

## **RE-ENGINEERING TEACHING PRACTICE THROUGH REFLEXIVE PRACTICE AND CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY FRAMEWORK**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The shift towards Reflexive Practice and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) in teaching practice is critical for the 21st century teachers. In this article, we argue that reflexive teaching and culturally relevant pedagogy frameworks qualify to be used for promoting student knowledge in the teaching practice. For us, teaching practice, as a social tool, is not at all an independent process, disconnected and apart from the society it serves. It is our contention that there is dire need to reengineer teaching practice within the poststructuralist framework. Among others, teaching practice in Open Distance Learning (ODL) setting should be realigned to embrace ethnic groups' cultural values, traditions, communication, learning styles, contributions, and relational patterns. We hold that politics of resistance, counter-hegemonic struggle and emancipation can be brought through reflexive practice and culturally relevant pedagogy. In this article, we use Bourdieu's concept of reflexivity and Ladson-Billings' framework of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy as a conceptual tool to unpack a shift towards pedagogies of reflection in teaching practice.

*Keywords:* Teaching Practice, ODL, reflexive teaching, Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, teaching practice

*“There is no possibility for teaching without learning. As well as there is no possibility of learning without teaching” (Paulo Freire)*

### **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

The above citation captures the basis of the adoption of critical pedagogy in Teaching Practice for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. However, we find it accurate and fitting to commence this article by asking the questions: (1) Why does critical pedagogy matter in Teaching Practice?; (2) Should reflexive teaching and culturally relevant pedagogy frameworks be used for promoting student knowledge in the South African Teaching Practice?; and (3) What (higher order) attributes will our teacher graduates need to thrive (or at least survive) in the 21<sup>st</sup> century world we have envisaged? For us, these questions are critical for reflecting around pedagogies of reflection and discourse surrounding Teaching Practice. Perhaps it is critical to indicate that Teaching Practice, as a social tool, is not at all an independent process, disconnected and apart from the society it serves. Most

significantly, it finds its essential purpose – its guiding principles – in the particular social order in which it develops and functions. Hence, this article argues that Teaching Practice theory and practice should be informed and guided by reflexive practice and culturally relevant pedagogy – they are the subsets critical pedagogy and Marxist-influenced theories. At philosophical level, critical pedagogy as a prism that reflects the complexities between teaching and learning, serve politically left-oriented or liberatory goals.

While Critical Pedagogy was born in the conditions of oppression, the notion critical pedagogy is very old – its roots are traceable in the thoughts and dialogues of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle. Albeit the fact that critical pedagogy has many faces and histories, there is a growing interest in a critical agenda within Teaching Practice – it is means in the struggle for justice and liberation. As Wink (2010) observes, critical pedagogy challenges our long-held assumptions and leads us to ask new questions, and the questions we ask will determine the answers we get. For him, critical pedagogy gives voice to the voiceless; and gives power to the powerless. In Biesta's (1998) view, critical pedagogy has become the target of considerable critique. He argues that "critical pedagogies are in one way or another committed to the imperative of transforming the larger social order in the interest of justice, equality, democracy, and human freedom" (p. 499). In the same vein, McLaren (2005) notes that "a renewed agenda for critical pedagogy must include strategies of addressing and redressing economic distribution, and that it must be centered around the transformation of property relations and the creation of a just system of appropriation and distribution of social wealth." For him, critical pedagogy serves as a point of departure for a politics of resistance and counter-hegemonic struggle. In addition to this, he sees teachers as transformative Intellectuals (Giroux, 1988). Hence, transformation begins in the classroom or "public sphere" (Giroux & McLaren, 1996). Put differently, Wink (2010) notes that "critical pedagogy opens the door to a broader and deeper perspective on teaching and learning in the classroom and the community".

