

Exploring the Perceptions of Secondary School Teachers about Critical Pedagogy at Secondary School Level

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Abstract

Critical teaching combines learning with reflective thinking. It allows students to understand the relationship between ideas, encourages questioning and challenges all forms of injustice and social disorientation. One principle of critical pedagogy is problem-solving education, which is an alternative to the banking model education in which the teacher is active, and the student is inactive in the learning process. Teachers in critical pedagogy are concerned about society and allow students to think critically and act within society. The present study examines critical teaching (CP) methods at the secondary school level. The aim of this study was to explore the perception of secondary school teachers about critical pedagogy, to examine the practices of critical pedagogy adopted by secondary school teachers. In the present study, mixed methods were adopted, which included both quantitative and qualitative methods. The design of this study was descriptive and survey type. The population for this study consisted of teachers from all public sector secondary schools (male) working in Hazara Division of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and teaching English, Urdu, Pakistan studies, and Islamic studies subjects. There are a total of 380 secondary level schools for both boys in Hazara Division (KP), where 6408 teachers are working. Four out of eight districts (50%) were selected as a sample of study. Further, researcher used cluster sampling technique. Questionnaire was used as research tool. Then, according to the suggestions and recommendations of experts and based on evidence of piloting, necessary changes were made in the instrument. The reliability of this study was determined by Cronbach Alpha. The researcher visited personally to sample institutions to collect data. Quantitative data obtained from teacher's questionnaires were compiled and tabulated. Percentages and mean scores were calculated to obtain results from quantitative data, and it was analysed and interpreted with the help of descriptive statistics, chi square (χ^2).

Keywords: Exploring, Critical Pedagogy, Secondary School Teacher, Perceptions

Introduction

Teaching is a transformative activity and demands that teachers must be highly conscious of their teaching practices instead of mere a routine activity. Teachers have an important responsibility to shape the lives of students (Abednia, 2017). Critical pedagogy emphasizes on combining learning with reflection and engaging thinking. It makes students to be able to understand the links between ideas, encourage questioning and challenge all forms of injustice and alienation in society. This type of teaching expands the ability of students to reflect upon their own experiences and beliefs and make them critically conscious (Baladi, 2018). Critical pedagogy encourages students to be confident to challenge or break up the existing imbalance of power in the persisting educational contexts. This happens when students critically question and challenge the general assumptions of society (Bartlett, 2016). According to Giroux (2013), Proponents of critical pedagogy know that whenever teachers

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teach, they face complex decisions about justice, democracy and competing moral claims all the time at every moment. So being aware with the critical teaching practices and critical consciousness is a vital component for them to be an effective pedagogue. Critical pedagogy is an ideologically progressive teaching philosophy that challenges students to examine power structures and patterns of inequality within what's seen by some as the status quo. By questioning authority, students can take control of their own learning and critically evaluate the opinions they have been taught to have. Critical pedagogy aims to take a sociological conflict perspective in examining power structures (Norton & Toohey, 2004).

Nayestani (2009) stated that the aim of critical pedagogy is enrichment of the whole life of the students. Where, students can question and challenge the accepted beliefs of others and find a connection between the dominating beliefs in the society and educational content and environment around them. By this they are in position to understand their role and place in society and take the necessary steps to transform their society to ultimately eliminate problems, inequalities, and oppression in their future lives. Critical education through the practice of critical pedagogy helps students to gain empowerment, to achieve self-awareness and to get self-reliant so that they can turn the unfavourable conditions of their society into a better one traditional for achieving social justice. To this end, traditional teaching techniques are being challenged and critical education based on critical thinking, dialogue, problem-solving and collaborative education need to transform teaching techniques in educational environment to achieve critical awareness that improves society and develop critical consciousness of the masses in society. Critical pedagogy includes educational experience that promotes critical consciousness in schools, which empowers students to question reality to become agents of social transformation.

Teachers should encourage students to participate genuinely in their education and social activities. They should believe that the schools are a powerful place to broaden the social perspective by critically discussing social injustice in society (Ross, 2016). Therefore, critical pedagogy should be a central aspect of school education and teaching activities and should be a vital component of every teacher's training program. Critical pedagogy and curiosity must play a vital role in the education system. Education must have a characteristic to encourage students to believe in them as more socially conscious and, therefore, the agents of change in development towards society base on social justice. These aspects provide the rationale for the present study. This study is an attempt in exploring the practices that relate with critical pedagogy, and therefore, the study is entitle as “practices of critical pedagogy at secondary school level”.

Critical pedagogy helps to improve the conditions of students in acquiring knowledge, at the same time it improves their thinking skills and value development and allows them to actively participate in society (McLaren, 2015). It is particularly important in the teaching of languages like English and Urdu and in the subject of Pakistan and Islamic studies in our society, it is particularly important in the teaching of languages like English and Urdu and in the subject of Pakistan and Islamic studies in our schools at secondary level for the development of critical and social awareness, therefore, due to this notion present study is entitled as “practices of critical pedagogy at secondary school level”. The interpretation of critical pedagogy by the teachers in their teaching practices is a relatively unstudied area in our education system. Classroom settings can be one of the most exciting places to test critical

teaching methods. The results of this study may serve as a guide for other scholars to conduct similar research studies. In addition, this research could be a starting point for further studies on critical pedagogy about faculty interpretations that would dramatically increase the limited generality of this study.

Aim of the study

The aim of this study was to explore the perceptions of secondary school teachers about critical pedagogy at secondary school level.

