DECOLONIZING EDUCATION FOR INCLUSIVITY: IMPLICATIONS FOR LITERACY EDUCATION

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I. INTRODUCTION

- Recognitions & Thanks: Our Elders/Ancestors for journeying with us, & the Land.

- Sharing a Story - The 'Street Activist'.

- I come to this discussion as a sociologist located in both the <u>questioning</u> and the <u>visionary</u> traditions of the discipline.

- The paradox of being ranked 'the top most educated nation in the world' and yet Black, Indigenous & racialized communities still struggle for educational justice and equity!

- When the teacher is ready the student always appears!

- The pursuit of a new global educational futurity:

- To co-produce knowledge with our varied communities.

- To reimagine "new geographies of knowledge" from our complex, multiple and intersecting ontologies & epistemologies.

- To create spiritually-centred learning spaces for a sustained healing ["sacred learning landscape" – Shirley, 2012; p. 77; and 'Suahunu, the Trialectic Space' - Dei, 2012]?

II. WORDS OF CAUTION

- "It is not important that everyone agrees with Fanon. It is more important that his work gives us a pedagogical foundation to interrogate, to decolonize, to reconstruct ourselves, our beliefs, our supposed normalcies." (Margaret Brimpong, 2012).

- "Any community is as good as we collectively work to make it" (Dei, 1996).

- To work with a productive theory of anger [given the sensation and complacency of 'movement'].

III. LONG STANDING ISSUES OF SCHOOLING AND EDUCATION

a) Systemic Challenges and the particular impacts on Indigenous, racialized, & other marginalized students' success (e.g., absence of representation of diverse bodies & knowledges; on-going negations & absences in the 'deep curriculum' - Dei, et als., 1997).

b) Youth Disengagement and "Push Out" - the process of disengaging from school; bodies physically present but absent in mind & soul).

c) The Salience [and Silence] of Race & Indigeneity (e.g., systemic racism, anti-Blackness, anti-Indigeneity; Islamophobia; and on-going legacies & impacts of [settler] colonialism).

d) Discursive Manipulations/Intellectual Gymnastics (schools taking credit for success; blame/pathologize families & communities for 'problems').

e) Dominant Conceptions of Success & Cultural Deficit Models of Schooling.

f)   Neo-liberalism and the Educational Agenda.

(e.g., a deliberate deployment of the language of neoliberal education reform, "standards", "accountability", "excellence", "competencies", "quality", "human capital", etc.).

g) Schooling in the context of Global Capitalist Modernity (disciplining of bodies/knowledges; education that serves individualized, private, corporate market interests).

h) How the dialectic of 'coloniality' and 'modernity' have worked to ensure an epistemic hegemony of Western science knowledge (see also Kerr, 2013) ; absence of "multicentricity" (Dei, 1996), "multi-epistemes" (Cajete, 1980).

i)   A Seductive Liberal Notion of Inclusion.

[depoliticization of difference; "standardization recipes" – Lewin (2008); hooks' (1992, pp. 22-23) "sameness as provocation that terrorizes"].

IV. ASKING NEW QUESTIONS

- How do we frame an inclusive anti-colonial global future and what is the nature of the work required to collectively arrive at that future?

- What sort of education should be taking place in schools today; & what are we going to do with our education as learners?

- How do we 're-fashion' our roles (students, learners, educators, & community workers) to create more relevant understandings of what it means to be 'human'?

- How do we equip ourselves using multiple lenses of critical inquiry?

- No one tells the full/complete story, so how do we tell multiple stories to get the whole story out?

- How do we bring a 'humility of knowing' to our work?

V. DISCURSIVE POSITIONS

a) Our de/anti-colonial intellectuality and practice must consider the body of the knowledge producer, place, desires, politics and contexts with[in] which knowledge is produced.

b) Decolonization cannot happen solely through Western [science] scholarship (see also Kerr, 2013).

c) Taking up literacy education through a critical perspective of social justice, Indigeneity, and decolonial praxis, as key to achieving academic & social success for <u>all</u> learners (see also Gorski & Swalwell, 2015; Semali, 1999).

VI. GLOBALIZATION AND EDUCATION LINK

A) CRITIQUES [GLOBAL PUBLICS]

i) An emerging "transnationally-organized global public" very critical of the ways globalization has intensified global socio-economic inequities (e.g., rising poverty & the differential & asymmetrical benefits of globalization to Global North and Global South.

ii) Pursuing the "rights of global capital" - hegemony of free markets, deregulation, competition, individualism, privatization, and a restrictive definition of education to serve corporate market interests.

B) SPECIFIC IMPACTS & THE SCHOOLING AND EDUCATION IMPLICATIONS

i)   Education for Global Diversity

(e.g., social difference & what it means for educational delivery – teaching, learning and administration of education; the cultural politics of schooling, etc.).

ii   Navigating Culture in a New Place

(e.g., bifurcated regimes of citizenship – 'citizens with rights' & 'subjects to be governed'; struggles for inclusive citizenship; dictates of "capitalist citizenship").

iii) Integration of New Migrants

(i.e., dealing with alienation, devalued identity and social exclusion/racialized exclusions).

iv) Refugees Crisis

(e.g., challenges of racialized and gendered poverty, homelessness, and displacement as non-status refugees, post-traumatic stress [coming from war zones], and how discrimination in the housing and the social service sector affects peoples' sense of belonging).

v) Global Extremism, State-Sanctioned Violence & the Fragile State of the World.