To some extent, most can agree that notwithstanding the fact that the National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa is designed to equip a teaching profession to meet the needs of a democratic South Africa in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is shallow and silent on issues of the pedagogies of reflection. Sadly, under the section of conceptual and pedagogical needs (p. 17), it only states that: "both conceptual and content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge are necessary for effective teaching, together with the teacher's willingness and ability to reflect and learn from the learners' own experience of being taught. Flowing from this, it is our contention that there is dare need to reengineer Teaching Practice within the poststructuralist framework. Among others, the South African Teaching Practice should be realigned to embrace ethnic groups' cultural values, traditions, communication, learning styles, contributions, and relational patterns.

In our view, one possibility is considering reflexive practice and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) frameworks (as jigsaw puzzles or building blocks of critical pedagogy) as a way of addressing the theoretical impasse and epistemic shift. It is perhaps worth indicating that reflexive practice and CRP address the issues of culture, identity politics, and multicultural education. With this in mind, we hold that politics of resistance, counter-hegemonic struggle and emancipation can be brought through reflexive practice and CRP. In this article, we use Bourdieu's concept of reflexivity and Ladson-Billings' framework of CRP as a conceptual tool to unpack a shift towards pedagogies of reflection in Teaching Practice. This article is aimed at contributing to the discourses on pedagogies of reflection in Teaching Practice, and is divided

into six sections. We begin by conceptualizing the notion reflexivity. In the second section we explore reflexivity as the ontology, epistemology and methodology. In the third section we investigate the implications of reflexivity for Teaching Practice. In the fourth section we sketch teaching and learning in an atmosphere of reflexivity. In the fifth section, we present CRP as theory and practice of Teaching Practice. And in the last section we propose a shift towards a reflexive practice and CRP framework in Teaching Practice.

### **CONCEPTUALIZING REFLEXIVITY**

From a historical point of view, the principle of “reflexivity” was first enunciated by the William Thomas in the early 1900s. He maintained that the situations that men define as true become true for them. By the 1980's reflexivity was interpreted in terms of mapping research activity against a linguistic background. The researcher was still invisible and there was no analysis of the interaction between the two frames of meaning production. Literature suggests that in 1971 Alvin Gouldner had pointed out how ethnographers could be seen to be normalising cultural fields, a critique which threatened to reveal the interests behind Western constructions of knowledge and destabilise the dominant worldview.

The concept “reflexivity” is very broad, has a very rich history and carries diverse meanings. Along this continuum, there are many interpretations with a common thread linking them – turning back one’s experience on oneself, reflecting upon, examining critically, and exploring analytically. On the one hand, reflexivity is seen as an attitude of attending systematically to the context of knowledge construction, especially to the effect of the researcher, at every step of the research process. For some scholars, it is a concept used in the social sciences to explore and deal with the relationship between the researcher and the object of research (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007:60). On the other hand, reflexivity in research design affords the “space” to decolonize western research methodologies and challenges us to claim our shortcomings, misunderstandings, oversights and mistakes, to re-claim our lives and make strong changes to our current realities. Being reflexive ensures that we do not compromise our identity whilst undertaking research (Karen & Booran, 2003:212). Reflexivity may engage the process of questioning the Enlightenment/modernist prioritisation of reflexivity, erasing it at the same time as acknowledging its pulsing course through the veins of metaphysical enquiry in the present.

### **REFLEXIVITY AS THE ONTOLOGY, EPISTEMOLOGY AND METHODOLOGY FOR TEACHING PRACTICE**

Perhaps, it would be apposite to start this section by indicating that the term ontology is often treated as synonymous with *metaphysics*. Ontology, as a branch of metaphysics, deals with the nature of being – it is the study of being alive and existing. It derives from the Greek *onto* (being) and *logia* (written or spoken discourse). While the concept is broadly perceived, the common thread running through the definitions of ontology see it as a system of categories accounting for a particular view of the world; and is language independent and relates vocabulary to conceptualization. As Guarino (1998) writes, “an ontology is a logical theory accounting for the intended meaning of a formal vocabulary, i.e. its ontological commitment to a particular conceptualization of the world. An ontology indirectly reflects this commitment (and the underlying conceptualization) by approximating these intended models.”

