CHAPTER 4B: DELVING INTO POSSIBLY REFLECTIVE PEDAGOGY

In Chapter 3A, I discussed on the problems and issues of oppressive nature of teacher centered pedagogies which seemed unhelpful in developing even a narrowed view of education, giving rise to *student centered pedagogies*. Given this background in this chapter, I am discussing on the question- *How have I worked through reforms in teacher education as means for implementing somehow student centered approach to teaching?* With this question in mind, my purpose, in this chapter, is to explore my somewhat constructivist practices of teaching, and to this end, I am trying to use recommended, and yet available tools of computer technologies to improve my TLPs (Sulaiman et al., 2012).

> 'As a teacher/facilitator, it is hard to break out of the old paradigm of teacher directed learning where I am in control. Yet learning and creativity are risky endeavours.' (Vettraino, Linds & Goulet, 2013, p. 17)

Setting the Scene: Solitary Thinking as Planning

It may be any Thursday of fall semester 2009 at TU. I was sitting in front of my desk top computer and thinking about my teaching, looking through a window partially covered by thick branches of a pomegranate tree. In the meanwhile, something struck in my mind and I started transfiguring the thoughts into few sentences on the keyboard in order to plan a lesson on an interesting topic, which may not be the case for culturally others. I mean, perhaps for learners who have desirable background knowledge in CTs, and for teacher educators who have required resources talking about such kind of topics as interesting makes no sense but for me and for my students it could be something engaging. And the topic I selected was found in the course syllabus which I had prepared

few weeks ago during ICT in Education curriculum development workshops (see Chapter 3B).

I remember, we (I and other teacher educators of ICT in Education) as subject experts, from different HEIs of Pakistan, we experienced to develop content of a centralized curriculum based on the given objectives, and that was in my hand to implement in my classes. However, being a faculty member of a resource-restraint university coupled with limited support from administrative side to implement the curriculum, I began to ask- What would be the ways to overcome such challenges, and how I can improve my teaching in such a challenging situation of centrally mandated curriculum (Whitehead, 1989).

Reflecting on limitations, and thinking about alternative ways that could be helpful to engage my learners in activities focusing on their active participation, interest in learning, and enabling them towards intended learning outcomes, I was lost in my thinking. In so doing, Pine and Boy (1977) reminded me that a learner centered teacher is one who thinks about self, and students to make the learning more meaningful for learners. Perhaps, involving in such kind of thinking that is what Winter (1998) calls an 'improvisatory self-realization', I realized it a much needed engagement to improve one's own practices by asking- How can I improve my teaching (Whitehead, 1989, 2014).

Pedagogies With Use of CTs as Improving Practices

Arriving at that stage, I began to remember my recent past with teacher centered pedagogies where I could teach without any involvement of students in my teaching activities appeared to be unhelpful for my learners. Coming to realize my past practices, and reflecting on my exposure with reformative activities with limited freedom of my (as

a teacher educator/s) contributions in the whole process of curriculum development, and
using required resources to support my pedagogies, I started looking at possibilities to
make my lessons more interactive to engage
students in learning process through 'participatory
and collaborative' ways (Barman, 2013, p.10).

> 'The unconscious is the myth-making center of the human person, the location from which we generate the images, myths, and stories that we largely unconsciously use to guide and make sense of our lives.' (Dirkx, 2008, p.84)

Arriving at this point of inquiry, I begin to realize that reforming curriculum
process had not been more democratic, inclusive and empowering by engaging teacher
educators like me from the stage of planning objectives, developing *culturally friendly set
of activities as curriculum* (Dewey, 1938; Karseth & Sivesind, 2011). Perhaps, the
approach to reformative curriculum development activity was not to focus on students
learning experiences rather mere cultural reproduction (Schubert, 1986) (see Chapter 3B).

With this view in mind, I began to look at my own *socio-pedagogical context*[57]*,*
and ask- What I can do with new curriculum to make a lesson different than what I was
doing with definitional, imposing-styled, and information-giving informative teaching?
Perhaps, this realization led me to think about the importance of developing a clear
understanding of the socio-pedagogical context and its impact on learning. To this end,
developing a clear understanding on learners' background, available and accessible
resources, content versus pedagogy, teaching versus learning (Luitel, 2009), to name but
a few of the ingredients of the whole process of TLPs seemed to play a crucial role in
re/shaping my practices in ICT in Education class.

