

Teachers have so many responsibilities to themselves, each other, their students, and society. In addition to learning the content around which courses are designed, students must learn important lifelong processes and skills that include critical thinking, problem solving, sense making, communication, making connections and multiple representations, organization, elaboration, and more (NCTM, 2000; Ormrod, 2009). Yet even further, young adolescents must develop a sense of self as they grow up and move into the real world, and young children must be given the image that humans are inherently ‘good’ (Banks, 1986). Teachers have a responsibility to guide their students in a positive direction in all three aspects.

Skiba (2001) reports that in some cultures, teachers play a major role in the raising of children. While this is not as prevalent in America, there are many responsibilities that teachers hold when guiding students. Teachers spend time with their students every day and play a major role model—whether intentional or not—in students’ lives. They pick up a lot from their teachers. Especially in the primary grades, teachers need to instill mannerisms and etiquette that is ‘acceptable’ in society, class, and culture. Children need to be aware of society’s expectations of them, and as they develop and grow, can decide what to do with these expectations. Another point to be made is that the mannerisms and etiquette of non-American children’s background culture also play a major role in their transition to American culture. Teachers need to be aware of, *and knowledgeable of*, their students’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds, as well as cultural idioms, body language, facial expressions, etc., in order to be effective teachers and maximize the learning process.

Society can be represented in two ways. On one hand, society is nothing more than a group of people that live, work, play, teach, govern, and interact with each other. Matters that

relate to this society are deemed “social” in my terminology. On the other hand, society is a self-sustaining entity that lives, grows, adapts to its environment, and *reproduces*. Society is more than the people of which it is made! Matters related to this society I call “societal,” and these are the matters that have an effect on society as a whole.

The reproduction of society is attributed by social knowledge and the transmission thereof, stereotypes, and common understandings that propagate as self-fulfilling prophecies (Apple, 1980). Members of society will either conform with or reject these ideologies. Members who choose to conform will fit well into stereotypes, pass on knowledge and continue its form of transmission, and agree with and not question common understandings while applying it in everyday life. In this case, society “reproduces” itself because the ideologies are self-sustaining and self-maintaining by societies’ conforming members. Members of society who choose to rebel do not fit easily into stereotypes, will question common knowledge and understanding, perhaps discover or add more knowledge to the so-called ‘pool,’ and promote the change and reform of society, progressing it forward. In this case, the reproduction of society is not as apparent. Anyon (1981) calls this knowledge “non-reproductive knowledge,” and society is seen as having a more adaptive and changing nature.

Concerning students, it is important for teachers to guide them in a direction of the students’ choices. In a typical classroom one can likely easily identify the “conforming” and the “rebellious” students, and the interaction between these two groups of children creates a dynamic and fertile atmosphere, one that is seen as effective from a pedagogical point of view. Societal implications are never made explicit, however it is a responsibility of teachers to explicitly

identify these implications, either within self or within culture, and present them in a subtle and implicit manner to their students, so as not to distract from learning of content and process.

Apple and Weis (1986) agree that education and politics are not orthogonal. They cannot be separated. While in the near sight, one would ideally separate education from politics, focusing on the students, their learning, the content of the class, lesson plan, etc., however education in the far sight has social and political undertones. The main idea brought to the table here is that societal knowledge can either be designated as “legitimate” for production (Anyon’s (1981) “reproductive knowledge”), or as “inappropriate” (Anyon’s “non-reproductive knowledge”). The reproductive knowledge is passed on and reproduced throughout society and across a culture by its members, and the non-reproductive knowledge is either dismissed or it facilitates change and reform. Anyon (1981) discusses the different aspects of reproductive and non-reproductive knowledge within different socioeconomic classes of students. Teachers should not target the socioeconomic status of their classrooms nor provide the corresponding types of knowledge, but make the differences of social class invisible.

Apple and Weis (1986) emphasize that students may often *reject* the dominant knowledge due to their position in a socioeconomic class. Knowledge that is seen as “legitimate” may not be perceived by a student to belong to his or her class, therefore the student will unconsciously form a barrier between what he or she needs to know and what is being taught in the classroom. This gap is manifested as the idea that the student ‘doesn’t care’ or is unmotivated. Teachers can counter this hinderance by providing real-world examples and applications related to content, especially in a math classroom, and developing closer personal relationships with their students. While this may help in the short run, we need to understand that the occurrence of students

rejecting dominant knowledge is prevalent in all cultures and cannot be easily avoided. There will always be separation among social classes and the best thing teachers can do is to cater to their individual students' cognitive, social, and developmental needs while making efforts to eliminate the conception of differences among class. When students can view themselves as equal to one another, they will not develop the idea that knowledge can be either "legitimate" or "inappropriate."

This brings us to Giroux's (1985) definition and opinion of "discourse" and how it can be used to change society. There are differences present within society and are 'engrained' in us from an early age, due to the reproductive nature of society. Teachers should be activists and change society from the ground up, to eliminate the conceptions of differences. That way, children will not be tempted to classify themselves or conform to a particular social class. This is where discourse comes in. Giroux uses the term "discourse" in a manner that would lead the reader to understand it as the discussion of education in society and action for implementing plans to change it. Discourse allows educators to realize differences among cultures and across time, and not only 'how bad things are' but 'how good things could be.' It helps teachers become aware of the aforementioned differences and provide ideas of how to better the lives of their students and avoid a reproductive society. By aiming for a non-reproductive society, children will not be 'engrained' with conceptions of differences among classes and will therefore not be tempted to conform to a particular class. When they grow up and have influence over their own children, these ideologies will hold.

As an example, children should be exposed to a much richer and more diverse curriculum at a young age so they can make decisions about what track to take earlier on. As they grow

older, they should be able to choose a more targeted track, which satisfies their cognitive and academic interests. Rather than being limited to only the same four core subjects for 13 years, children should be exposed to all the fields that are out there and develop a more informed interest from a younger age. With more options, children will not be expected to take a job in a career that 'fits with their class' but rather will develop ambitions and dreams that will take them anywhere they want to go.

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