Lincoln and Guba (1994:108), the most prolific and polyphonic voices of twentieth century philosophy, described questions of ontology (what is the form and nature of reality and

what can be known about it); epistemology (what is the nature of the relationship between the knower and what can be known); and methodology (how can the inquirer go about finding out whatever they believe can be known) as essential in critiquing and conducting research. Nonetheless, ontology is needed in order to clarify the resulting issues of reflexivity and epistemology, without getting tied up in strong constructivism (Olsen, 2008). Ontology, as an explicit specification of a conceptualization (Gruber, 1993: 199), is not just a series of foundational statements.

As a social construct, ontology embodies some sort of world view (entities, attributes and processes) with respect to a given domain. Hence, ontological statements are very much about hermeneutics and contested meanings. Ontology describes: (a) attributes (properties, features, characteristics, or parameters that objects can have and share; (b) relations (ways that objects can be related to one another); (3) events (the changing of attributes or relations), and (d) classes (Classes of things in the domain of interest). Such a conceptualisation may be implicit (for example, existing only in someone's head or embodied in a piece of theory and practice. Most importantly, the idea of ontology fits the profile of alternative inquiry paradigms.

In the light of the above, Bourdieu, Woolgar, Foucault and Bhabha's work on reflexivity fit the characteristics of ontology, epistemology, methodology and method. Bourdieu argued that the social scientist is inherently laden with biases, and only by becoming reflexively aware of those biases can the social scientists free themselves from them and aspire to the practice of an objective science. For him, reflexivity is an epistemological principle which advises sociologists, as 'objectifying subjects', to turn their objectifying gaze upon themselves and become aware of the hidden assumptions that structure their research (Karakayali, 2004:352). In addition, he held that reflexivity is part of the solution, not the problem.

The importance of reflexive practice has been attracting increasing attention in a variety of academic disciplines, and by researchers whose theoretical convictions range from realism to postmodernism. However, Teaching Practice has not run away this trend. With the growing influence of postmodernism and post structuralism in Teaching Practice theory and practice, reflexivity qualifies to be considered an excellent thing, as it involves recognition of the problematic nature of research, the dubious position of the researcher, the crisis of representation, the constructive nature of language, as well as an admission of the fact that there is no "one best way" of conducting either theoretical or empirical work (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

In this article, we shall draw mainly from Bourdieu's framework. Bourdieu, one of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's radical thinkers, consistently argued that his conception of epistemic reflexivity provided not only a means of developing richer descriptions of the social world but also the basis for a more practically adequate and epistemologically secure social science. Bourdieu's reflexivity takes two forms, namely, methodological and epistemic. Epistemic reflexivity focuses on researchers' belief systems and is a process for analyzing and challenging metatheoretical assumptions. Methodological reflexivity is concerned with the monitoring of the behavioral impact on the research setting as a result of carrying out the research (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007:60). Flowing from this, Bourdieu's reflexivity seems to be essentially a methodology that may produce the ironic outcome that a theory essentially of social reproduction may not be able to reproduce itself. For Bourdieu, reflexivity does not mean that one reflects on one's theories, but on one's practices. It is an attempt to relate social experiences to theoretical constructs.

Of note is that, experiences are situated in time and place; and experiences are contextualized (St. Clair, Rodriguez & Nelson, 2005:142). The notion of the teacher as a reflexive practitioner and teacher as researcher of own classroom practice is promoted widely in the Teaching Practice literature of recent years (UNESCO, 2007). This involves using reflexive practice as a teacher development tool, both in a pre-service /novice and in-service contexts of teacher professional development. Being reflexive means much more than being critical of a field or aspect/component of teaching practice. It means that one must know how the field is organized and how it is practiced (St. Clair, Rodriguez & Nelson, 2005:146). In this article we examine reflexivity as a meaningful way of approaching learning about teaching so that a better understanding of teaching, and teaching about teaching might be developed.

