

Research Article

Critical Pedagogy in Addressing Social Inequality and Promoting Social Justice in Education

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Abstract

How can critical pedagogy contribute in addressing social inequality and promoting social justice in education? In what ways McLaren, Giroux and Apple conceptualize the role of teacher and student, and the issue of power and domination in education? How do critical consciousness, critical thinking and critical action address in education along with implications for teaching and learning practices? These questions are the main concerns to be discussed through this paper. Critical pedagogy is the philosophy of education that develops the learners to critique regarding the structures of power and oppression and it also shows the social movement that combines education with critical theory. Similarly, it is a theory of education that focuses on the relationship between power, knowledge and social justice. This review paper attempts to explore the contribution of critical pedagogy in addressing social inequality and promoting social justice in education. It is qualitative in nature. It adopts the analysis of documents from books and journal articles related to the critical pedagogy. This review paper concludes that critical pedagogy as a revolutionary approach to education to combat various diverse types of oppression. Through critical analysis and questioning of social inequalities, the development of a sense of agency, and participation in transformational action for a more just and equitable society are all goals of critical pedagogy.

Keywords

Critical Pedagogy, Critical Consciousness, Forms of Oppression, Social Justice, Social Inequality

1. Introduction

Critical pedagogy is a theory of education that emphasizes on the relationship between power, social justice and knowledge [25]. Similarly, critical pedagogy motivates students to develop a critical conscious which follows reasoning, challenging dominant ideologies and social power structures [1]. That means, it aims to empower the learners to become critical thinkers who query the status through transforming oppressive social structures and systems in the process of teaching learning. It is asserted that critical pedagogy

examines power dynamics, social inequalities and the procedures in which these aspects influence the domains of education [11]. In addition to this, Critical pedagogy demonstrates a theoretical framework to explore issues of power in the philosophy of education. It is utterly based on the world experience of the students and concurs with student interests and questions [8]. That means critical pedagogy is all about challenging power structures, but one of the most common power dynamics in a student's life is that of the teacher-

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student relationship [3]. In the domain of philosophy of education, critical pedagogy shows the social movement that combines education with critical theory. In addition to this, critical pedagogy examines the relation between oppression, literacy and praxis. From the critical pedagogy, there comes critical awareness. Students become aware of the contractions in their social, political, economic, gender, race and class conditions and then taking actions to emphasize these contractions [16]. In this paper, it is attempted to discuss the contribution of critical pedagogy in addressing social inequality and promoting social justice in education. It also presents the goals and principles of critical pedagogy and the implications of it for teaching and learning practices. Besides this, it captures the critical consciousness, critical thinking and critical action in education and presents how McLaren, Giroux and Apple focus the issues of power and domination in education and conceptualize the role of teacher and students in order to border the social movements and struggles for social justice. The following sections discuss detailed information about critical pedagogy as a theory and practice for addressing social inequality and promoting social justice in education.

2. Goals and Principles of Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy inquires how and why the knowledge gets constructed the way it performs, that means it follows a difference in the forms of knowledge formulated by the German theorist Jurgen Habermas [16]. According to McLaren, Giroux and Apple, the major goals and principles of critical pedagogy are discussed in the following lines.

Social Justice is one of the genuine aspects that critical pedagogy is concerned in the pursuit of challenging and disrupting oppressive structures and systems that creates inequality, discrimination and injustice [3]. It attempts to develop equitable and justice society. Similarly, empowerment is also principle of critical pedagogy. It aims to empower the students by motivating them to critically analyze and raise the query regarding the social, political and cultural systems that shape their lives. It looks for enhancing students' ability to consider critically and involve in transformative action. In addition to this, consciousness-rising is the pivotal goals of critical pedagogy. It aims to develop students' awareness about social, political and cultural issues. It attempts to support the students critically reflect on their own social positions and privileges, encouraging them to become active agents of change in their societies. In the same way, Dialogue and collaboration assist to encourage the students and teachers to participate in open and respectful discussions, challenging dominant narratives and exploring alternative perspectives. Critical pedagogy focuses the significance of dialogue and collaboration in the learning process [17]. Authenticity and relevance is one of the principles of critical

