

Looking at our school (2022):

A Quality Framework for Post-Primary Schools

PLA 3 for History and Policy Module

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T3A2c; Team 6

Observations & points of significance of LAOS (2022) through engagement with Maxime Greene's Diversity & Inclusion paper (1993)

Gavin

Observation through the 'Diversity' lens:

- In the standards of practice –teaching and learning section of the LAOS document, the domain 1 standard that reads 'Students demonstrate knowledge, skills & understanding by the post-primary curriculum.
- One of the 'statements of highly effective practice' relevant to this includes; 'Students are enabled to contribute positively, actively and compassionately toward the creation of a more sustainable and just world.
- For this to come to be, let us be reminded of Maxime Greene's statement in Diversity & Inclusion (1993) that ''there is some agreement in today's society of the need to reject single dominating views or interpretations, whether from textbooks, teachers, or religious beliefs''. (Greene, 1993,p.218).

Implication

- In order for our students to have accurate concepts toward what it means to be in a more just society, their needs to be an appreciation as to the many different points of view and cultures; and for them to 'live' this ideal, we must also as teachers live it out and remember that even our own textbooks need to be reviewed & questioned with a further allowance of the possibility that certain themes can be outdated by an ever-moving cultural landscape.

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Observation through the 'imagination' lens of Maxime Greene

- Also, in the standards category in the same domain it cites the need for 'students to engage in creative processes individually & collaboratively in a way that transforms their knowledge, skills & understanding resulting in new and innovative ideas & solutions **that have value in real world applications'.** If I am to think of this through Greene's 'imagination' theme; she ''argues for the centrality of the arts in the curriculum'' and that encounters with such "awaken us to alternative possibilities of being human and relating to other" (Greene, 1993, p.214).

Implication

- She also reminds us that ''curriculum frameworks are oriented for specific outcomes spelled out in terms of competencies demanded by the technological society & competitive needs'' (1993, p.217).
- Are we truly allowing pupils to express themselves imaginatively and creatively within their own unique interests or is it narrowed down to the interests our society want our pupils to be 'strong' in, within **'real world';** that is, the creative influences that only benefits the interests of the economy at present**. This in itself puts a harness on imagination and diversity of thought.**

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Mary

Observation through the 'cultural differentiation' lens of Maxime Greene

- Teachers standard code does not mention personalized learning strategies for multicultural classes. It suggests that teacher's 'judgement' should be used to create an inclusive learning environment. "Teachers are informed by meaningful analysis of and use of data as well as teachers' professional judgement and decision making. " One might argue that a detailed strategy for training is needed to educate Irish teachers specific skills so they can effectively comply with the other statements in this report. Relying on their 'judgement' is not enough and is failing in some regards to address the issue effectively.

- Recognizing student's role in being co-creators of education is significant "Students are recognized as key contributors to our sustainable future.". Maxine Green states that people of differing nationalities have 'distinctive ways of constituting reality'. (Greene, 1993, p.218). This kind of thinking will make for a richer educational tapestry and have an effect on the wider community. The OECD report states, 'Integrating refugee children into school systems can also improve the employment prospects of their parents and guardians' (OECD, 2023[4])

- The teaching standard code says, "Teachers are aware of students' individual learning needs, interests and abilities, and design and implement personalized interventions accordingly." Maxine Greene said we should be "responsive to increasing numbers of life-stories, to more and more "different" voices."
- **Implication**
- With better inclusion and diversity strategies, teachers would be more effective and create happy, healthy whole students. The happiness and inclusion of a student at school level has a positive effect. It would also influence the parents of the students. The OECD report indicates ' Integrating refugee children into school systems can also improve the employment prospects of their parents and guardians' (OECD, 2023[4]).
- Students would feel that their voice is valid no matter what background they are from.
- The lessons would be more inclusive and open minded and would create a more wholesome environment where students of all abilities and backgrounds would be centralized rather than marginalized. This would better prepare students for the multi-cultural world we now live in and help leave the monoculturistic ideology once held in Irish society in the past.

