

**Anam Khurram Javed**

**SUM20-005**

**Diversity in Art Education**

**Final Essay**

**18<sup>th</sup> July 2020**

**The contents of this paper entail how I perceive diversity, keeping in view the theories and insights discussed in class and I you might be, as a diversity and social justice-minded educator, and what sort of art or design classroom I want to create based on the content of the course *Diversity in Art Education*.**

One always perceives that education has to do with teaching a group of students a certain skillset or a curriculum and at most, entails committing completely, to all the tasks involved in the job. However, one starts to realize the true gravity of one's job as one assumes the role.

Firstly, it is important to question if one is embracing the role of a teacher, facilitator or educator. It is also essential to know the difference between the applied connotations to stress the importance of assigned roles as they can directly affect relationships within the classroom. Hence, how the facilitator and students perceive and practice diversity in a classroom, can

impact the learning of skills, flourishing of ideas, mental health as well as general well-being. As a facilitator, I have felt that education becomes a hindrance or a burden when one is unable to solve a problem or suffers from a blockage in their ideas. Hence, I would design my classroom around the concept of Bringing ideas to life while weaving the hidden curriculum with Empathy as the underlying concept.

In order to implement this, I would assume the role of a Facilitator in my classroom so that I can become a part of the learning process without affecting the students' learning in any way. Facilitating as an approach to teaching, develops an independent attitude to the application of the skill based learnings taught in the class. Moreover, by teaching without questioning the practices through which we have been educated, we only teach students to approach problem solving from our personal or learned points of view.<sup>1</sup>

As facilitators we are looked upon to teach certain skills and the position enables us to be looked up to as individuals as well. Our attitudes, virtues, actions, behaviors and mannerisms have intangible impacts on the students. This is why I truly believe it is essential for any educator to know their teaching philosophy so that they can categorize the curriculum of their classroom based on their value systems and enduring ideas so the learnings of the classroom have magnitude beyond the classroom, as the students take their respective roles as a part of the society. My Teaching Philosophy revolves around Empathy as the core principal, encouraging

---

<sup>1</sup> Efland, A. (1995). The Spiral and The Lattice: Changes in Cognitive Learning Theory with Implications for Art Education. *Studies in Art Education*, 36(3), 134-153. doi:10.2307/1320905

diversity of thought, promoting problem solving as well as imparting moral and ethical values of justice, integrity, honesty, resilience and perseverance. These enduring values can directly impact one's perception of diversity.<sup>2</sup>

The Facilitator should also refer to the Student as a *Learner*. The connotation attached to the word *student* implies that one has to attend the class to study and learn without inquiring and analyzing. The word *Learner* can change this perception so the student can now start viewing themselves as a person who engages with the content provided, but learns to adapt to the provided knowledge through their lens and thus bring individual unique ideas to the classroom.<sup>3</sup>

In a classroom, it is important to promote *Diversity of Thought* as it encourages the idea of Equity. Equity is not treating the Learners with equality, but rather treating them according to their respective situations and needs.<sup>4</sup> If the concept of Empathy is inculcated in class, it can lead learners farther away from negativities like bullying, marginalization, racism and discrimination. It is the idea that all individuals are different with unique ideas, sensibilities, physical features and characteristics.<sup>5</sup> Through the findings of Jane Elliot's *blue eyes/ brown eyes experiment*, we see that discrimination can be learned or unlearned. If one was to unlearn,

---

<sup>2</sup> Swanger, D. (1993). The Arts, Empathy, and Aristotle. *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 27(1), 41-49. doi:10.2307/3333340

<sup>3</sup> Swanger, D. (1993). The Arts, Empathy, and Aristotle. *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 27(1), 41-49. doi:10.2307/3333340

<sup>4</sup> Cook, K., & Hegtvedt, K. (1983). Distributive Justice, Equity, and Equality. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 9, 217-241. Retrieved July 17, 2020, from [www.jstor.org/stable/2946064](http://www.jstor.org/stable/2946064)

<sup>5</sup> Cook, K., & Hegtvedt, K. (1983). Distributive Justice, Equity, and Equality. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 9, 217-241. Retrieved July 17, 2020, from [www.jstor.org/stable/2946064](http://www.jstor.org/stable/2946064)

question cultural teachings and empathize with an unprejudiced state of mind, this would diminish personal judgments and create a supportive environment with the focus to facilitate and benefit the learner.<sup>6</sup>