Bourdieu systematically used the term "reflexivity" during the 90s, with the emergence of a new analytic conflict between rationalism and relativism (Tsekeris & Katrivesis, 2008). According to Bourdieu, reflexivity must include the social dimension of knowledge production, as well as the various effects of the intellectual fields and interests. Bourdieu's reflexivity objectifies objectification but needs development to help achieve objective knowledge. Reflexivity enters the social sciences through phenomenology; and often rejects the traditional meaning of validity because, as social constructivists, they do not subscribe to the idea that an objective reality exists external to their research. On the other hand, it is valued and central to many researchers' examination of their own subjectivity and impact of that on the research process, especially analysis and interpretation

The recent discourses of reflexivity are partly due to a shift away from the concept of reflection, tarnished as it is by its affiliation with modern philosophy's decontextualized subject. Reflexivity has been identified too as one of the defining features of post-industrial society and of the 'new' social movements. For Habermas, modernization is in part the realization of the reflexive potential inherent in the communicative rationality of the lifeworld. In addition, reflexivity has been introduced in opposition to cognitivist or moral-practical interpretations of modernity. If reflexivity thus dramatizes the situated nature of reflection, the interest it spurs today is more than just a festive wake occasioned by the demise of the philosophy of the subject. At philosophical level, reflexivity involves construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of embodied subjectivities, thus providing rich material for analysis. As an essential human capacity, reflexivity is responsible for the mobilization of personal experience towards the subjective orientation at the interactional level. Therefore, reflexivity is regarded as an essential capacity adjusting the actors to situations, or to the specific contexts of social phenomena.

In short, Teaching Practice qualifies to be perceived as a social dimension of knowledge production – it has social interconnectedness dimensions of human activity. Although the discourses of reflexivity have remained tied to a number of essential developments in contemporary sociology, little attention, if any, has been paid to its implications on Teaching Practice. Reflexivity has a number of significant implications for South African Teaching Practice. Teaching and learning in reflexive setting is strongly shaped by the context in which the teacher practices. This is usually the classroom, which, in turn, is strongly influenced by the wider school culture and the community and society in which the school is situated. Teachers' daily experiences in their practice context shape their understandings, and their understandings shape their experiences (Timperley, 2008:6). Thus, the fluid nature of the teaching and learning in Teaching Practice demands a revitalised framework of effective Teaching Practice consistent with research into teacher learning, Freirean pedagogy and emerging paradigm of teaching as an

ongoing intellectual pursuit, focusing not on the mastery of static content but rather on the construction of meaning within a collaborative environment. We conclude this section by highlighting that teaching and learning in the South African Teaching Practice should shift from the "banking concept" of education to Freirean framework.

### **TEACHING AND LEARNING IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF REFLEXIVITY**

It is an undeniable fact that reflexivity grounds reality in interconnectedness of varied socio-cultural activities and interactions which are shaped by learning and learning shaped by reality in the process of learning. Freire (2005) locates the whole process of learning in social interconnectedness dimensions of human activity that is in economical, political, cultural and environmental dimensions of human interrelationships. This observation is evidence that learning is always situated in social contexts and must be understood and analysed as such.

Freire (2005:102) arguing for a progressive educators discourse for learning had this to say, "our relationship with the learners' demands that we respect them and demands equally that we be aware of the concrete conditions of their world, the conditions that shape them. To try to know the reality that our students live is a task that the educational practice imposed on us: Without this, we have no access to the way they think, so only with great difficulty can we perceive what and how they know". Of note is that, the concrete conditions of the learners' world, are not necessarily certain, straight forward and static, but can be uncertain, complex and dynamic too. It is therefore, imperative that learning addresses real life uncertainties, complexities and dynamic situations. But to provide such learning-in-context or situated learning, students must be taught how to learn, how to be critical and how to be both reflective and reflexive in their learning.