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[57] The belief that pedagogies are socially constructed and shaped within a particular sociocultural setting makes it more responsive to students' needs. Teachers with paper plans (i.e., lesson planning) and mental plans (unwritten, yet situation based plans which arise with change in behavior of learners in a real classroom situation and unpredicted events may occurred in classes. Because classes, today, are very dynamic and complex so written plans can no longer be helpful for a teacher to fully rely on with SMART Objectives to accomplish. Teachers need to understand how to organize socially constructed learning in learner centered teaching situations.

Arriving at this point of my inquiry, I begin to realize that the agenda of reforms appeared to focus on *'smart/er'* objectives towards context free intended learning outcomes given by a centralize curriculum rather being sensitive to the socio-pedagogical context (Ali, 2011). Perhaps, *'smart/er'* objectives can to some extent help teacher educators towards fixed learning outcomes, and yet developing a clear understanding of socio-pedagogical settings enable them to make better meaning of learner centered approaches to teaching (O'Sullivan, 2004). I argue that being insensitive towards socio-pedagogical and thinking about context free (i.e., no importance to context of each class) pedagogies limit TLPs.

However, initially I was a supporter of reforms and, to some extent, it enabled to break the status quo of teaching as telling to somewhat teaching as interacting with learners. Probably, this shift from teacher centered to student centered (Barman, 2013: Qutoshi & Poudel, 2014).But soon I came to know that to prepare lesson plans focusing on 'smart/er' objectives in my learner centered pedagogies was a difficult task. Neither had I computers in my class nor there were students with at least basic knowledge of computers (as they come from public schooling systems from remote villages and towns around the TU). Perhaps, that situation must have led me to think about my vision to engage with reformative curriculum of ICT in Education while teaching student teachers.

Reflecting on the situation, I came to realize that though many changes can be noticed in the context of TU as compared to my own school and college days (this I have already articulated somewhere in Chapter 1A), I was still facing many challenges. Such challenges of varying degree and nature, for example, were access to computers (for students' practice), lack of required resources and lack of support from the department to

facilitate the process of teaching/learning with use of CTs, to name a few. With such observation about the context, and looking for alternative ways to engage with my goals of student centered teaching (Ahmed, 2013), I was lost in my imagination.

Let me take you back to my own learning, as a student, of computer skills during 1993 in Karachi, one of the biggest cities of Pakistan to give you a comparative view of that time with my professional experience of teaching under reforms during 2010. Perhaps, this would give you an idea of how the lifeworlds of learners and teachers present different picture in big cities as compared to small and marginalized cities. I remember vividly that at the time of my diploma in computer software course, we (as students) had not enough computers to practice independently, yet we got opportunity to practice in a smaller group at least. However, today even after 12 years, such limited facilities are not available to my student teachers at TU context.

Arriving at the stage, I began to realize that I need to select an appropriate topic for teaching with use of technologies to accomplish my desired learning outcomes (Sulaiman et al., 2012). Perhaps, at that time I realized that in such a situation few topics can be discussed easily, to some extent, despite having no computers. With this in my mind, I thought on ways to develop some basic understanding of learners about a centralize content of the curriculum of ICT in Education. At the same time, I began to realize that most of the topics seem very difficult to teach without proper use of CTs in class to make lessons more attractive and interactive with practice on computers to get students engaged with learning (Qutoshi, 2014).

Notions of Reforming as Neo-colonizing

In the meanwhile the ideas of the director of curriculum to whom I engaged in a somewhat critical dialogue on the issue of resources inequality and nature of a centralized curriculum during the curriculum development workshop for ICT in Education, continued to occupy me. Let me take you back to a little part of that dialogue which took place sometime in late 2009 or early 2010 (see Chapter 3B, pp. 198-199).

