living in a post-modern era, future PE teachers need to be empowered with self-awareness and compassion in order to work for the benefit of their students and the health of their communities. Along with pedagogical content knowledge, future PE teachers should work at an individual and a school community level to provide good teaching in response to children's and youth's needs. Working at a school and community level to create opportunities for embracing physical activity as a core part of living, studying and practicing with the principles of game-based pedagogies, and working with curricula that focus on the promotion of personal and social responsibility, are functional elements of transformative and democratic PE practice and need to be included in the 21st century PETE programs.