The concept of empathy should further echo with the use of the facilitator's language.<sup>7</sup> For instance when we use assumptions in our language, without immediately realizing, we might create discriminatory groups within the classroom. This is why labelling a learner lazy, better than the other or expressing our personal opinions about their personality, can cause divisions within the classroom and give way to competition instead of encouraging the learners to pursue their education with teamwork and enthusiasm.<sup>8</sup> Such practices in the class room can have multilayer effects and only allow the learners to grasp the emotion we are conveying instead of instilling the ability within the learners to develop their own analysis. This is why practicing Objectivity in the classroom can in fact aid the facilitator in instilling inquisitiveness in learners.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Iowa Schoolteacher Demonstrates Racism as Learned Behavior. (1995). *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, (8), 36-36. doi:10.2307/2963038

<sup>7</sup> Leyshon, C. (2012, 09, 16). *THIS WEEK IN FICTION: MOHSIN HAMID* . Retrieved from The New Yorker : <https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/this-week-in-fiction-mohsin-hamid>

<sup>8</sup> Iowa Schoolteacher Demonstrates Racism as Learned Behavior. (1995). *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, (8), 36-36. doi:10.2307/2963038

<sup>9</sup> Swanger, D. (1993). The Arts, Empathy, and Aristotle. *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 27(1), 41-49. doi:10.2307/3333340

It is also essential for the space of the classroom to be associated with comfort and freedom of thought in order to facilitate the flourishing of ideas as well as critical consciousness.<sup>10</sup> If one is unable to question the norms of the society or is unable to project their idea a certain way because of the requirement of an assignment or an external opinion, then it is likely that the learner may not be able to perform according to their full potential and develop deep, critical responses.<sup>11</sup> Such setbacks can deter the process of developing a critical consciousness which is not only important for learners as individuals but also as artists who constantly explore their identities and through that lens shape and reshape their view points of the world around them.<sup>12</sup> These individual/unique viewpoints facilitate problem solving around the globe. Hence, I truly believe that practicing equity can further facilitate Problem solving as inculcating it in a classroom can build confidence in individuals so that they can approach the world and their respective futures with practicality and sensitivity.

Jordan Bernt Peterson, renowned Canadian Clinical Psychologist further explains that the idea of simply including different races or ethnicities in a group is not Genuine Diversity, as every individual has different talents, characteristics and levels of intelligence. This is why we must acknowledge and gather the appropriate talents that are necessary to produce intended results.

---

<sup>10</sup> Lal, S. (1984). Rabindranāth Tagore's Ideals of Aesthetic Education. *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 18(2), 31-39. doi:10.2307/3332497

<sup>11</sup> Tarr, P. (2001). Aesthetic Codes in Early Childhood Classrooms: What Art Educators Can Learn from Reggio Emilia. *Art Education*, 54(3), 33-39. doi:10.2307/3193922

<sup>12</sup> Lal, S. (1984). Rabindranāth Tagore's Ideals of Aesthetic Education. *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 18(2), 31-39. doi:10.2307/3332497

And once an aim is set on a target with implementation of the right skillset, educators can enable their students toward passion and productivity.<sup>13</sup>

For the framework of my Art and Design classroom implementing these values, ideas from Rabindranath Tagore's Philosophy and Sir Ken Robinson's lectures have inspired me. Tagore was one of the earliest and most prominent educators to think of Global Village as an idea for his educational system. He stressed that the curriculum should evolve organically around nature. His classrooms were in open air and he rejected the conventional and mechanical processes of learning. Tagore also believed that apart from information and knowledge, it is important to develop a relationship with nature, plants, creativity and to provide an open environment for education.<sup>14</sup>

On the other hand, Sir Ken Robinson of Warwick University elaborates on how the current education systems diminish creativity rather than stimulating it.<sup>15</sup> As the education systems do not focus on Arts as importantly as subjects like Mathematics, sciences and languages, millions of students who are invested in Arts face alienation and are unable to take their part in the economies as individuals. His point of view makes it evident that creativity should not be seen as an interruption or a distraction to academic education. Expressions of creativity are based on

---

<sup>13</sup> Peterson, J. B. (Speaker). (November 2017). *Identity politics and the Marxist lie of white privilege*.

