

Education and Prefigurative Politics: Six Pedagogies for Working Toward Peace and Justice in Troubled Times

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Introduction

- Pedagogical practices in higher education (HE) often operate implicitly (or explicitly) under the assumption of promoting a better society; however, explicit theories of social change underscoring such pedagogies are frequently under-examined (Andreotti, 2015; Trifonas, 2003).
- This study examines pedagogies for social change in the Korean context.

Research Questions

How and to what extent do university educators' visions and specific educational praxes work toward prefiguratively creating a better tomorrow today (as interpreted by scholars) in the higher education classroom?

How are these praxes conceptualized and outlined within the global literature?

What are the social challenges educators are addressing in their responsive pedagogies toward a prefigurative politics?

How and when are different theoretical, pedagogical, methodological, or policy approaches utilized to more effectively promote peace and social change?



Korean Context

Introduction:
Modern Korean Higher Education

1949

1960s-70s

1980s

2016

present

Rule of President Park Chung-Hee
religious & student movements
converged to oppose the
government's suppression of
human rights (Shin, 2020).

University campuses play a major role in
Korean democratization (Lee, 1990)

1987- Student protests at Yonsei and Seoul
National University precipitated the change
of governance from autocracy to liberal
democracy (Han, 1988).

Student activists became
politicians and academics,
pedagogies for democracy, civil
rights, and social justice were
introduced into curricula and
teaching (Kang, 2018) = intimate
relationship between higher
education and social change

Candlelight Revolution
Starting at Ewha Womans
University
resulted in ousting then President
Park Geun-Hye from office



Conceptual Framework: Prefigurative Politics

Praxes for a better tomorrow today

Three key elements of prefigurative politics are outlined:

- (i) a correspondence between the means and ends in social justice, and by extension pedagogy;
- (ii) connecting the personal and political in peace work; and
- (iii) finding synchronicity between the mind and body, or episteme and being (Gordon, 2018; Raekstad & Gradin, 2020).

Definition guiding the discussion:

Breines (1980) argues that prefigurative politics is the attempt to **‘embody personal and anti-hierarchical values... to develop the seeds of liberation and the new society (prior to and in the process of revolution) through notions of participatory democracy grounded in counter-institutions; this meant building community’** (p. 421). She claims the aim is to **‘unite the public and private spheres of life’** (ibid). Here, **we understand ‘to embody’ and ‘unite’** to mean personal embodiment of the values and dispositions for a peaceful society, as enacted through teaching, and the organization of the body-politic to collectively realize a just and peaceful society.

Democratic Pedagogy: Practicing What We Preach

- Traced democratic pedagogy back to the ideals of democracy through education in the work of Dewey (1916), Bloom (see Fielding, 2014), and A.S. Neill (1960)
- **Diverse visions for the ends and means of education** from the Right and Left of democratic politics; while some scholars **critique** neoliberalism and capitalism
- **In Korea**, the literature details how anti-communist education has often inhibited critical thinking and democratic learning when anti-communism is positioned as patriotic (Lee, 1990)
- More **definitive ends and means** can be seen as academics critique the increasingly closed and depoliticized system
- **To practice prefigurative ends-and-means**, many scholars call for **democratic praxes** of debate, dialogue, critical inquiry, reflexivity, cross-cultural awareness, intercultural understanding, and empathy-building.

Findings

P1: *“I would like to see the student activism and student activity as a legacy.”*

Turning to his syllabi, in his course titled “Law and Social Studies”, P1 leads students to reflect on social movements as a mode for social change, in particular concerning democratic citizenship and human rights.

Peace & Social Justice Education: Toward Emotive and Affective Learning

- **The prefigurative ends and means of this pedagogy** seeks to achieve peace and harmony with the mind/body before turning to achieve peace and harmony in society
- This prefigurative strand draws on **contemporary peace and social justice scholars** such as Reardon (2012), Harris (1990), Bajaj (2015), and Zembylas (2018) to provide examples of peace education as a political praxis
- **In Korea**, frequently focusing on reunification, integration of North Korean refugees into South Korean institutions, and multicultural education for a changing society (Kang, 2018)
- Connecting with the principle of the **personal is political**, Peace education in Korean society is necessary to emphasize peace, unification, human rights, environment, and globalization (Park, 2009)

Findings

Linking peace, human rights, social justice and university education, P4 stated, *“universities really should be doing more to address issues of equity and access and participation. And I think those are all social justice issues and human rights issues for education... There's people who are LGBTQ who are asking and demanding their rights, human rights here in the country. We need more support from universities to help transformation from the top and to be seen as... beacons of how to do things and how to be equitable.”*

Challenges raised by the educators

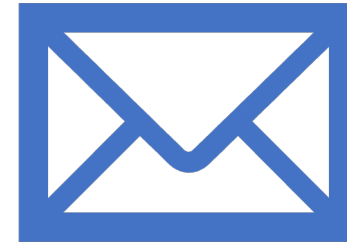
- Systemic and pedagogical misalignments
- Literature revealed a lack of critical inquiry as to who is making the decisions for the educational system and why
- However, the six participants interviewed for this study revealed that, although the literature may indicate a lack of critical inquiry, the educators themselves – especially those who identify as working toward positive social change – are very much engaged in attempts to interrupt unjust practices in HE and promote alternative possibilities.

Thank you!



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