Reflecting on the views of the director of curriculum there, who was too linear and partial in terms of contextual thinking, I realized how superficial plans the director of curriculum had in his mind about fixing the problems of non-availability of basic resources in all universities which shows a *self-serving attitude* rather reformers ground work to bring a change in existing situations. As Kincheloe (2005) argues 'many educational reformers see no need for teachers to be

> 'Literally, there is little hope for educational reform if they do not gain detailed insight into:– the context in which education takes place;– the historical forces that have shaped the purposes of schooling;– the ways dominant power uses schools for anti-democratic ideological self-interest;– how all of this all of these knowledges relate to transformative classroom teaching in general and to their particular curricular domain in particular' (Kincheloe, 2005, 254).

rigorous scholars… such reforms require disempowered teachers who do what they're told and often read pre-designed scripts to their students' (p. 5). Reflecting on the Kincheloe's argument, I begin to feel that I (and many of my colleagues) can be some of those disempowered teachers who had to follow such directions to implement a *homogeneous image of curriculum* (a centralized curriculum imposed to implement throughout the universities of Pakistan without realizing context specific needs of different universities) in culturally diverse group of learners in a resource restraint university to accomplish the intended learning outcome (see Chapter 3B).

Arriving at this point of inquiry, I begin to argue that without understanding university specific contextual realities like nature of students, their backgrounds, capacities of teachers, available and accessible resources and administrative people with bureaucratic mindsets with top down approach to pass on directions rather providing necessary support to teachers (to use critical pedagogies), to name a few critical situations, it was hardly possible to create conditions favorable for reforms agenda with a centralized new curriculum to implement in order to accomplish a particular set of desired learning outcome (Kincheloe, 2007). My argument is that the reform agenda is not sufficient to fulfill the needs of teacher educators, teachers and learners rather it appears to focus an add-on activity and/or a kind of modified version of the previous practices.

Performing as a Reformist Pedagogist

As I have argued earlier, some reforms, though enable teachers to change the status quo of a rigid nature of an organizational culture, that still forced me (and my colleagues) to adopt traditional teaching approaches (Ali, 2011; Duckworth, 2009). Probably, reforms could provide somewhat partial freedom to teacher educators.

With this limited freedom, as a dis/empowered teacher educator[58] my focus remains on use of PowerPoint presentations as tools to improve my teaching in order to increase students' interest in learning (Qutoshi, 2014). This reformative pedagogy at my disposal partially, to some extent, helped me (not an enabler but little bit helper that is not sufficient to provide meaning-centered education) to think about my role as a facilitator and my students' role as an active participant in the process of

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[58]i.e., an educator who is limited to operate within a centralized curriculum with limited resources to work on learner centered approach to teaching under reforms agenda to improve practices

teaching/learning rather than considering them as 'recipient of teacher's knowledge and wisdom' (Ahmed, 2013, p.1).

Reflecting on this narrow view of practical interest of reformative notions of improvement in teacher education in the context of Pakistan rather what Habermas'
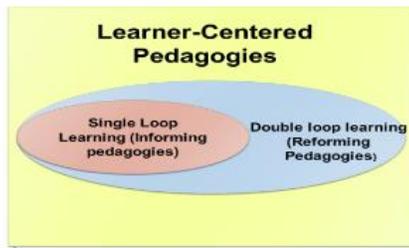
(1972) view of broader level of freedom for construction of knowledge through active and effective involvement of learners in the educative process, led me to think about possible alternatives

at my partial disposal. Perhaps, this reflection enabled me to realize that for teacher educators in different *socio-pedagogical setting* where students have an easy access to computers and other required resources for learning to enhance talking about these petty things/ideas (contextual limitations) makes no sense to them, but for my context it makes a lot!

In such a situation, I was making my mind to engage with a topic like - 'computer software and hardware' for a class of B. Ed (Hons). With this in mind, I started thinking with 'good intentions' to help my learners with whatever available resources I had at my disposal to use, and plan a lesson to teach. Perhaps, this kind of thinking about my past practices, and asking self how to improve present situation must have led me towards somewhat double loop learning (Argyris & Schon, 1974, 1978; Halai, 2006).