<sup>14</sup> Lal, S. (1984). Rabindranāth Tagore's Ideals of Aesthetic Education. *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 18(2), 31-39. doi:10.2307/3332497

<sup>15</sup> Language Arts staff, & Robinson, K. (2014). Conversation Currents: Developing Individual Talent and Abilities: An Interview with Sir Ken Robinson. *Language Arts*, 92(2), 157-162. Retrieved July 16, 2020, from [www.jstor.org/stable/24575633](http://www.jstor.org/stable/24575633)

different aptitudes, talents and inspirations which means that if these students feel insignificant in their careers, they will be unable to benefit the economy of the country.<sup>16</sup>

Inspired by Tagore's theories, nature based activities can be incorporated or working in outdoor spaces can be encouraged so the learners can pay attention to all that their senses are absorbing, and thus stay aware of the visual and non-visual cues around them so that they may inspire them or even open their eyes to how much of the environment they continuously absorb.<sup>17</sup>

Incorporating the use of unconventional materials and found objects will also help learners, so that they may be able to reimagine and question the past methodologies. These practices can encourage learners to develop their own critical responses, reflections and self-reflections.<sup>18</sup>

Although I do feel it is a necessity to implement these values but as we empathize with the learners, we must also understand that real empathy is not compliance in the moment, but to instill values that would reap long-term benefits. Moreover, as the classroom is built around the purpose of bringing ideas to life, it is integral to make sure that empathy is also not mistaken for sympathy as in the long-term classroom dynamics, this can deter the learning and interfere with the learners' ability to ideate independently.<sup>19</sup> It can also cause the learner to feel dependent on the help of the facilitator for various tasks and activities. Hence, in a classroom

---

<sup>16</sup> Robinson, K. (Speaker). (2006). *TED Talk: Do Schools Kill Creativity?*.  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/sir\\_ken\\_robinson\\_do\\_schools\\_kill\\_creativity?language=en#t-284815](https://www.ted.com/talks/sir_ken_robinson_do_schools_kill_creativity?language=en#t-284815)

<sup>17</sup> Horowitz, A. (2013). *On Looking: Eleven Walks with Expert Eyes*. New York: Scribner.

<sup>18</sup> Lal, S. (1984). Rabindranāth Tagore's Ideals of Aesthetic Education. *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 18(2), 31-39. doi:10.2307/3332497

<sup>19</sup> Wender, E. (2014). The Practice of Empathy. *The English Journal*, 103(6), 33-37. Retrieved July 16, 2020, from [www.jstor.org/stable/24484377](http://www.jstor.org/stable/24484377)

where flourishing of ideas and their application is encouraged, it is important for the facilitator's presence to be slightly detached from the learners.<sup>20</sup>

As for implementing learning theories, the *Behaviourism* approach is optimal in teaching technical skills for this environment. This refers to learning through passive means such as lecturing and practicing. Facilitators must also encourage mind mapping through *Cognivitism*, as this can ensure that learners are able to make visual connections to the concepts being taught in class and then apply them after having understood them. *Conructivism* can also be employed to further the experiential learnings as well as collaborative work and *Connectivism* in the overall self-directed demeanor of the facilitator so that learners can also develop a self-directed approach to their work and be able to make connections through all the courses.<sup>21</sup>

As an instructor/educator, one also has to ensure that biases, prejudices and personal preferences are not affecting the judgment of the Facilitator as that can in turn affect the learning of the entire classroom. In order to ensure the learners emerge as competent individuals who can survive the grind of the real world, necessary skills must be honed and certain academic criteria must be fulfilled so that one is not only capable of performing a task or generating ideas, but they can in fact, connect their thought process to an independently

---

<sup>20</sup> Efland, A. (1995). The Spiral and The Lattice: Changes in Cognitive Learning Theory with Implications for Art Education. *Studies in Art Education*, 36(3), 134-153. doi:10.2307/1320905

<sup>21</sup> Tarr, P. (2001). Aesthetic Codes in Early Childhood Classrooms: What Art Educators Can Learn from Reggio Emilia. *Art Education*, 54(3), 33-39. doi:10.2307/3193922



formulated solution and execute their ideas in physical form.<sup>22</sup> This is why it is also important to realize that rigor leads one to understand that learning skills require patience and perseverance. If one adapts to these values as an attitude to face hardship, then we can create a classroom of opinionated individuals who are positive in their attitudes and have acquired the ability to systematically bring ideas to life.

The position of the Facilitator can be used to encourage dissemination of existing knowledge whilst incorporating story telling as a medium of communication. For instance using the relevant knowledge in order to teach the skill based portion of the curriculum while using stories, personal accounts, experiences and epiphanies to encourage thought provoking ideas.<sup>23</sup> Since the earliest of times, humans have told stories to learn from one another, pass doctrines and even in expansion of religions.<sup>24</sup> Hence, in order to encourage discourse, equity, diversity of thought and empathy within the classroom, it is important for a an educator to embrace the role of a facilitator while not disturbing the engaging thought processes, critical questions, unconventional approaches, innovative ideas and epiphanies that occur within the classroom.