pedagogy. It inspires learning experiences that are authentic and relevant to learners' lives. It focuses the educators to connect curriculum content to real world –issue and experiences, developing learning meaningful and implementable to learners' social realities. Transformation is also the valuable principle of critical pedagogy. It aims to develop transformative learning experiences. It looks for going beyond only transmission of knowledge and skills that support to empower the learners to critically reflect, challenge assumptions and making the participants active in the process of social transformation. In a nutshell, critical pedagogy is a transformative approach to education that looks forward to motivate the students enhancing social justice, focusing on dialogue and collaboration and upgrade the consciousness about social misuses [15].

2.1. Critical Consciousness, Critical Thinking and Critical Action in Education

Critical consciousness, critical thinking, and critical action are crucial elements of critical pedagogy in education, according to McLaren, Giroux, and Apple. They characterize each of these ideas in different ways:

Critical Consciousness: The maturation of knowledge and comprehension of social, political, and cultural issues is referred to as critical consciousness [4]. It entails identifying and challenging the prevailing ideologies, hierarchies, and oppressive institutions that influence society. Critical reflection on one's own social privileges, biases, and experiences, as well as those of oppressed groups, is encouraged by critical consciousness [10]. It strives to give people the power to confront and change these unjust structures.

Critical Thinking: Analyzing, assessing, and challenging concepts, claims, and facts are all parts of the cognitive process known as critical thinking. With regard to critical pedagogy, beyond rote memorization and passive acceptance of knowledge, critical thinking is an advanced skill [23]. It encourages pupils to examine deeply, pose probing questions, and take into account many viewpoints. In order to challenge and dismantle prevailing narratives and ideas, students need to develop analytical and problem-solving skills.

Critical action: It describes the liberating and transformational activities that people perform as a result of their critical consciousness and critical thinking [24]. It entails challenging and altering oppressive systems and institutions utilizing information and understanding acquired via critical pedagogy. In addition to activism, advocacy, community organizing, and social justice work, critical action can take many different forms. It seeks to encourage constructive change and build a society that is more just and equal.

Thus, there is a connection between critical consciousness, critical thought, and critical action. Beyond rote memorization and passive acceptance of knowledge, critical thinking is an advanced skill. It encourages pupils to examine deeply, pose probing questions, and take into account many view-

points. Students can challenge and deconstruct prevailing narratives by using the analytical and problem-solving abilities they learn through critical thinking, which is one of the key components of critical pedagogy. Together, they strive to enable people to engage in critical analysis, confront oppressive systems, gain a deeper comprehension of social concerns, and take transformative action to build a more just and equitable society.

2.2. The Role of Teacher and the Student in Critical Pedagogy

Regarding the role of the teacher and the students, McLaren, Giroux, and Apple conceptualize the roles of the teacher and the student in critical pedagogy in the following way:

The Teacher as Facilitator: According to critical pedagogy, the teacher's job is to facilitate learning rather than merely impart knowledge. The instructor fosters a secure space for learning where pupils can express their ideas, have challenging conversations, and confront prevailing narratives. Students are guided and inspired by the teacher to think critically, raise questions, and consider alternate viewpoints.

Student as Active Participant: In critical pedagogy, rather than viewing students as passive consumers of knowledge, educators view them as active players in the learning process [13]. They are exhorted to practice analytical, reflective, and critical thinking. Students have the ability to speak out, tell their stories, and participate in class discussions. Additionally, they are urged to apply what they learned to tackle current problems and take initiative to solve societal injustices.

Knowledge Co-Construction: The co-construction of knowledge between teachers and students is emphasized by critical pedagogy. Teachers and students work together to critically examine knowledge rather than depending exclusively on textbooks or reliable sources. While students contribute their own perspectives, experiences, and ideas to the learning process, the teacher promotes discussions and offers direction. Students benefit from a sense of empowerment and ownership because to this collaborative approach.