Observations & points of significance of LAOS (2022) through engagement with Maxime Greene's Diversity & Inclusion paper (1993)

Alec

Observation through the 'inclusion' lenses of Maxime Greene

- Greene notes in her 'Diversity and Inclusion' paper that "all persons should be treated as ends, never as means." She calls on teachers to care for marginalised people, and rather than follow others adding fuel to the fires of injustice and discrimination, we should aim to be "healers" if not "saints," (Greene, 1993).
- Greene also notes the impact of "official stories (or 'master narratives')" on society's perceptions of marginalised people, and of marginalised peoples' of themselves, (Greene, 1993, pg. 219). She quotes bell hooks* who claims that marginalised people have a different and valuable experience going through life as they have first-hand knowledge on the dissonance "what is taken for granted at the center and what might and what ought to be." This can be a vehicle for giving rise to questioning about the obstacles needed to be overcome to get to the "what might and what ought to be" which in turn may help "move the young to learn to learn," (Greene, 1993, pg. 220).
- In the LAOS 2022 document I did see "inclusion of all students" and the "centrality of student wellbeing" identified as important focus points for the framework for assessing a good teaching and learning environment. In part of the rubric for assessing the quality of a school it also notes the importance of teachers taking care of their own health and wellbeing, (LAOS, 2022).

Implication

- This to me seems to open-up the function of the teacher as an activist, as someone who brings about social change in the classroom and by extension, society in general.
- Being a teacher with experience of marginalisation can be useful in the classroom to bring a new perspective to the class, and to have a better sense of the experiences and knowledge students from marginalised communities may bring to the environment.
- The aims and assessment criteria of the LAOS 2022 document and framework seem like noble goals that more-or-less align with Maxine Greene's ideals of inclusion and care, , (LAOS, 2022). However, I did not notice any mention of accommodations made in this inspection and evaluation for schools with a higher population of students from marginalised communities and the impact this may have on attendance and engagement, teachers who are going through difficult life experiences or experience marginalisation themselves, or for schools that may struggle more with funding, staff, and resources and the impact this could have on the ability of the school to fully engage and cater to all students to the best of their ability.
- To imagine an ideal world of what "might and what ought to be" as Greene asks us to, I think these issues should also be accounted for in a way that surveys what supports should be made available to make schooling truly as inclusive, caring, and diverse as it should be universally.

*(bell hooks wrote her name in all lowercase letters to center her work rather than herself).

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Alec

Observation through the 'consciousness of agency' and 'wide awakeness' lenses of Maxime Greene

- Greene quotes Albert Camus in her talk directed at new teachers. He claimed that "weariness comes from a mechanical life." Greene wants us as people and as teachers to keep the "why" alive, and encourage both ourselves and our students' to imagine "what might be, what ought to be," (Greene, 2002). The teacher as a stranger introducing a different perspective is seen by Greene as a key tool to helping students gain "consiousness of agency" and "wide awakeness," (Hancock, 2001; Willis, 2016).
- Greene in her 'Diversity and Inclusion' paper quotes and concurs with Irigaray who asks us to be aware and diverge from ways of thinking that allow our unconscious biases to go unchecked and cause us to make self-fufilling assumptions about which students are the "good" or "naughty" ones and any other stereotypes we may have about different people according to their past actions or their identity or community group. These types of perspectives can be damaging to those they are projected upon. Instead Irigaray and Greene invite us to encourage ourselves and our students to take on "a rejection of measuring rods, a refusal to "grade" anyone's story against a standard norm." People should not be defined by one thing, Irigaray encourages girls and women, for example, who have experienced this type of categorising, to instead "view themselves as plural, multiple, willing to break with 'normal' defintions," (Greene, 1993, pg. 1993).
- Overall, I think the LAOS 2022 document is supportive of these outlooks. It emphasises teaching as a way to encourage and guide students to be "active agents in their learning." Having teachers and students introduce and discuss new ideas and perspectives inspired by media and opinions of the people represented on the curriculum and each other's experiences in life is a key aspe ct to the idea of effective teaching, (LAOS, 2022).

Implication

- While in my opinion, I think both Greene and the LAOS 2022 document are in agreement here, I feel these visions are not backed-up by the reality of assessment in Irish education. The continued focus and emphasis on the huge summative assessments of the Junior and Leaving Certificates seem contradictory to these ideas of continuous and life-long learning. If the true goal of education is to inspire students to be passionate about learning, experimenting, investigating, and challenging new concepts and ideas, this is very much at odds with intensive timed exams which emphasis memory and retention abilities, and ability to recall under pressure, much more than creative thinking and application of the knowledge learned.
- These contradictory aims and end goals put immense pressure on teachers to cater to both the facilitation of the growth of student's autonomy, confidence, and interest in questioning and investigating, and getting them to learn off knowledge that is not their own to spew out on a page in their final exams. As they education system has changed immensely since current and newly qualifying teachers experienced schooling ourselves, when we are asked to reflect and get ideas and inspirations from teachers we have had ourselves in the past, they are often asking us to drawn upon role models who often did not exist, or at the very least were few and far between.

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