Affirming Freire's view Torres (1996) notes that uncertainties, complex processes, disruptions, confusions in concrete life situations, can be brought under critiquing processes during learning if educators are progressive (meaning that they must be democratically literate educators). Attesting to this observation Stevenson (as cited by Le Roux 1996) see the notion of acknowledging uncertainties, complexities, disruptions, confusion as processes that need to be embraced in learning as enriching and means that provide alternative ways of learning rather than allowing the learning process to be rendered ineffective and non-fulfilling to both educators and learners. We seem to concur with Popkewitz and Fendler (1999) that learning that allows learners to critique their way of learning and doing things is an acceptable pedagogical process that allows reflexivity in learning.

We sum up this section by asking "what does this mean to teaching and learning in Teaching Practice in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?" It means that students learning will have to be provided with modelling, coaching and problem-solving learning activities to do in order to learn better (based on activity theory). Cautions to teachers and learners are that, the doing of activities during learning is not just focused on the end-result but, is also focused on the process and social context of the activity carried out. The learning is not just about the accomplishment of the task, but learning about the tools and environment in which it is accomplished (Haas, 2003) and deliberately critiquing the whole learning process to avoid the perception that knowledge is 'complete'.

There are two phases of social process: *in the initial phase* of problem-solving, students encouraging, supporting, and guiding each other, are often observed; in the second phase, students come to their own conclusions based on experimental evidence, and resolve their conflict by articulating their argumentation. Freire (2005) puts this idea differently when he says that educators mediation of learning should "be so much more effective as they lucidly and objectively make clear to the learners, (1) that changing one's position is legitimate, and (2) the reasons that made them change. However, Freire cautions that "the relationship between educators and learners is complex, fundamental, and difficult; it is relationship about which we should think constantly (p107)".

## **IMPLICATIONS OF REFLEXIVITY FOR TEACHING PRACTICE**

Bourdieu systematically used the term "reflexivity" during the 90s, with the emergence of a new analytic conflict between rationalism and relativism (Tsekeris & Katrivesis, 2008). According to Bourdieu, reflexivity must include the social dimension of knowledge production, as well as the various effects of the intellectual fields and interests. Bourdieu's reflexivity objectifies objectification but needs development to help achieve objective knowledge. On the one hand, reflexivity enters the social sciences through phenomenology; and often rejects the traditional meaning of validity because, as social constructivists, they do not subscribe to the idea that an objective reality exists external to their research. On the other hand, it is valued and central to many researchers' examination of their own subjectivity and impact of that on the research process, especially analysis and interpretation

The recent discourses of reflexivity are partly due to a shift away from the concept of reflection, tarnished as it is by its affiliation with modern philosophy's decontextualized subject. The notion of reflection has its roots in the works of generation of most influential industrial/modern era philosophers of design and design education. Among others, they include David Kolb, John Dewey, Graham Gibbs and Donald Schön. Their ideas about teaching and learning to design follow the conception of the technicist design process. In his famous books *The Reflective Practitioner* (1983) and *Educating the Reflective Practitioner* (1987) Donald Schön claims that:

"When a practitioner reflects in and on his practice, the possible objects of his reflection are as varied as the kinds of phenomena before him and the systems of knowing-in-practice which he brings to them. He may reflect on the tacit norms and appreciations which underlies a judgement or on the strategies and theories implicit a pattern of behaviour. He may reflect on the feeling for a situation which has led him to adopt a particular course of action, on the way in which he has framed the problem he is trying to solve, or on the role he has constructed for himself within a larger institutional context".

In contrast to reflection, reflexivity has been identified too as one of the defining features of post-industrial society and of the 'new' social movements. For Habermas, modernization in part as the realization of the reflexive potential inherent in the communicative rationality of the lifeworld. In addition, reflexivity has been introduced in opposition to cognitivist or moral-practical interpretations of modernity. If reflexivity thus dramatizes the situated nature of reflection, the interest it spurs today is more than just a festive wake occasioned by the demise of the philosophy of the subject. At philosophical level, reflexivity involves construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of embodied subjectivities, thus providing rich material for

analysis. As an essential human capacity, reflexivity is responsible for the mobilization of personal experience towards the subjective orientation at the interactional level. Therefore, reflexivity is regarded as an essential capacity adjusting the actors to situations, or to the specific contexts of social phenomena.