Developing Critical Thinkers in Students: Critical pedagogy strives to develop critical thinkers in students who can examine and oppose oppressive systems. Teachers support pupils' growth in critical thinking abilities viato challenge presumptions, analyze data, and take into account many viewpoints [6]. Students are taught to critically examine social injustices, power structures, and disparities in order to gain the agency to effect change.

Education for Social Transformation: According to critical pedagogy, teachers and students alike are jointly responsible for promoting social change [9]. The instructor acts as a mentor and a guide, encouraging pupils to develop a critical consciousness and giving them the tools they need to be active change makers. The application of knowledge and critical thinking abilities to social concerns and the creation of a more just and equitable society are encouraged among students.

In conclusion, in critical pedagogy, the student actively participates in the co-construction while the instructor serves as a facilitator. The instructor encourages a sense of social responsibility and a commitment to social reform by empowering pupils to be critical thinkers and change agents.

2.3. Implications in Teaching and Learning Practices

The ideas of McLaren, Giroux, and Apple have an impact on instructional strategies in a number of ways.

Critical Pedagogy: According to McLaren, Giroux, and Apple, critical pedagogy is crucial because it encourages students to question authority figures and examine established power systems. Instead than just accepting social, political, and cultural issues, this method challenges pupils to critically examine them. This strategy can be used by teachers to promote social justice, promote varied viewpoints, and facilitate classroom dialogues.

Social Justice Education: These academics support educating students about social injustice and addressing social injustices. They contend that educational institutions such as schools ought to serve as democratic learning environments where pupils are educated on social issues and inspired to take good action [20]. Social justice can be taught in the classroom. By incorporating current events into the curriculum, encouraging empathy and understanding, and involving students in volunteer work in the community.

Cultural Relevance: McLaren, Giroux, and Apple stress the significance of ensuring that education is inclusive and relevant to all cultures. They contend that education should take into account and recognize students' varied origins and experiences. This can be accomplished by teachers through include other viewpoints and opinions in the curriculum, employing culturally sensitive teaching techniques, and fostering an environment in the classroom that values diversity.

Critical Media Literacy: Given that the media significantly influences students' perceptions and beliefs, these researchers also emphasize the necessity of critical media literacy. Teachers can assist students in developing their media production abilities, media analysis skills, and an understanding of how power and ideology are ingrained in media.

In this way, the implications of McLaren, Giroux, and Apple's viewpoints for instructional strategies center on encouraging media literacy, social justice, and critical thinking. With the tools to confront and change oppressive structures, these strategies seek to provide students with the knowledge and abilities to become active participants in their education and society.

2.4. The Issue of Power and Domination in Education

Prominent academics McLaren, Giroux, and Apple have significantly influenced critical pedagogy and its relationship

to larger social movements and fights for social justice. Here is a summary of their viewpoints:

McLaren stresses the value of critical pedagogy as a catalyst for change in addressing social injustices. He contends that education should allow students to critically assess and oppose oppressive structures and systems rather than being neutral. By emphasizing the function of education in cultivating critical consciousness and inspiring students to take part in social justice battles, McLaren links critical pedagogy to larger social movements. He highlights the importance of addressing problems like sexism, racism, and classism in educational institutions.

Giroux [9], concentrates on the confluence of democracy, power, and education. For the development of a critical consciousness that opposes dominant beliefs and promotes democratic actions, he contends that critical pedagogy is crucial. In order to establish a link between critical pedagogy and larger social movements, Giroux emphasizes the need of education in rising up engaged, active individuals who can oppose oppressive systems [22]. He stresses the value of applying what kids learn in the classroom to real-world problems and exhorts teachers to help pupils develop their agency and capacity for social action.

Apple [2], examines the connection between social inequality, ideology, and education in his or her works. According to him, critical pedagogy should attempt to challenge and subvert prevailing ideologies that support social injustice. By emphasizing the need to address issues of power, privilege, and injustice within educational systems, Apple links critical pedagogy to larger social movements. He places a strong emphasis on encouraging students to engage in critical thinking and on educating them about the subversive curriculum that perpetuates societal hierarchies.