Research Methodology

The present study was a descriptive study in nature. A descriptive study is one in which information is collected without changing the environment (i.e., nothing is manipulated). The population for this study comprised on all public sector secondary school teachers working in the schools of Hazara Division of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and teaching the subjects of English, Urdu, and Islamic and Pakistan Studies. There is total 380 secondary schools including both high and higher secondary schools in Hazara Division (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), and a total of 6408 teachers are working in these schools. Related literature and the previous research on critical pedagogy were studied and a foundation of knowledge was built based on literature for development of instrument for this research study. Quantitative data which was obtained through the questionnaires was arranged and tabulated properly. Percentages and mean scores were calculated for obtaining the results and findings from quantitative data. As well as quantitative data were analysed and interpreted with the help of descriptive statistics with Chi square (χ^2). Percentages and mean score of data were obtained.

Results

Table 1

Learning is a social process, and it takes place because of social Interaction

Description	SDA	DA	UND	A	SA	Total	Mean	χ^2	df	p-value
Frequency	44	38	32	231	5	350	3.32	475.571 ^a	4	.000
Percentage	13	11	9	66	1	100				

Table 1 describes the opinions of the secondary school teachers with respect to “Learning is a social process, and it takes place because of social interaction”. This indicates that 236 secondary school teachers with 67% agreed. 82 with 24% secondary school teachers are not agreed, while 32 with 9% secondary school teachers had neutral responses. Furthermore, the value of mean score is 3.32 and chi-square (475.571^a) is found significant as stated p-value (.000) is smaller than the expected level of significance i.e., 0.05. Thus, result is found significant.

Table 2

The Content of the Textbook Should Be According to Student's Needs

Description	SDA	DA	UND	A	SA	Total	Mean	χ^2	df	p-value
Frequency	4	2	10	155	179	350	4.43	452.657 ^a	4	.000
Percentage	1	1	3	44	51	100				

Table 2 describes the opinions of the secondary school teachers with respect to the “Content

of the textbook should be according to student's needs". This indicates that 334 secondary school teachers with 95% agreed. 6 with 2% secondary school teachers are not agreed, while 10 with 3% secondary school teachers had neutral responses. Furthermore, the value of mean score (4.43) and chi-square (452.657^a) is found significant as the stated p-value (.000) is smaller than the expected level of significance i.e., 0.05. Thus, the result is found significant.

Table 3

Teaching Method Should Be Well-Matched with Student's Interest

Description	SDA	DA	UND	A	SA	Total	Mean	χ^2	df	p-value
Frequency	10	13	5	114	208	350	4.42	457.914 ^a	4	.000
Percentage	3	4	1	33	59	100				

Table 3 describes the opinions of the secondary school teachers with respect to "teaching method should be well-matched with student's interest". This indicates that 322 secondary school teachers with 92% agreed. 23 with 7% secondary school teachers are not agreed, while 5 with 1% secondary school teachers had neutral responses. Furthermore, the value of mean score (4.42) and chi-square (457.914^a) is found significant as stated p-value (.000) is smaller than the expected level of significance i.e., 0.05. Thus, the result is found significant.

Table 4

Learning Attitudes and Styles of Male/Female Student Are Different

Description	SDA	DA	UND	A	SA	Total	Mean	χ^2	df	p-value
Frequency	11	10	38	127	164	350	4.20	288.429 ^a	4	.000
Percentage	3	3	11	36	47	100				

Table 4 describes the opinions of the secondary school teachers with respect to "Learning attitudes and styles of male/female student are different". This indicates that 291 secondary school teachers with 83% agreed. 21 with 6% secondary school teachers are not agreed, while 38 with 11% secondary school teachers had neutral responses. Furthermore, the value of mean score (4.20) and chi-square (288.429^a) is found significant as stated p-value (.000) is smaller than the expected level of significance i.e., 0.05. Thus, the result is found significant.

Table 5

If Students Are Not Satisfied with Contents and the Way of Teaching Teacher Must Revise Them

Description	SDA	DA	UND	A	SA	Total	Mean	χ^2	df	p-value
Frequency	2	24	41	162	121	350	4.07	266.371 ^a	4	.000
Percentage	1	7	12	46	35	100				

Table 5 describes the opinions of the secondary school teachers with respect to "If students are not satisfied with contents and the way of teaching teacher must revise them". This indicates that 283 secondary school teachers with 81% agreed. 26 with 8% secondary school teachers are not agreed, while 41 with 12% secondary school teachers had neutral responses. Furthermore, the value of mean score (4.07) and chi-square (266.371^a) is found significant as stated p-value (.000) is smaller than the expected level of significance i.e., 0.05. Thus, the result is found significant.

Conclusions

It is concluded that critical pedagogy is a teaching philosophy that invites educators to encourage students to critique structures of power and oppression. In critical pedagogy, a teacher uses his or her own enlightenment to encourage students to question and challenge

inequalities that exist in families, schools, and societies. Critical pedagogy is a progressive teaching approach that stimulates students to examine power structures and the patterns of inequality and status quo within the society. By questioning authority, students can control of their own learning and critically evaluate the opinions they have been taught to have critical consciousness. Critical pedagogy aims to take a sociological conflict perspective in examining power structures. Critical pedagogy is a transformation-based approach to education focusing to create and improve critical thinking skills in students. Creative teaching includes demonstrating to students how the subject / content of the lesson relates to their own lives and the real world. This enables them to develop a greater sense of purpose of education and the life. If a task is not difficult enough for the students, they feel that they are not progressing in their learning.

Recommendations

Finding of this study emphasizes the transition from the teacher-centered to the students-centered classrooms, where students have the freedom to investigate and to discover things independently and excel their learning. This approach towards education could really be very useful for teachers in creating transformative and constructive classroom environment in educational institutions, where students are aware of their role in society and act as social transformers in society. A critical pedagogical approach should be introduced in the entire the curriculum at all levels of education from primary to university level to improve the quality and for purposeful education to enable the learners to have conscientization for social improvement and a just society

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