Reflexivity is compatible with Freirean framework – it negates the "banking" concept of education. As Freire (1999) writes:

“the banking concept of education as an instrument of oppression— its presuppositions— a critique”; the problem-posing concept of education as an instrument for liberation—its presuppositions; the "banking" concept and the teacher-student contradiction; the problem-posing concept and the supersedence of the teacher-student contradiction; education: a mutual process, world-mediated; people as uncompleted beings, conscious of their incompleteness, and their attempt to be more fully human”.

Implicit in the banking concept is the assumption of a dichotomy between human beings and the world: a person is merely *in* the world, not *with* the world or with others; the individual is spectator, not re-creator (Freire, 1999). At the heart of this article is the assumption that education is the practice of freedom - as opposed to education as the practice of domination. According to Freire (1999), “liberating education consists in acts of cognition, not transferrals of information. It is a learning situation in which the cognizable object (far from being the end of the cognitive act) intermediates the cognitive actors - teacher on the one hand and students on the other”. Accordingly the practice of problem-posing education entails at the outset that the teacher-student contradiction be resolved. Dialogical relations - indispensable to the capacity of cognitive actors to cooperate in perceiving the same cognizable object - are otherwise impossible (Freire, 1999). Thus, we argue that the contemporary banking approach to Teaching Practice, for example, will never propose to students that they critically consider reality.

In the banking approach, reality is seen as motionless, static, compartmentalized, and predictable. Also, in the “banking” concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing (Freire, 1999). The students, alienated like the slave in the Hegelian dialectic, accept their ignorance as justifying the teacher's existence - but, unlike the slave, they never discover that they educate the teacher. For this reason we hold that Teaching Practice must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teacher-education practitioners and students.

To conclude this section, we note that reflexivity has a number of significant implications for Teaching Practice, as a paradigm site of education and a scientific laboratory, more specifically the theory and practice. Teaching and learning in reflexive setting is strongly shaped by the context in which the teacher practices. This is usually the classroom, which, in turn, is strongly influenced by the wider school culture and the community and society in which the school is situated. As reflexive practitioners, “teachers’ daily experiences in their practice context shape their understandings, and their understandings shape their experiences’ (Timperley, 2008:6). Thus, the complex and fluid nature of the Teaching Practice, as a policy imperative, needs demand a revitalised framework of effective theory and practice consistent with research into teacher learning, Freirean pedagogy and emerging paradigms of pedagogies of reflection as an ongoing intellectual pursuit, focusing not on the mastery of static content but rather on the construction of meaning within a collaborative environment. Thus, Teaching Practice should shift from the "banking concept" of education to Freirean framework.



## **CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY (CRP)/ CULTURALLY RELEVANT TEACHING (CRT) AS THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING PRACTICE**

The concept culture is broadly perceived. For example, the poststructuralist trinity (Lacan, Derrida and Foucault) note that culture as a category of social life has itself been conceptualised in a number of different ways. Among others, they see culture as: (1) creativity or agency, (2) a system of symbols and meanings, and (3) practice. Culture is neither a particular kind of practice nor practice that takes place in a particular social location. It is rather the semiotic dimension of human social practice in general (Sewell, 2005:48). As observed by most celebrated and influential scholars (Ladson-Billings, 1992a; 1992b; 1994a; 1994b; 2001; McLaren, 1995; Gay, 2010; Taylor & Sobel, 2011; Scherff & Spector, 2010; Swartz, 1997; Giroux, 1997; Nieto & Bode, 2010; 2011; Johnson & McElroy, 2012; Pitsoe & Dichaba, 2014), culture is central to learning (including curriculum, instruction, interactions, and assessment). It plays a role not only in communicating and receiving information, but also in shaping the thinking processes of groups and individuals (Scherff & Spector, 2010; Taylor & Sobel, 2011). A pedagogy that acknowledges, responds to, and celebrates fundamental cultures offers full, equitable access to education for students from all cultures (Ladson-Billings, 1994a; 1994b; 2001).