In conclusion, McLaren, Giroux, and Apple emphasize the importance of education in creating critical consciousness, confronting oppressive structures, and equipping students to be active agents of change. This helps them relate critical pedagogy to larger social movements and fights for social justice. They promote a pedagogy that is intensely concerned with questions of power, ideology, and social inequity and that pushes students to inquire into, consider, and alter their immediate environment.

2.5. The Forms of Oppression and the Challenging Proposal Through Critical Pedagogy

Prominent researchers in the field of critical pedagogy, McLaren, Giroux, and Apple have recognized a number of oppressive practices in society. These oppressive practices include:

Economic oppression: This type of oppression is defined by an unfair distribution of resources and wealth, which creates social and economic inequality. According to McLaren, Giroux, and Apple critical pedagogy can be used to combat

economic oppression by encouraging students to think critically about the economy and how it affects society. They support educating kids about alternative economic models, economic justice, and fostering critical thinking about the social and economic systems that support inequality.

Racial oppression: Systematic marginalization and discrimination against racial and ethnic minority groups are referred to as racial oppression. McLaren, Giroux, and Apple contend that by fostering anti-racist education, critical pedagogy may undermine racial oppression. They place a strong emphasis on the value of educating children about the causes of racism throughout history, the harm caused by racial stereotypes, and the significance of cultivating empathy and understanding among students from various ethnic origins [18]. By advancing feminism and gender equality, critical pedagogy may combat gender oppression. McLaren, Giroux, and Apple suggest questioning gender stereotypes, including feminist theories and viewpoints into the curriculum, and developing welcoming and inspiring learning settings for people of all genders.

Cultural oppression: This practice entails erasing and marginalizing particular cultures and identities [12]. By promoting the recognition and enjoyment of cultural diversity, critical pedagogy may combat cultural oppression. And Apple contends that by fostering anti-racist education, critical pedagogy may undermine racial oppression. They place a strong emphasis on the value of educating pupils about the historical causes of racism, the effects of racial diversity, and the significance of fostering cultural acceptance. It is recommended by McLaren, Giroux, and Apple that multicultural education be incorporated into the curriculum in order to expose pupils to many cultural viewpoints and to challenge prevailing cultural narratives and prejudices.

McLaren, Giroux, and Apple suggest critical pedagogy as a revolutionary approach to education to combat these diverse types of oppression. Through critical analysis and questioning of social inequalities, the development of a sense of agency, and participation in transformational action for a more just and equitable society are all goals of critical pedagogy. It entails setting up democratic, participative classrooms where pupils can have discussions.

2.6. Connecting Critical Pedagogy to Broader Social Movements and Struggles for Social Justice

Educational theorists McLaren, Giroux, and Apple have significantly influenced the field of critical pedagogy, which emphasizes the link between education and larger social movements and fights for social justice.

McLaren is renowned for his contributions to critical pedagogy and for coining the phrase "revolutionary critical pedagogy." [14] mentions that education should actively endeavor to confront and change oppressive societal institutions rather than remaining neutral. By encouraging critical consciousness

and equipping students to be agents of social change, McLaren contends that critical pedagogy should link education to larger social movements and fights for social justice. He is an advocate for educational practices that take into account concerns of class, race, gender, and other types of oppression.

Giroux is an additional significant and prominent author on the subject of the interaction between education, power, and social justice. He contends that promoting critical thinking and opposing prevailing views can be accomplished through education. Giroux stresses the need of teaching children to critically discuss and question the status quo by involving them in classroom discussions on social issues. By encouraging students to take on active roles in democratic processes and cultivating a feeling of social responsibility, he thinks critical pedagogy should link education to larger social movements.

Apple states that critical pedagogy research focuses on how education can support or undermine social injustices. According to him, schools reflect and replicate current power structures rather than being neutral places. Apple highlights the Understanding how education fits into bigger social movements and their social, cultural, and political contexts is crucial. He emphasizes critical pedagogy, which addresses issues of race, class, gender, and other kinds of oppression in the curriculum and classroom procedures in order to promote social justice and challenge prevailing ideas.