In the documentary *How Art made the World*, Nigel Spivey, a professor at the University of Cambridge explains how storytelling can be used to map selective histories and even to

---

<sup>22</sup> Dewey, J. (2010). The Need for a Philosophy of Education (1934). *Schools: Studies in Education*, 7(2), 244-245. doi:10.1086/656072

<sup>23</sup> Wender, E. (2014). The Practice of Empathy. *The English Journal*, 103(6), 33-37. Retrieved July 16, 2020, from [www.jstor.org/stable/24484377](http://www.jstor.org/stable/24484377)

<sup>24</sup> Spivey, N. (Director). (2006). *How Art Made The World: Once Upon A Time* [Motion Picture].

manipulate an audience.<sup>25</sup> I believe if the underlying theme of the curriculum revolves around problem solving whilst storytelling is used to facilitate *ideation*, the requirement for learning appropriate skills stay uncompromised. This is why I believe it may be possible to manipulate the storytelling experience, but it is most likely to occur in an environment where grades motivate students rather than their passions and experiences.<sup>26</sup> As it is after all our passions and experiences that compel us to align our priorities with our actions and this balance is what enables us to offer systematic solutions to problems throughout the world. A designer or any professional should be adept in skills and technology as they function as tools for communicating an artistic expression, but one should be able to detach themselves from the practiced skills and preconceived notions whilst mind mapping for ideas.<sup>27</sup>

Apart from establishing a non-judgmental environment inside the classroom, one must consider the effects external factors might have on creativity. The concept of *Pedagogy of listening* entails that as a living being, one is absorbing every aspect of their surroundings rather than just hearing. For instance, noticing the broken sound of a machine, makes us realize that it is different than usual. As we continuously absorb direct interactions and occurrences as well, it cannot be ignored that all our senses absorb the information from our surrounding and thus have the power to affect moods, actions and therefore, have a profound impact on our creative

---

<sup>25</sup> Spivey, N. (Director). (2006). *How Art Made The World: Once Upon A Time* [Motion Picture].

<sup>26</sup> Language Arts staff, & Robinson, K. (2014). Conversation Currents: Developing Individual Talent and Abilities: An Interview with Sir Ken Robinson. *Language Arts*, 92(2), 157-162. Retrieved July 16, 2020, from [www.jstor.org/stable/24575633](http://www.jstor.org/stable/24575633)

<sup>27</sup> Salamatullah. (1960). Tagore as Educationist. *Indian Literature*, 4(1/2), 133-139. Retrieved July 17, 2020, from [www.jstor.org/stable/23329366](http://www.jstor.org/stable/23329366)

expression.<sup>28</sup> This means that one may not be able to justify the developed micro-aggressions and may lose their self-esteem in the struggle. This is why the learners should be encouraged to address topics revolving around politics and religion through logical reasoning, keeping in mind, the audience and their sentiments.<sup>29</sup> This discourse is important for the solution providers of the ever changing world. And when diversity is perceived as a beacon that provides answers rather than complicate matters then we can truly appreciate the fruits it can reap.

In conclusion, we see that although it is important to teach a curriculum or a syllabus, how a facilitator perceives diversity in a classroom can either flourish the learnings of a classroom or bring the process of idea generation to a halt altogether. Therefore, it is necessary to realize that a facilitator must encourage diversity of thought so that prejudices and discrimination can be minimized. If the Learners are able to develop a critical consciousness and find echoes of others inside themselves, then they can orientate their learnings to provide viable solutions, pursue their passions and consequently produce unimaginable outcomes in the future.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> Smith-Gilman, Sheryl. (2018). Developing a Pedagogy of Listening: Experiences in an Indigenous Preschool (Dispatch). *Studies in Social Justice*. 12. 345-355. 10.26522/ssj.v12i2.1631.

<sup>29</sup> Tarr, P. (2001). Aesthetic Codes in Early Childhood Classrooms: What Art Educators Can Learn from Reggio Emilia. *Art Education*, 54(3), 33-39. doi:10.2307/3193922

<sup>30</sup> Leyshon, C. (2012, 09, 16). *THIS WEEK IN FICTION: MOHSIN HAMID* . Retrieved from The New Yorker : <https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/this-week-in-fiction-mohsin-hamid>

