

**RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES IN ISSUE
BASED CURRICULUM AND
CRITICAL PEDAGOGY**

Sajitha.P.S.

M.Ed. Student

Dept.of Education

University of Calicut

And

Dr.Baiju.K.Nath

Lecturer in Education

University of Calicut

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Abstract

The National Policy on Education (NPE, 1986) proposed the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) as a means of evolving a national system of education, recommending a core component derived from the vision of national development enshrined in the constitution. The KCF-2007 draws upon the National Curriculum Framework of 2005 (NCF - 2005) introduced critical pedagogy and issue based approach in education from the academic year 2008-09. While implementing a new approach in educational system, it requires a thorough research base for its success. Eventhough a lot of works have been conducted in critical pedagogy, majority were in adult learning; and researches in issue based approach are very less. Inorder to transact the new curricular approach in a successful manner, researches in issue based approach and critical pedagogy is to be encouraged. This paper tries to identify the researchable areas in issue based approach and critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy should be perceived as pedagogy for existence or survival. Hence what is critical will be changed by age level, experience, subject of study, type of institutions, etc. Access, equity, and quality are the basic dimensions of any type of education. Conceptual analysis and prioritisation of competencies at each level is the basic issue to be resolved. Though access in terms of institutions is realised, access in terms of resources is not even estimated. The critical concepts required and pedagogy to attain that of elementary level child will be entirely different from that of secondary level pupil.

Introduction

"The unsolved problems of education are so numerous and so varied that it is necessary to simplify a survey of them by using some rather arbitrary classification" (F.L. Whitney). In a globally interdependent world, the concept of complexity frames the socio-political and environmental issues of the day. Strongly held beliefs and values lead to increasing polarization and conflict. Competing perspectives and ideologies continuously pull in this or that direction. Educators are charged with preparing students to live and work in this complex, interactive world. Intuitively, they realize that helping students learn to use their minds, well must be a major focus for instruction. The teachers have much work to do in improving education for our young people. For that the teachers and administrator need significant retraining; curriculum needs to be redesigned; school districts need systems approaches for organisational effectiveness (Lynn Erickson, 2007).

The history of Indian education shows that various cultural and religious groups established their own educational institutions to suit their specific requirements. The religious institutions provided for the development of the whole individual - body, mind and spirit, infusion of a spirit of piety and religiousness, formulation of characters, development of personality, and inculcations of respect for civic and social duties, production of social efficiency, and preservation and spread of national culture (NCF, 2000, p. 1). But then all good things comes to an end - certainly not because they cease to be god but because they are over powered.

Various imbalances such as rural/urban, rich/poor, and differences on the basis of caste, religion, ideology, gender and differential ability are existed in our

society. Education can play a very significant role in minimising and eliminating these differences by providing equality of access to quality education and opportunity (NCF, 2000, p. 9). This equality is to be achieved in two ways, by ensuring that each person 'receives suitable education at pace and through methods suited to her/his being'. Secondly, by developing a curriculum that promotes the 'awareness of inherent equality of all'.

'The destiny of India is now being shaped in her classrooms', the Kothari Commission (1964-66) depicts the importance of education in general and of schooling in particular. This observation by the commission cannot be truer ever than at a time when India has been aspiring to be a super power in all walks of life including the knowledge industry. Fulfilling such a dream is the cultivation of citizen with ignited minds, clarity of vision, rootedness in culture and openness of thought. Such a process cannot even be fancied without having at hand the service of a dynamic educational system which is in synchronisation with the changing needs and aspiration of the Indian society in a fast moving world. It is hence imperative that the curricula for different stages of schooling are reviewed periodically.

KCF 2007, draws upon NCF 2005, introduced the concept of issue based approach, from the academic year 2008-2009. KCF 2007 was prepared after holding discussions with academics, organisations of teachers, students, non-governmental organisations and the general public. The issue based approach aims at social reformations, should provide opportunities to work for social justice, to generate better citizen, to promote a naturalistic spirit, etc. The problems are leaned

in such a way that the local issues should be analysed in a global context. Critical pedagogy and issue based approach has recently in practice here and hence it needs adequate research base in order to make the concept more realistic and fruitful. Even though a lot of works have been conducted in critical pedagogy, but majority in adult learning. While considering school level the research works in this field are very less. For improving higher education it is necessary to give enough consideration in the school level itself. So it is a must to conduct researches in school level. The issue based approach is relatively a new area and hence the number of research work is very less. This paper aims to unveil the various researchable issues in critical pedagogy and issue based approach.