In conclusion, McLaren, Giroux, and Apple emphasize the need for education to be transformative, give students the tools to critically assess and challenge oppressive social structures, encourage a sense of social responsibility, and actively engage students in democratic processes. This connects critical pedagogy to larger social movements and struggles for social justice.

2.7. Challenges and Opportunities of Social Movements and Social Justice

According to McLaren, Giroux, and Apple, there are advantages and disadvantages to linking critical pedagogy to larger social movements and fights for social justice. Several important factors such as challenges are listed below:

Pushback and Resistance: Traditional educational systems, conservative ideologies, and preexisting power dynamics can be obstacles to the implementation of critical pedagogy in educational institutions. Critical pedagogy could be seen as overly radical or disruptive to the current quo by others.

A lack of institutional support: To be successfully implemented, critical pedagogy needs institutional backing and resources. However, educational institutions could put more emphasis on efficiency, uniformity, and standardized testing than on critical thinking and social justice. The adoption of critical pedagogy in traditional education may be hampered by this lack of support.

Critical pedagogy in teacher preparation and professional development demands a change in the way that teachers de-

liver their lessons, forcing them to adopt fresh strategies and grow as critical thinkers [5]. It can be difficult to give instructors access to proper training and ongoing professional development opportunities, especially when such initiatives do not receive high priority from the current structures.

Besides this, the opportunities of social movements and social justice are discussed as follow:

Empowering Students: Critical pedagogy gives students the chance to hone their critical thinking abilities, participate in insightful discussions, and take an active role in their own education. It may give individuals the confidence to confront oppressive systems and encourage a feeling of social accountability.

Social Transformation: Both individual and societal transformation is possible through tying critical pedagogy to larger social movements and fights for social justice. The challenge and destruction of repressive structures, the promotion of equity, and promoting social transformation.

Fostering Social Consciousness: Critical pedagogy pushes students to think critically about social problems, injustices, and power structures. It contributes to the growth of involved and informed citizens by encouraging social consciousness, empathy, and knowledge of many perspectives.

Community Engagement: Critical pedagogy encourages action and community involvement. Students are inspired to take action, work with others, and have a positive influence in their communities by linking education to social movements and battles for social justice. While there are obstacles, the opportunities created by tying critical pedagogy to larger social movements and social justice battles offer the possibility of life-changing educational opportunities and the development of a more just and equitable society.

3. Strengths and Limitations of Critical Pedagogy as a Theory and Practice for Addressing Social Inequality and Promoting Social Justice in Education

When it comes to addressing social inequality and advancing social justice in education, critical pedagogy as a theory and practice has both many advantages and disadvantages. Here are some important things to think about such as the positive aspects of critical pedagogy are listed as follow:

Empowerment: Critical pedagogy places a strong emphasis on giving students the tools they need to understand and fight oppressive social structures and systems. It fosters a sense of agency and active engagement in social change by challenging pupils to ask probing questions and think critically about the world around them.

Social Justice: By addressing issues of injustice, prejudice, and marginalization, critical pedagogy stresses social justice. In order to promote justice and fairness and to question prevailing notions, it tries to establish inclusive learning environments.

Authentic Learning: Critical pedagogy encourages real-

world connections between classroom information and activities outside of the classroom issues. It fosters a better understanding and relevance of education by encouraging students to use their knowledge and talents to investigate and solve societal problems.

Collaboration and discourse: Open discourse and collaborative learning environments are key components of critical pedagogy. It encourages students to participate in civil and welcoming discussions that promote the sharing of differing viewpoints and the improvement of critical thinking abilities.

On the other side, the drawbacks of critical pedagogy can be discussed in the following line:

Pushback and Resistance: Employing critical pedagogy may encounter opposition from students, parents, and organizations that may feel uneasy questioning long-standing norms and structures. This may reduce its applicability and effectiveness.

Time and curricular Restrictions: To examine social concerns and participate in critical conversations, critical pedagogy needs time and curricular flexibility. But the pressure to provide coverage Critical pedagogy implementation may be constrained by the need to cover curriculum requirements and pass benchmark tests.