Let me tell you fairly, my intention was to teach using a PowerPoint presentation-as a software program (giving them an idea on how the software programs look like and how these programs help us in our everyday work like helpers in co-teaching and in/dependent learning etc.). In this way, my purpose was to engage my learners to

develop their interest with a catchy lesson for them using pictures, animated slides with text etc. and models of computers showing with different parts as hardware components to make them understand about these programs (Sulaiman et al., 2012). Keeping these ideas in mind, I prepared slides using my personal laptop to accomplish intended learning outcomes. Perhaps, I was not aware of the rational intention of Habermasian view[59](Habermas, 1984/1981), but I was aware of what an 'intention' means for a Muslim and how it makes a difference in his/her life and the lives of the other to whom s/he lives with them.

Intention as Motivator

Here, I use the term 'Intention'- Niyyah. In Arabic language it means one's way of thinking towards doing something. So, I can say, as a teacher having Niyyah- the intention, and embodying it as one of the core values of my   life as a filter, was to help learners (as a belief...a good intention leads to do something good and vice versa) by explaining the terms (hardware and software), and their applications in their educational and personal lives in future by using slide shows to engage them more actively.

Reflecting on my views on 'intention', I came to realize that *intension is* a very powerful source of motivation towards doing something, within my own belief system,

'Whoever acquires knowledge by which the pleasure of Allah is sought, but he only acquires it for the purpose of worldly gain, will not smell the fragrance of Paradise on the Day of Resurrection"(Sunan Ibn e Majah, Book of Sunnah, Hadith no 252)

that played a key role in my lifeworlds. As I was taught, groomed and enculturated in a society where intentions are considered as basis of one's actions and

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[59] This view is about 'The Theory of Communicative Action Volume 1', that talks about concept of rationality beyond the 'subjectivistic' and 'individualistic premises' of modern philosophy and social theory (Wikipedia, 2015).

interactions, eventually it became as part of one of my embodied values in my life. Perhaps, it is the intention that implants a spirit into the body, shapes subjective reality, signifies a goal, gives a direction, motivates towards action, and seems part of the dance between human, and the cosmos (Houston, Blankstein & Cole, 2008).

Arriving at this point of inquiry, I begin to feel that all the actions (good and/or bad) highly depend upon the intention of human being. I can understand if my actions are guided by good intention, at that time I can make a difference in the lives of my students and such embodied values become as *life affirming and life enhancing values* (Whitehead & Huxtable, 2016). With this in mind, I start thinking about how to use PowerPoint software as CTs in my teaching to make more interesting for my learners to engage in learning, and will accomplish the intended learning outcomes of the topic (computer software and hardware).

Perhaps, that situation made me to reflect on the 'intention' of the people in the academia who are in power to exercise their decisions which in/directly impact on both teacher educators and student teachers. As 'intention' within our belief system appears to be guided by our thinking and actions, I came to realize that unfortunately people in power have not 'good intentions' towards improving practices, rather they tend to create an superficial environment which facilitate corrupt practices such as, favoritism, nepotism, regionalism, sexism, and racism, to name a few, (Qutoshi, 2015b).

Perhaps, these kinds of practices in the society in general, and in the academia in particular created many challenges like access to and availability of resources (Almenaral
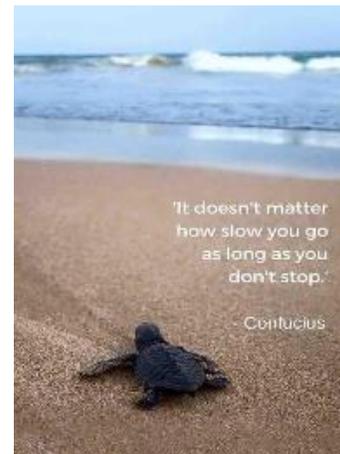
& Diaz, 2012). There, I came to realize that neither had I required basic resources of technology to engage my student teachers in practice on nor they had a sound background in computers to understand my topic easily. Reflecting on such kind of challenges such as students' backgrounds, and limited freedom to use technologies for teaching and impact in TLPs to improve, I began to think about how to create an interactive classroom culture (Sulaiman et al., 2012). I came to realize that, for teachers like me it was equally important to understand the classroom culture beyond these limitations, because without understanding classroom culture I couldn't teach to make learning happen to accomplish expected learning outcomes of the topic, in a technical subject like ICT in Education.

