Place-based Education and Critical Pedagogies of Place: Teachers Challenging the Neocolonizing Processes of the New Zealand and Canadian Schooling Systems

Background

 Canada and New Zealand share a common British colonial history and, accordingly, share many similar problems as a result of the importation of British industrial and recent neo-liberal schooling models that have impacted negatively on learners, especially those of Indigenous ancestry.

Schooling similarities in New Zealand and Canada

- Mandatory schooling to the age of sixteen
- Classroom based learning
- Physical spaces of schools are very similar (individual classrooms, gymnasium, offices, etc.)
- Set time for subject specific classes/learning, 9am-3pm
- Vacation time (summer break, holidays)
- Curriculum
- Subject specific (compartmentalized vs. wholistic)
- Standardized testing

Research Questions

- Why and how have schools and school-based programmes incorporating place-based education located in Christchurch, New Zealand, and Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada,
 - evolved in their development (historical analysis), and
 - implemented the tenets of place-based education and critical pedagogy of place in their work with students?
- 2. To what extent do the teacher participants in both countries provide resistance, at their respective local community levels, to the neocolonizing processes of their respective schooling systems?
- 3. What challenges do the teacher participants in both countries face when attempting to provide resistance at their local community levels to the neocolonizing processes of their respective systems?

Tenets of PBE

- 1. Using the local community and environment (Education outside the classroom)
- 2. Hands on, real world learning experiences (Experiential education/learning)
- 3. Serving as active, contributing citizens (Citizenship)
- 4. Appreciation for the natural world (Environmental education/learning)
- 5. Cultural studies (Multicultural/Intercultural)
- 6. Nature investigations (Outdoor education)
- 7. Real world problem solving (Inquiry based learning)
- 8. Immersion into community life (Community based learning)
- 9. Multidisciplinary
- 10. Connects place with self and community. Surrounding phenomenon are the foundation for curriculum development (Place-based)
- 11. Students becoming the creators of knowledge rather than only consumers of knowledge. Student's questions and concerns play central roles in determining what is studied (Student centered)
- 12. Teachers act primarily as co-learners and "brokers" of community resources and learning possibilities (Teacher as facilitator)
- 13. Walls between the community and school buildings are crossed frequently or broken through (Education outside the classroom)

Using the work of Woodhouse and Knapp (2000), Smith (2002), Sobel (2004)

Indigenous PBE

 From the literature PBE aligns very well with Indigenous epistemology, ontology, ways of thinking and being (Alaska Native Knowledge Network, Atleo, Barnhardt, Cajete, Deloria Jr., and Penetito)

Data Collection

- •The data was collected through an initial online questionnaire using Qualtrics software, an in-person interview with research participants as well as observations of the teachers' teaching spaces. My research participants were all teachers:
 - 6 questionnaires/interviews in Saskatoon and 5 in Christchurch

Christchurch Earthquakes (2010, 2011)

- Many teachers/students were displaced during this time including two of my research participants
- •All teachers/students were effected by the earthquakes in one way or another
- Schools amalgamated and used shared spaces
- •Change in **space/time**
- Change in Foundation/Philosophy of learning

Data Analysis

Domains of Interest

- Time (timetabling, teacher with students all day, no bells)
- Space/Place (classroom, community, natural/built environments)
- Curriculum (thematic approach, student centered)
- Assessment/Evaluation (portfolios, self assessment, interviews, peer assessment, no letter/number grades)
- Critical pedagogy of place

Time - "So time is fluid. Ya, time is totally fluid"

- Alternative timetabling
 - Teachers with students all day
 - No set school day from 9am 3pm
 - Use of weekends and evenings
- Two of the teachers in strict timetabled schools talked about wanting more time with students (two classes combined/half day)
- No Bells "Time, well we don't have all these interruptions."
- Majority of classes spent 50% of time outside of the classroom and engaged with community resources (people, buildings, transport, etc.)

"Time to us is whatever makes us successful so we really don't have time for assignments. It's did we get to our destination. So we don't go by any subject period of 30 minutes or 50 minutes we let our kids define the time and what they think they need to be successful in a certain project."

Space

•Use of classroom space





"Our classroom begins at the exit sign found at the end of our school's hallway"

Space/Place

- School
 - Classroom
 - School grounds
- Local Community
 - Local public libraries
 - Community centres
 - Green spaces
- Wider Communities
 - Surrounding towns/cities/natural areas

"place gives context and history especially with the narratives behind those places and what has happened in the past and what is now happening. You are part of it now, in terms of the students, what are we going to do about it in cases of social justice and injustice? You can use place very powerfully that way"

Curriculum

- Thematically integrated subjects
- Student centred
- Place-based learning opportunities
 - Project-based
 - Experiential
 - Inquiry-based

Assessment/Evaluation

- Peer assessment/evaluation
- Portfolios
- Interviews
- No letter/number grades

Critical Pedagogy of Place

- Decolonization and Reinhabitation (David Greenwood)
- Braiding histories project
 - Students constructed a critical analysis of a Métis historical site while on a landbased journey
- Third space/Ecological Métissage/Two-eyed seeing
 - Mi'kmaq Elder Albert Marshall
- He Kākano programme (improve the emotional, social, cultural and academic outcomes of Māori children in main stream schools) and Ka Hikitia strategy (Māori students are enjoying and achieving education success as Māori)
 - "What works for Māori works for everyone. But what works for everyone does not necessarily work best for Māori"
 - Promotes the use of Māori tikanga (culture, values, customs and language) in the classrooms/schools
 - All three of the schools in Christchurch were part of the voluntary programmes
 - Schools recognized by ERO (Education Review Office) to be making a positive change for Māori learners

Key Findings

- Courage of teachers
- Awareness/importance of transforming space into place
- The beginnings of Critical Pedagogy of Place
- The process of decolonization is resistance/disruption and enables acts of reinhabitation
- Reinhabitation can lead to a re-colonization and cultural appropriation if not reflected upon and decolonized again
- The importance of post-graduate learning

Challenges for teachers

- •Little support by Administrators and colleagues but they did have 'key' strong advocates
- •Need to "measure and prove" the programme to everyone all of the time (ERO/Trustees/Principals/Staff)
- Time not enough hours in the day
- •Funding

Thank you

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