



RE-THINKING OUR PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES IN
TEACHER EDUCATION TO SUBVERT THE NEOLIBERAL
STRONGHOLD ON HIGHER EDUCATION

INAUGURAL LECTURE

By

Professor Logamurthie Athiemoolam (D.Ed)

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Faculty of Education: Department of Secondary School Education

Abstract

The focus of this lecture is on an interrogation of neoliberalism, what it entails, the pedagogies it espouses, and some pedagogies that we could consider implementing in our classes, with reference to teacher education, or broader, to subvert its influence. While the initial conceptualisation of the university was to prepare students to be critical and creative thinkers for democratic citizenry, this notion of the university has been severely impacted with the onset of neoliberalism, which uses market-based logic to dictate the kind of knowledge that students should receive at university, as its focus is specifically on preparing them for the workplace, and nothing else. This implies that, according to neoliberalism, the role of universities is not to prepare students to become critically engaged citizens for a democratic society, but to specifically prepare them for the market economy.

It is with this background in mind that the lecture commences by firstly providing an overview of the key features of neoliberalism, as it manifests in society, with reference to how it aims to disrupt democracy by infiltrating principles, synonymous with the market economy, into all aspects of society. Thereafter, the lecture will proceed to examine some of the key features that drive its agenda, such as competition, individualism, narrow minded self-interests, and its focus on preparing students for the market economy to serve a capitalist society. Using this premise as a base, the lecture will examine the impact of neoliberalism on higher education, especially in terms of how the relationship between lecturers and students becomes increasingly commodified, with a strong focus on measurable performativity. Hence universities are perceived as institutions where knowledge is bought and sold to students who are the obedient consumers of knowledge, being prepared for the workplace.

By critically engaging with the pedagogies that inform neoliberalism, such as its focus on a measurement-based, positivistic, banking approach to education, the lecture aims to shed light on the teaching strategies and approaches that underpin its philosophy, and to examine how its influence could be subverted. Hence, to curtail its impact on teaching and learning in higher education contexts, the lecture sheds light on alternative pedagogies that we could embrace that could lead to transformative learning spaces for enhanced critical reflection and meaning making.

This then leads to an examination of the pedagogies that I believe could counter its harmful impacts on pedagogy in higher education, especially in terms of our focus on preparing young people to become critically engaged citizens, who will become agents of change. Based on many years of teaching and lecturing experience I believe that the following three pedagogies namely transformative pedagogy, culturally responsive pedagogy and arts-based pedagogies could make a constructive contribution to impeding its influence. The lecture will examine these pedagogies by providing an overview of what they entail and the ways in which they could subvert neoliberal principles, especially in terms of their transformative nature.

Since the key features of these pedagogies are that they lead to collaborative meaning-making through dialogical engagement, develop students' critical and creative thinking skills, promote critical consciousness, and stimulate reflective practice, they offer the potential to contribute to the development of a critically reflective citizenry, thereby subverting the influence of neoliberal pedagogy in higher education teaching and learning contexts.