Arriving at this stage and thinking about these socio-pedagogical complexities of TU context, I once again was lost in my imagination. I began to think how important it was for me to understand self/students in the context of such kind of complexities of classroom culture within this institutional culture as a whole. For example, how to develop a better understanding of contexts (at multiple levels), classroom lifeworlds, pedagogies, self and students' background and culture of the university that would better help me to make meaning of my teaching to improve learning with activity centered approach to teaching (Duckworth, 2009).

In the meanwhile, Ms Butterfly entered into the room, and I once again came out of my creative, yet critical imagination and engage in our discussions. 'Sir ji, what's going on, you seem lost somewhere in your thinking', she asked. 'Yes you're right,

I was just thinking about teaching a lesson on computer 'hardware and software', and I started sharing my worries with her.

She said, 'sir you have your own laptop, and you can use in your class.' 'Yes it is in my plan to use laptop for a multimedia presentation to show them slides on the topic, so that the students can have a look at slides'. I stopped for sometimes and continued, 'but I am thinking to engage learners with practice on computers in the classroom and… or in computer lab. You know? The course also demands like that', I discussed my plan.

She said, 'it's really a god idea to engage them in learning by doing- it's a constructivist approach I guess (Brown, 2008; Weimer, 2002).' 'Yes it is', I continued, 'and you know without providing different opportunities to learners for their active participation in the whole process of TLPs we can no more rely on simple lecture methods, I mean one directional flow of ideas. I guess, with active participation in learning process students can experience new insights, and to this end, I want my students to let them discuss, generate ideas, and involve in dialogues', I explained.

Reflecting on the situation, it appeared that I was becoming over ambitious after developing a curriculum on ICT in Education (as an expert in subject matter) which was more idealist without critically knowing self and others within that particular socio-pedagogical context. And on the other hand, I was forgetting the nature of centralized curriculum that was demanding some fixed expected '*learning outcomes'. I was confined within a conventional image of* curriculum, and yet I was struggling with a constructivist idea (Schubert, 1986).

> **A Class on Computers without Computers!**
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> It may be one of the hot days of the June at the TU I picked my personal laptop heading towards my class to reach at least five minutes … in order to make sure everything works well before the class to start. I was worried about technological issues and electrical breakdowns which mostly hampers classes for which there were no proper arrangements to make sure everything is okay. I know as per policy everyone has to use computer technology in TLPs but poor arrangements and lack of skills and motivation restrict to do so. And even there were no computers for hands on practice for the students of a technical subject like 'ICT in Education'…then how to improve TLPs with use of technologies is a question that has no answer.

You may critique my idea of having good intentions, and their role for my actions and interactions that may be necessary, but not sufficient in itself. Let me tell you if there is a will there is a way, and this will (the good one) come through good intentions. What I believe is that the good intention can lead you to find ways and means to its ends', I explained in further detail.

She pulled a chair and sat by asking, 'Sir I have a question.' 'Well tell it', I replied in curiosity. She smiled and looked at me with the question, 'have you ever thought seriously about the intentions of this policy making class who mostly get benefit at the expense of these reforms. I mean reforms actually do not seem that much beneficial to the students and teachers who are practically engaged in TLPs to the extent these polices highlight.' Perhaps, she was talking about the limitations of reforms at receiving ends.

I quickly replied, 'I guess, you are raising an important point related to a particular mind set, the most powerful class, in this country. If you remember, I was talking about predefined objectives that means this elite class, the new colonial masters, who are framing these policies for us not for their children because they can send their children to study in foreign countries. They are getting benefits from the western donors for the accomplishment of their agendas, rather than to empower the teachers and students through these reforms (see Chapter 3B). And you know, our suffering today is because of these policies. My intention right now is how to do something beautiful with use of PowerPoint presentation.' I showed my dislikes to elite reformers, who were for me both linear and partial. 'Okay sir ji, do something beautiful... as your thinking is

beautiful', she said in a mocking tone 'Yes, I think beautiful, but you look beautiful!' a

laughter burst out, as I quickly replied at her comment.

