Bourdieu's capitals and the socio-cultural perspective of literacy frameworks: a ready-made vessel for decolonising the curriculum.

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The term 'decolonising the curriculum has attained more prominence in recent times, particularly in the wake of political events, the core of which has been in the United States. Such prominence naturally induces a variety of engagement and conceptualisations which can be placed on a cline with populist agitations embedded in social justice ideals (See e.g. Akhter, 2020) on one end and realistic educational engagements on the other. With the former, the notion of decolonising the curriculum falls within the framework of intersectionality and borrows from the comprehensive all-encompassing agitations such as 'Rhodes must fall' and 'Why is my curriculum so white?' (Akhter, 2020). The latter, however, has been more concerned with the functional process of how the process of decolonisation might happen.

But the issues involved here goes beyond mere grandiose assertions and claims. If the goal of decolonising the curriculum is to be achieved, there must be a workable framework through which it can be achieved, and such a framework must have consistent elements that can be universally applied. As such, the pertinent question is: how exactly is the curriculum to be decolonised?

There have been various proposals on how the process of decolonisation can be effected. Many of these have rightly presented principles around which the process can be framed. For example, Learning and Teaching Hub @Bath (2020, p1) declares 'To decolonise means looking at what we teach, how we position what we teach in its context, and how we are positioned as teachers and learners, especially in relation to others who may not share this position and privilege'. While this underpinning philosophy is laudable, it still falls short of offering a process for practical engagement. The focus on positionality makes the whole process subjective and reduces the assessment of achievement within the potentially subjective realm of the teacher. This, in my view, defeats the whole notion of 'challenging power and hierarchies', as it effectively leaves decisions in the hands of 'the powerful'.

Despite obvious limitations, proposals around decolonisation appear to have consistency built around the notion of multiplicity of voices in the design and implementation of the curriculum. This consensus is encapsuled by Charles (2019) who draws on Keele University's conceptualisation of the process as the process of:

'creating spaces and resources for a dialogue among all members of the university on how to imagine and envision all cultures and knowledge systems in the curriculum, and with respect to what is being taught and how it frames the world.' (p1).

For us, this conceptualisation has a lot of merit because, as Charles notes, 'it is all-encompassing of the Institution and its members, be they students or staff'(p1). In essence, it eliminates the element

of power relations and addresses the potential needs of all potentially marginalised sub-groups of learners rather than focus on just one sub-group. What is particularly significant about this outlook is the in-built mechanism for preventing the replacement of one dominant voice with another- an issue that has been the focus around which opposition to the notion of decolonising the curriculum have rallied.

If we accept this notion of multiplicity of voices, it seems to me that the concept of socio-cultural perspective of literacy, also referred to as multiliteracies, particularly the strand that draws on Bourdieu's concept of capitals, is a ready and pliable framework for its implementation. Indeed, there is much convergence between the two, thus suggesting that the frameworks of multiliteracies and understandings of Bourdieu's capitals can serve as the platform for implementing the decolonisation of the curriculum.

Similar to Bourdieu's capital framework, the socio-cultural perspective of literacy projected by the New Literacy Studies (See Street, 1984, Grenfell, 2012a) is vociferous in its recognition of 'complexity' and draws on the acknowledgement of complexity and differentiation with the argument that the value of any one position is necessarily informed by our perception of the capital associated with that position (Grenfell, 2012a). Taking this argument one step further, Ade-Ojo & Duckworth (2017) suggest that literacy policy and practice can be seen through the lens of capital which may manifest in three different forms of the social, the cultural and the economic (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Street et al., 2014; Grenfell et al., 2012). What this implies is that 'there cannot, and should not be one singular construction and appreciation of capital' (p389) or indeed literacy, as they are phenomena that are context-dependent. The socio-cultural perspective of literacy 'entails the recognition of 'multiple literacies', varying according to time and space and also contested in relations of power' (Street, 2012, p. 27). The prioritisation of multiplicity makes evident the convergence in the arguments underpinning both Bourdieu's capital framework (Bourdieu, 1986) and the socio-cultural perspective of literacy which has sometimes been framed under the caption of multiliteracies. (Street, 2012; Darvin, 2014; Grenfell, 2012b; Street et al., 2014). This relationship is accentuated by Grenfell (2012b), who suggests that Bourdieu 'furnishes a theoretical standpoint that provides not just the appropriate methodological framework for studying language …but also its political impetus (Darvin, 2014, p. 129, Ade-Ojo & Duckworth, 2017, p389). The synergy between the two concepts is thus painted for us in bold relief; and affirms that there is no possibility of hearing only one voice, as we must recognise that other voices lurk around in different contexts. We only need to recognise, accept, and accommodate them. It is essentially a call for a shift in mindset.

We extend this argument around multiplicity to the process of decolonising the curriculum. The starting point is that the stakeholders in the development and delivery of curriculum must recognise, just like Bourdieu and the proponents of multiliteracies, that there are different elements that can be included in the curriculum, different ways of delivering the curriculum and perhaps more importantly, different goals of the curriculum. Framing this around the notion of stakeholders brings into play all potential participants ranging from policy makers through teachers to students. In recognising the element of multiplicity of voices, the element of choice and inclusion becomes sustained.

Given that the underpinning driver for the process of decolonising the curriculum is multiplicity, I suggest that the framework provided by Bourdieu and which is central to the argument of multiliteracies has already provided us with a framework for decolonising the curriculum. The starting point must be the recognition of the multiplicity of rights: the right to contribute to the development of the curriculum; the right to contribute to the content of the curriculum; the right to different understandings of the curriculum and more importantly, the right to participate in the

arguments around the acceptance and rejection of curriculum outcomes. In essence, at the core of decolonising the curriculum is the democratisation of the process. As Bourdieu argues, there are different capitals that influence the curriculum. The challenge of decolonising the curriculum is finding a way to give access and hearing to the voices that are not dominant. To do this, we must first accept the legitimacy of their existence.

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