Numerous conceptualizations of CRP exist. For example, the term CRP is used interchangeably with several terms, such as culturally responsive, culturally appropriate, culturally congruent and culturally compatible, to describe effective pedagogy in culturally diverse classrooms. It is a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills and attitudes (Ladson-Billings, 1992a; 1992b; 1994a; 1994b; 2001; Scherff & Spector, 2010; Taylor & Sobel, 2011). For Gay (2000; 2010), CRT uses cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of diverse students to make learning more appropriate and effective for them; it teaches to and through the strengths of these students.

It is important to emphasize that a significant number of scholars (Ladson-Billings, 1994a; Ladson-Billings, 1994b; Asante, 1991/1992; Au, 1993; Erickson, 1987; Gordon, 1993; Smith & Ayers, 2006; Lipman, 1995; Gay 2000; Pewewardy, 1994; Philips, 1983; Scherff & Spector, 2010) perceive CRT as liberating, transformative, comprehensive, validating, empowering, emancipatory and transformative. In addition, it guides students in understanding that no single version of “truth” is total and permanent. It does not solely prescribe to mainstream ways of knowing. CRT infuses family customs—as well as community culture and expectations—throughout the teaching and learning environment (Ladson-Billings, 1994a; Ladson-Billings, 1994b; Gay, 2000). In addition, by providing instruction in a context meaningful to students and in a way that values their culture, knowledge, and experiences, CRT fosters student motivation and engagement. Central to CRT, as Gay (2000:37) notes, is making authentic knowledge about ethnic groups accessible to students. Furthermore the validation, information, and the pride it generates are both psychologically and intellectually liberating.

According to Gay (2000:31–32), while improving academic achievement and developing a sense of community, camaraderie, and shared responsibility is a goal of CRP, education of this sort can be multidimensional for teachers and learners:

“Culturally responsive teaching requires tapping into a wide range of cultural knowledge, experiences, contributions, and perspectives. Emotions, beliefs, values, ethos, opinions, and feelings are scrutinized along with factual information to make curriculum and instruction more reflective of and responsive to ethnic diversity. However, every conceivable aspect of an ethnic group’s culture is not replicated in the classroom. Nor are the cultures included in the curriculum used only with students from that ethnic group. Cultural responsive pedagogy focuses on those elements of cultural socialization that most directly affect learning.”

For Ladson-Billings (1992:382), culturally responsive teachers develop intellectual, social, emotional, and political learning by "using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes". Among others, cooperation, community and connectedness are central attributes of culturally responsive teaching. Gay (2000:38) asserts that students are expected to work together and are held accountable for one another’s success. The goal is for all students to be winners, rather than some who win and others who lose, and for some students to assume responsibility for helping one another achieve to the best of their ability (Gay, 2000:38).

To conclude, CRT is “using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of diverse students to make learning more appropriate and effective for them. It lifts the veil of presumed absolute authority from conceptions of scholarly truth typically taught in schools; and helps students realise that no single version of truth is total and permanent (Gay 2010). It does not make itself the mainstream way of knowing or learning. To accomplish this, teachers make real knowledge about different cultures and ethnic groups accessible to students. The validation, information, and pride it generates are both psychologically and intellectually liberating (Gay, 2010).

## **TOWARDS A REFLEXIVE PRACTICE AND CRP FRAMEWORK IN TEACHING PRACTICE**

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Teaching Practice sector is complex and chaotic – it is caught in a theoretical impasse. Among others, it is going through a fundamental transformation and revolution in terms of its pedagogy, its role in society, mode of operation, and economic structure and value. With the massive shift from modern to postmodern paradigm, hegemony of traditional pedagogies seems to have no future in 21<sup>st</sup> century Teaching Practice setting. While we acknowledge the limitations of reflexive practice and CRP, given the culturally diverse settings in South African Teaching Practice institutions, we call for a paradigm shift or revolutionary science – a change in the basic assumptions, or paradigms, within the ruling theory of science. In his famous book, *“The Structure of Scientific Revolutions”* Thomas Kuhn (1970) writes that “all crises begin with the blurring of a paradigm and the consequent loosening of the rules for normal research. ...Or finally, the case that will most concern us here, a crisis may end with the emergence of a new candidate for paradigm and with the ensuing battle over its acceptance”. For him, “scientific advancement is not evolutionary, but rather is a series of peaceful interludes punctuated by intellectually violent revolutions, and in those revolutions "one conceptual world view is replaced by another". Furthermore he perceived paradigm as a “revolution, a transformation, a sort of metamorphosis. It just does not happen, but rather it is driven by agents of change”.