Extremism as a current global concern (links to terrorism of all forms - religious extremism, and racial bigotry).

Question: How can education help counter forms of extremism which present a danger to societies globally?

 (e.g., preventing youth from joining extremist groups; enabling youth to critically analyze extremism and its consequences – Trentham, 2008; Davies 2013; helping address youth nihilism, sense of despair, loss sense of hope & living a dead-end existence).

C) POSSIBILITIES: REFRAMING GLOBAL [CITIZENSHIP] EDUCATION [GCE)

i) Broadening what GCE stands for - beyond global interdependence; commitment to fundamental freedoms and rights; an acknowledgement of cultural diversity, tolerance of intercultural differences; & the efficacy and power of individual action (see Mundy & Manion, 2008; Wright, 2011, p.7).

ii) New Questions: How does GCE deal concretely with power, privilege, and our relative complicities in sustaining colonial and oppressive education & ensuing global structural inequities?

iii) Are there redemptive qualities of GCE that can be pursued? What critical frameworks and practices are needed to disrupt asymmetrical power relations (Andreotti & de Souza, 2008; Dei 2008; Charania, 2010)?

iv)   The perception of education today as a core avenue for "global redistributive justice" (Mundy, 2008).

(e.g., how conventional discourses of "democracy" "good governance" and 'human rights" are linked with education, particularly, in the Global South & mired in the primacy of markets/global capital).

VII. FRAMINGS OF LITERACY EDUCATION

- Moving literacy education from knowing how to read and write to engaging learning as a process of sharing, reciprocity, respect, collaboration, healing, and creating sustainable relationships.

- Perceiving literacy NOT as an end by itself; but as a process and a movement of transitioning in life for different learners (see Edwards, McMillon & Turner, 2015).

- Equity literacy as about teaching social justice, power, resistance, social responsibility, accountability, transparency & ethics (see also Taylor, Yeboah, and Ringlaben, 2016).

- The most effective equity literacy approach is integrative, interdisciplinary, and holistic; linking 'academics' to the 'practical' (see also Flood, Heath, & Lapp, 2015; Price-Dennis, Holmes & Smith, 2015).

- Racial equity literacy as a strategic instruction about saliency of Indigeneity, race, Blackness, & the interstices of difference – gender, disability, class, sexuality, etc. (see also Epstein & Gist, 2015; Collins & Ferri, 2016).

- Indigenous literacy that promotes Indigenous/cultural knowledges and philosophies of education as both political and intellectual acts (Semali, 1999).

- Situating Inclusivity & Decolonization as key aspects of literacy education (e.g., idea of "beginning anew", etc.).

VIII. TOWARDS DECOLONIZED LITERACY EDUCATION

a) <u>Understanding Decolonization</u>

- Many paths to decolonization & decolonization as always a violent phenomenon (Fanon, 1967); not an arrival, but a historical on-going process which "engages with imperialism and colonialism at multiple levels" (Smith, 2012; p. 21).

- Decolonization is not about mainstreaming practice (i.e., decolonization project cannot seek for legitimation and validation from the dominant).

- Decolonization is about developing a critical consciousness of oneself as a learner, place, history, identity, culture & memory; and "abandoning all reflexes of subordination" (Diop, 1974).

b) **Decolonization and the Land**

- Decolonization is primarily anchored in the question of the Land (concrete & metaphorical).

- Caution against the slippage into a hegemonic thinking that only non (authenticized) - Indigenous bodies need to decolonize (i.e., a pitfall of only conceptualizing decolonization in ways that provides no space to address either "autodestruction" or the intersectionalities of struggles - Doyle-Wood, 2016).

- Decolonization involves the psyche, cultural memories & resisting internalized colonial relations of thought and power, including acknowledging diverse experiences of peoples who conceptualize Land and space differently for transnational anti-colonial praxis.

- Colonialism and settler colonialism [while requiring analytical distinctions] are both cut from the same cloth: racism, slavery & capitalism (see Smith, 2006).

- Settlerhood is produced through the twin processes of Indigenous genocide and African enslavement.

- Decolonization requires the settler/occupier 'ceases to exist'; and acknowledging true meaning of "reconciliation" as more than "Gee, we are sorry!).

c) **<u>Decolonization and Transgressive Pedagogies</u>**

- Decolonization is a political and intellectual act; begins by asking new questions.

- There is a particular place of Indigenous epistemologies in the academy to threaten, challenge, replace and re-imagine alternatives to colonial thinking and practices.

- The complex problems and challenges facing the world today defy universalist solutions, but can be remedied by multi-centric ways of knowing/doing/being.

