Synthesis Paper 1

Brittani Luce

University of Redlands

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It is important to equip our students with the skills needed to thrive in today’s changing society. We currently live in an era where cultural identity is becoming more significant and where media and the internet is a constant source for information. Because of this societal shift, we value the qualities in which Wagner identifies as a “knowledge society” (As cited in Kalantiz, Cope, Chan, Dalley-Trim, 2016, p.41). Innovation, problem solving, responsibility, collaboration, and having access to information are qualities our culture embraces. As an educator, it is our responsibility to adapt to this knowledge-era and meet students halfway. We need to be able to teach to their culture, giving them different opportunities to learn in the classroom. It is essential for educators to use the authentic literacy pedagogy approach in order to establish equity in the classroom.

Equity is described as all students having access to educational and social opportunities (Kalantiz, Cope, Chan, Dalley-Trim, 2016). An educator’s goal is to create a classroom environment where equity is attainable for all students. This is done in a number of ways. First, getting to know students on a professional and personal level will give teachers access to information needed in order to provide them with a quality and meaningful education. This will give insight to their cultural and educational background which can be used to help establish a learning path for that particular student. Second, teachers must make students feel important and give them purpose. Third, teachers should develop curriculum based on what students already know. This will make them excited to learn and willing to expand their knowledge on a specific concept. Fourth, classwork should be engaging. It should spark student interest by being socially and culturally relatable.

In order to establish and maintain equity, it’s important to determine a teaching style that promotes cultural and social awareness, purpose, and creativity. When it comes to literacies, authentic literacy pedagogy supports equity by giving meaningful experiences that students can relate to. Instead of focusing on formalities and rules like its opposite didactic pedagogy, authentic pedagogy encourages natural interactions and is taught using a top down approach (Kalantiz, Cope, Chan, Dalley-Trim, 2016). It uses the whole language approach which is “a focus on learning to read and write by starting with real meanings in whole texts, and incidentally addressing formalities and conventions, such as phonics, grammar and literary devices” (Kalantiz, Cope, Chan, Dalley-Trim, 2016). This approach mimics the natural flow of language and allows students to see the words meanings and builds on comprehension strategies (Kalantiz, Cope, Chan, Dalley-Trim, 2016).

Because society engages in many social and cultural Discourses, there is not one set of rules on how to use language. Gee describes Discourses as “meaningful socially situated identities and activities” (As cited in Unrau, Alvermann, 2013). They are identity kits that determine how we act while engaging with certain social groups (Unrau, Alvermann, 2013). Authentic pedagogy embraces these different Discourses and gives students multiple opportunities to read and study these different social languages that are encountered in everyday life. The knowledge processes can help. The knowledge process is an important framework that I newly encountered throughout the readings. It is used to engage students and allows educators enough variation in planning which is key to making school appealing for students. Using the knowledge processes while also practicing authentic pedagogy will help extend the learning experiences for learners and expose them to different types of learning and language (Kalantiz, Cope, Chan, Dalley-Trim, 2016). Utilizing the knowledge process allows for more engagement and brings a broader range of activities into the classroom. By “weaving” through it, it gives different types of learners the opportunity to learn the concepts being taught. Since authentic pedagogy’s main focus is on the experiential processes which is experiencing the known and new, students will be exposed to relatable texts and be able to apply that text to newer concepts.

The readings have provided me with valuable information that I am able to utilize in my own classroom. I was unaware about authentic pedagogy literacies until I was educated in our readings. As a future educator, the authentic literacy approach will be an essential technique I use in my classroom to help close the achievement gap between English Language Learners and low-income students. Since authentic pedagogy supports learning by referencing what students know, this will be a valuable method for student engagement. As I study more about literacy pedagogy, my ideas about didactic pedagogy have changed. At first, I thought this was the only way to teach. Since I was taught using a didactic approach, I didn’t realize there were different methods of teaching that would accommodate different learning styles. What seems challenging about choosing the authentic pedagogy approach is that it might not be suitable for all learners. Some students do best while working independently and authentic pedagogy requires a lot of social interactions. However, switching between didactic pedagogy and authentic pedagogy seems like a better option while teaching. This allows students to know what the rules are, but also allows for the rules to be bent in certain situations. Switching between the two would allow me to reach different types of learners. Using authentic pedagogy would allow my ELL learners and special needs learners to socialize and share their personal experiences with the class, making the lessons more tailored to their individual needs. However, I can still lay down the foundational frame work that didactic literacy allows for. This would allow for less social interaction and cater to the students who need that structure.

Learning about the different methods of teaching, the knowledge processes, and the literacy theories have made me more aware of individual needs. It has even made me hyperaware of my own learning which allows me to reflect on my teaching style and lesson planning. For example, I am currently designing a unit in another class and I have gone through to make sure I’ve applied authentic pedagogy lessons. I noticed that most of my lessons are based on authentic pedagogy which reflects who I am as a learner and teacher. I also mapped out the knowledge processes in my unit and adjusted a few lessons based on my new-found knowledge. By utilizing what I learned, I can make my classroom a more enjoyable and engaging climate for my students.

References

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