What is critical pedagogy?

Critical pedagogy is relatively an old concept, which is typically based on Marxian philosophy. Ideological and cultural freedom is the motto of this philosophy and the concepts of learning according to this philosophy are based on three aspects. They are why children learn? What children learn? And how they learn? The critical question here is whose future, story, and interests do the school represent. Critical pedagogy argues that school practices are need to be informed by a public philosophy that addresses how to construct ideological and institutional conditions in which the lived experience of empowerment for the vast majority of students becomes the defining future of schooling. Critical pedagogy takes as a central concern the issue of power in the teaching and learning context. It focuses on how and in whose interests knowledge is produced and 'passed on' and view the ideal aims of education as emancipatory.

Critical pedagogy attempts to:

1. Create new forms of knowledge through its emphasis on breaking down disciplines and creating interdisciplinary knowledge.
2. Raise questions about the relationships between the margins and centres of power in schools and is concerned about how to provide a way of reading history as part of a larger project of reclaiming power and identity, particularly as these are shaped around the categories, of race, gender, class and ethnicity.
3. Reject the distinction between high and popular culture so as to make curriculum knowledge responsive to the everyday knowledge that constitutes peoples lived histories differently.
4. illuminate the primacy of the ethical in defining the language that teachers and others use to produce particular cultural practices.

Works conducted in Critical Pedagogy

Even though a lot of works have been conducted in critical pedagogy, majority were in adult learning. These works include:

- Urban poetics: Poetry, social justice and critical pedagogy in education (David Stovall2006).
- Multi cultural education, critical pedagogy and the policies of differences, by Darren Lund (1998).

- Critical pedagogy and attentive love by Daniel P. Liston.
- Education in a culture of violence: critical pedagogy of place in war time by David A Green Wood.
- Critical pedagogy and democratic educations: possibilities for cross pollination (D. Brent Edwards Jr. 2009.)
- Democratic education and critical pedagogy,(Tony Knight and Art Pearl).
- Does critical pedagogy work with privileged students?, (Allen, Ricky Ice; Roscatto, Cesar Augusto).
- Toward a critical pedagogy of engagement for alienated youth; from Freire and school based research (McInerney, Peter).

Above mentioned are only a few works in critical pedagogy. Lot of other works are conducted in this area. While analysing all these works, it is clear that, in school level, research works in this field are very less and those conducted were highly philosophical than pedagogic. Research works in this field are very essential for improving our educational system. While considering school level, the researchable areas are;

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This perception increases the complexity of situation further and demands detailed research in its various aspects.

- Studies about critical pedagogy in each level, i.e., pre primary, primary, secondary, higher secondary and higher education; is needed. Because in each level, the need of the students are varied. So the pedagogy should be suitable with the level of the student.
- While considering teachers, their need to increase knowledge base in new approach, practical difficulties while implementing the critical pedagogy, pre-service and in-service training in this pedagogy etc. need research evidences.
- While considering institutional resources, identification and mobilisation mechanism for effective resource procurement and utilisation to ensure access and quality.
- Evaluation system should be remoulded to develop and use various evaluation tools and techniques suitable for the philosophy of critical pedagogy. Modifying existing evaluation practices with the change in approach.
- According to NCF (2005) "Critical pedagogy provides an opportunity to reflect critically on issue in terms of their political, social, economic and moral aspects. It entails the acceptance of multiple views on social issues and a to democratic forms of interaction. This is important in view of the multiple contexts in which our schools function. A critical

framework helps children to see social issues from different perspectives and understand how such issues are connected to their lives". While analysing this statement, it is evident that enough research background is needed for the analysis of the attainment of all the above mentioned aspects, through our educational system.