- Teaching students to understand their Euro-ancestry privilege & the power of hegemonies [whether ontological, epistemological & axiological].

IX. IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING DIVERSITY, DIFFERENCE AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

Five (5) Core Philosophical Principles/Standpoints:

a) **Politics of Identity and Knowledge**

- Who we are, how we come to know, understand and act within our worlds – are all linked.

- Acknowledging the relative saliencies of our different identities.

- Recognizing the severity of issues for certain bodies and communities.

b) Cultivating "Diverse Communities"

- How we create communities – acknowledging difference, knowledge, resource & power sharing.

- Communities as sites & places of learning and healing, respect, sharing and reciprocity; as well as differences & sameness; [e.g., shared experiences are never singular].

- As communities emerge as part of transnational mobility we are confronted with broader questions/tensions/challenges, as well as possibilities (e.g., migration, family reunification, community development, etc.).

c)   Notion of "Difference"

- The problem of colonial differencing.

- The dangers of depoliticizing of difference (i.e., evading power).

- Importance of moving beyond the mere acknowledgment of difference to responding concretely to difference.

- Interstices of social difference (race, gender, class, sexuality, disability, language, etc.) serve to complicate human subjectivities and identities & further subvert naturalized/totalizing discourses.

- The power of sub-altern and sub-intern difference - the authentication [not relativism] of voice and experience.

d) Discourse of Radical Inclusion

- Inclusion is about beginning anew; not simply adding to what already exists!

- Radical inclusion works with multiple models of social justice (e.g., 'treating everybody the same'; targeting differentiated responses to groups; recognizing there is no universal learner, etc.).

e) Politics and 'Acts of Refusal' [Simpson 2007, 2014].

- Beyond 'accommodations' of the different 'Others' to anti-colonial configurations of power sharing and the everyday rewards of resistance.

- Extending "liberal pluralism" and "structural pluralism" to a new "politics of redistribution" [Nancy Fraser, 2003] of social goods and valued resources of society; and also, to challenge our colonial investments [see also Coulthard, 2007].

X. INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIES FOR ACHIEVING EDUCATIONAL INCLUSION

1) INSTITUTIONAL POLICY

a) Developing institutional policy to achieve inclusivity; diversification of educational curriculum with clear guidelines, well-defined equity standards, timelines, expectations, measures of accountability.

b) Critical approaches to educational inclusivity framed within anti-racist, anti-Black racism, Indigenous & anti-Islamophobic and xenophobic perspectives.

c) Clear communication of such policy and its implications.

d) Mandates for Faculties of Education (e.g., mandatory courses for faculty & student-teachers on Black/African/Indigenous Education; Anti-Black and Anti-Racism, & Equity Studies before certification; selection of teacher candidates for training to proportionally reflect student population demographics).

2) PUTTING IN PLACE SPECIFIC EQUITY INITIATIVES

a) Developing academic programming initiatives that are not strictly subjected to economic arguments and rationalizations of "demand/supply".

b) Integrating Indigenous literatures and minority scholarship into school curricula.

c) Pursuing annual/periodic curriculum reviews.

d) Developing proactive strategies of staff/faculty recruitment, and retention, as well as promotion into top-level administrative positions.

e) Counter-visioning schooling (e.g., Africentric & Indigenous schools that work with Indigenous philosophies of education - community, social responsibility, reciprocity, sharing, connectedness, relationality, language and culture, etc.).

f) Creating healthy, spiritually-centred learning spaces (e.g., having community centres work from within schools; community and youth workers running programs inside schools; increase the presence of Elders, families in schools through community programming & events; having each school assigned to a community centre in order to build relationships).

g) Replacing police presence in schools with caring adults/Elders (e.g., to facilitate teaching [not enforcing] discipline; nurturing and mentorship rather than criminalizing learners).

h) Initiatives to transition from middle school to academic streams in secondary school; transitions from secondary school to meaningful postsecondary education for gainful employment).

3)   <u>PEDAGOGY AND METHODOLOGIES</u>

a) Diversifying the curriculum through infusion of multiple teaching methodologies, Indigenous pedagogies and equity courses.

b) The application of Indigenous initiatives to support critical understandings Indigenous, colonial settlerhood and national histories, etc.

c) A consideration of more dialogical curriculum co-creation involving educators, students, parents & local communities.

4)   EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENTS

a)   Dealing with the still rigid Eurocentric evaluation methods (e.g., to consider orality as equal medium to written text - giving students opportunity to submit assignments orally).

b)   Not limiting "text" to only academic projects, but also, including community-based events as sites of learning.

c)   Encouraging students to present non-traditional papers (arts based, multimedia) as other opportunities to be creative and think 'outside the box', - a recognition and honour of multiple ways of knowing and being.

XI.   CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Dangers of reading counter & oppositional discourses as necessarily 'hegemonic'. They are also about a search for new futures, an idea that 'something else/different is possible".

There is the urgency of nurturing a "political-epistemic community" working for new educational futures.

THANK YOU

ASANTE SANA