Technology as Creative Tool for Improving Practices

'As you are using multimedia presentations in your classes now a days, did you

find any change in learning with reference to the increased level of creativity in your

students', Ms Butterfly asked. 'I guess, it is really very interesting to share one of our co-

planning and co-teaching class', I continued, 'a couple of days before, I called my

students to sit, and plan a lesson for an introductory type of class using slides

presentation.' I added, 'the purpose was to get engage students in thinking about real life

situations in their future teaching in classes with their students when they go back to

schools after completing the course.'

'It seems interesting', she said. 'Yes, it is', I continued, 'You know, one of the

students came with an idea to prepare one slide for every student, and pasting his/her

photograph with key points about his/her life. His idea was to prepare a slide and discus

the points with each other, and then exchange in a group of two students for introducing

his/her friends through that slide. 'Wow! That sounds interesting, by the why who was

that sir', she asked.

'Oh yes, he was Mr Irfan, and you know he is very sharp', I continued. 'And that

idea was highly appreciated by all of us, and divided the task to everyone to come with

one slide next day. To assist my student to do that job, I requested the head of computer

science department to allow my students to work in his lab for around two hours. And

thankfully he allowed us to do that. Otherwise that was not possible. And it was mutually

decided not to dump text on slides, but to come with key built points about skills, strong

points, areas for improvement, and vision in their life etc. Believe me students did

wonderful presentations.'

I was reflecting on how small activities can generate innovative ideas to do things differently, for example in this case, to know each other and help them to develop skills while handling slides, and introducing their friends in a different way. I think use of technologies cannot only develop skills in learners but also develop confidence to speak/present publicly if used innovatively (Qutoshi, 2014; Sulaiman et al., 2012). Probably, it depends upon the teachers who take such small risks to involve students to do something differently in their TLPs. I came to know that my intentions through which I imagine and act (within my belief system) seem very powerful to bring a change in my way of teaching and its impact on the creativity of my students.

And using this *value* in my practices I was reflecting on 'to what extent I could serve a *practical interest* of learners while working with future teachers' (Habermas,

> My aim is not to see how myth can be added onto today's core business of education, that of production, but how those who work within it, teachers, are already and always bearers of myth. (Davison, 2008, p.68).

1972). Probably, I have been successful, to some extent, by working together for co-planning and co-teaching like team members, and enabling learners to disrupt cultural myths of 'not to speak in front of elders/teachers' (Taylor, 1996). However, I came to realize that much has to be accomplished by enabling them to develop more capacity to take more responsibility for their independent and engaged learning.

Closure and my Way Forward

I guess it is vital to know how I, as teacher educator, engage with my routine activities of professional lifeworlds. The way I do things in my in/formal discussions with colleagues and student teachers relating to TLPs with use of technologies, planning

lessons, sharing stories of teaching, celebrating accomplishments and failures to mention but a few, matter a lot in shaping my TLPs. Such thinking and reflections, of course, helped me to address question- to what extent developing a clear understanding at conscious level about my teaching/learning makes sense to both self/others (student teachers) while working with limited freedom within a bureaucratic environment.

The question is: what are the possible innovative ways to explore my past as a learner, understand my present role as an educator, and envision my/our future roles for the empowerment of self/other? This appears to be 'inquiry as knowing' itself that has eventually brought into surface the extent of my efforts to understand the culture/s at different level, which can develop consciousness about self/other regarding our teaching/learning. For example, knowing culture at classroom level (to understand TLPs), and at institutional level (to understand how institutional culture hinders and/or fosters innovation in teaching/learning for empowerment), and its implications for self/others can be helpful to realize limitations of reforms. Probably, this sort of thinking can help me to use *cultural knowing* as a powerful philosophical referent and epistemological approach, the ways and means to reflect on self/beyond by putting self in the place of learner and at the place of teacher. Perhaps, such role of understanding a multicultural class to enable learners not only to learn the subject but also to learn how to behave like intercultural citizens is in line with what Freire (1998) calls 'Teachers as Cultural Workers.' With this thought, in the next chapter, I envision a *critical-creative pedagogy* to embrace an *emancipatory interest* for my learners in future, thereby developing my own living-theory evolving from-within these practices.