Issue Based Approach

The National Curriculum Framework of 2005 (NCF) heralds a paradigm shift in school education. It seeks to affect a break from the existing syllabi and pedagogic practices. In the making of curriculum NCF suggested the following five principles.

- Connecting knowledge of life outside the school.
- Ensuring that learning is shifted away from rote method.
- Enriching the curriculum to provide for over all development of children rather than remain textbook centric.
- Making examination more flexible and integrated into classroom life and,
- Nurturing an over-siding identity informed by caring concern within the democratic policy of the country.

The KCF, 2007 draws upon NCF 2005, conceptually and pedagogically, reflected in the following statement: "when the objectives of education of Kerala are determined, independence, sovereignty, secularism and democracy of India are to be kept in view. The concepts of work oriented human values and high sense of

aesthetics are to be achieved through this. Sense of security and responsibility shall be reflected in all walks of life. Each child shall acquire the idea that his welfare is closely connected with that of his family and society" (KCF, 2.4).

The KCF 2007 is actually a refinement of the prevailing system, and explores new possibilities. The main change is that in that in the previous system the textbooks were prepared in the basis of contents conceived in the syllabus, while in the new system of textbooks are prepared on the basis of issue based content. Constructivist and critical pedagogy, issue based approach in textbooks and continuous and cumulative evaluation. Except, the second, the other two were already prevailing in Kerala since 1997.

An innovative aspect of the KCF is its issue based approach for the preparation of syllabi and text books. The issues are identified for the preparation of text books are as follows:-

- Absence of a vision of universal humanism.
- Lack of human resource development
- Lack of understanding of the specificities of cultural identity and its need to develop freely.
- Inability to see agriculture as a part of culture.
- Lack of scientific approach to health and public health.
- Lack of due consideration towards marginalised groups.
- Lack of scientific management of land and water.

- Lack of eco-friendly industrialisation and urbanisation that issues are posed in a negative manner, has been a point of criticism.

Even though issue based approach is a by product of critical pedagogy, which is relatively a new area and the research work in this field are scarce. Even if researches have been conducted, it is not made available for wide public use. To implement a new approach in our educational system, it needs a thorough research base. The main areas of research in the field of issue based approach are discussed below.

- The issues are not properly defined as level specific, presenting the same issue in all levels or presenting issues that targeted on adults should be restructured to level of children. So there needs adequate research base for detailing and categorisation of various issues, that are identified in the issue based curriculum in a futuristic manner. Because issues that are prominent today may be out of focus in near future.
- While considering the level, the needs, experiences and interests of students in different levels are varied. So the issues, presented in pre-primary class should be entirely different from primary and that of secondary and so on. Hence the issues are presented in accordance with the needs and experience of students. Inorder to identify the issues to be presented in each level, we need proper research.
- While preparing textbooks, we need to know what should be included in the textbooks of each level in integrated inclusive manner. Comprehensive and

metaphysical approach in course design will be shaped by adequate research studies.

- Majority of teachers who are in service at present is under the influence of a system which can be traced to the colonial past. Only by conscious and deliberate efforts that they can imbibe a new democratic spirit. One way of achieving it is through teacher training programmes. Hence new methodologies are to be applied in the teachers training programme for that adequate research base is needed.
- Since teachers play a pivotal role of a 'facilitator' in the new paradigm, the handbooks and source books become the tools to show the right path. Handbooks provide necessary guidance for the effective transaction of the curriculum. So for the preparation of handbooks, and source books, necessary research work is essential.
- Textbooks are constructed in such a way that to satisfy the needs of each and every student. So care should be taken for its preparation to make it as comprehensive and learner friendly as possible. Hence, preparing textbooks in accordance with the dimensions of the new curriculum, research is inevitable to identify the needs of various sections of the society.

Conclusion

"In everything we should follow the order of nature. There is a certain natural sequence along which the human intelligence moves in acquiring knowledge. This sequence must be studied, and instruction must be based on the knowledge of

Research perspectives is inevitable" (Leipzig, 1626). The success of a new curricular approach, introduced in an educational system, adequate research base is needed. Hence it is necessary to conduct enough research works in issue based approach and critical pedagogy and disseminate it for the benefit of all in the field of education.

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