Teacher Preparation and Support: Critical pedagogy demands that teachers have a solid understanding of social justice issues as well as critical theory. It may be difficult to execute successfully since many teachers may not have had appropriate training or support in this area.

Cultural Sensitivity: Critical pedagogy needs to take into account the various cultural experiences and backgrounds of students. In order to prevent further marginalization or tokenization, it is crucial to ensure that essential dialogues and actions are inclusive and respectful of many perspectives.

Finally yet most importantly, critical pedagogy has a lot of potential for addressing social injustice in education and advancing social justice. But for it to be used effectively, the drawbacks must be addressed, and educators and students must be given navigating assistance. Critical pedagogy implementation may be constrained by the need to cover curriculum requirements and pass benchmark tests.

Implications for Educators, Policymakers and Activists to Create more Equitable Education System

For educators, decision-makers, and activists working to develop more equitable and just educational institutions, the study of McLaren, Giroux, and Apple 's work has a number of implications:

Critical Pedagogy: McLaren, Giroux, and Apple stress the significance of critical pedagogy, which calls on teachers to question current power structures and foster critical thinking in pupils. By involving students in debates about social issues, urging them to challenge prevailing views, and building a sense of agency and empowerment, educators can put this strategy into practice.

Social Justice Education: These academics support social justice education, which entails tackling unfairness and ine-

quality in educational systems [21]. Teaching pupils about social challenges, historical injustices, and the value of activism, educators can incorporate social justice themes into their curricula. This strategy benefits students such as increase your capacity for empathy, critical thinking, and a dedication to justice.

Democratizing Education: According to McLaren, Giroux, and Apple, democratizing education would involve sharing authority and decision-making with all parties involved, such as students, parents, teachers, and members of the community. This can be supported by policymakers by ensuring that a variety of views are heard throughout the development of educational policies, distributing resources fairly, and providing opportunities for community involvement in schools.

Cultural Relevance: According to these academics, it is crucial to provide students with instruction that is sensitive to their cultural origins and experiences [7]. The use of culturally appropriate resources, involving student cultural viewpoints in the curriculum, and establishing inclusive classroom environments are all examples of culturally responsive teaching methods that educators should work to implement [19].

Activism: According to McLaren, Giroux, and Apple, policymakers, educators, and activists must collaborate. Together to oppose oppressive systems and promote change. Activists can use their voices to call attention to educational disparities, advocate for legislative changes, and lend support to grass-roots initiatives that seek to build more just and equitable educational systems.

In nutshell, the evaluation of the research conducted by these experts shows how critical pedagogy, social justice education, democratization, cultural relevance, and activism are crucial for building more just and equitable educational institutions. These insights can be used by educators, decision-makers, and activists to influence education and promote a more fair society.

4. Conclusion

The present paper shows how critical pedagogy can contribute in addressing social inequality and promoting social justice in education. It attempts to analyze the perceptive of Peter McLaren, Henry Giroux and M. W. Apple regarding the strengths and limitations of critical pedagogy and how the implications can be conducted for educators, policymakers and activists who look for creating more equitable educational system. Critical pedagogy is a transformative approach to education that looks forward to motivate the students enhancing social justice, focusing on dialogue and collaboration and upgrade the consciousness about social misuses. McLaren, Giroux, and Apple emphasize the need for education to be transformative, give students the tools to critically assess and challenge oppressive social structures, encourage a sense of social responsibility, and actively engage students in democratic processes. They further suggest critical pedagogy as a revolutionary approach to

education to combat various diverse types of oppression. Through critical analysis and questioning of social inequalities, the development of a sense of agency, and participation in transformational action for a more just and equitable society are all goals of critical pedagogy. It entails setting up democratic, participative classrooms where students can have discussions. Thus, critical pedagogy has a lot of potentials for addressing social injustice in education and advancing social justice. But for it to be used effectively, the drawbacks must be addressed, and educators and students must be given navigating assistance.

Abbreviations

CP	Critical Pedagogy
ELE	English Language Education

Author Contributions

Hiranya Lal Lamsal is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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