Likewise, paradigm shift in Teaching Practice for the 21<sup>st</sup> century is inevitable. This paradigm shift is in terms of teaching (instruction) and learning approaches, curriculum design, interactions, and assessment to the ones that are more responsive to the life experiences of the other ethnic groups of students. Notwithstanding the fact that true paradigm shifts represent drastic, sometimes uncomfortable change; for us it is obvious that cultural appropriateness, congruence, or compatibility within the context and/or the frameworks of reflexive practice and CRT are very critical in the achievement of the National Policy Framework for Teaching Practice and Development in South Africa policy ideals. They both offer the potential to create “reflexive and culturally sensitive teachers” who will be able to make informed choices in their schools and to act more effectively to make workplace practices more ethical and equitable; and stimulates the possibility of *praxis* and, it is in *praxis* that theory becomes an emancipatory guide that will empower students to be positive agents of change when they are ‘out there in the real world. Given the political, complex and fluid nature of the teaching and learning in Teaching Practice needs, reflexive practice and CRT, among others, have potential of providing the basis situated learning in Teaching Practice context – focusing not on the mastery of static content but rather on the construction of meaning within a collaborative environment.

For reflexivity to lead to valuable learning outcomes for teacher educators and their students, we argue that it must be effective reflexivity practice. Notwithstanding its critics, reflexive practice is seen by many teacher educators to be at the very heart of effective teacher preparation programs and the development of professional competence. Teachers cannot be reflexive without reflecting on the modes of teaching and learning involvement. Thus, reflexive practices can be viewed as essential for accounting for various subjective preconceptions and distortions that infiltrate the decision-making process. Reflexivity is compatible with Freirean framework – it negates the “banking” concept of education. Implicit in the banking concept is the assumption of a dichotomy between human beings and the world: a person is merely *in* the world, not *with* the world or with others; the individual is spectator, not re-creator (Freire, 1999).

At the heart of this article is the assumption that Teaching Practice is the practice of freedom - as opposed to education as the practice of domination. According to Freire (1999), liberating education consists in acts of cognition, not transferrals of information. It is a learning situation in which the cognizable object (far from being the end of the cognitive act) intermediates the cognitive actors - teacher on the one hand and students on the other. Accordingly the practice of problem-posing education entails at the outset that the teacher-student contradiction be resolved. Dialogical relations - indispensable to the capacity of cognitive actors to cooperate in perceiving the same cognizable object - are otherwise impossible (Freire, 1999). Thus, we argue that the contemporary banking approach to Teaching Practice, for example, will never propose to students that they critically consider reality. In the banking approach, reality is seen as motionless, static, compartmentalized, and predictable. Also, in the “banking” concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing (Freire, 1999). The students, alienated like the slave in the Hegelian dialectic, accept their ignorance as justifying the teacher's existence - but, unlike the slave, they never discover that they educate the teacher. For this reason we hold that education must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teacher-education practitioners and students.

## CONCLUSION

This article has argued for the need to rethink Teaching Practice in order to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. With the growing influence of postmodernism and post structuralism, there is a need for a revolutionary shift in Teaching Practice in terms of theory and practice. Among others, Teaching Practice should be coined in such a way that it meets the societal need as well as promotion of the advancement of the pedagogies of reflection. As a way of addressing the theoretical impasse and epistemic shift, reflexive practice and CRP frameworks should be embraced in making the “*National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development*” ideals a reality.

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