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Orginal Article

Educational Autoethnography and Teachers' Critical Action against a Centralized Curriculum: The Praxis of Fidelity to the Truth Event

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Abstract

This article advances a new theoretical formulation of how teachers can critically confront a centralized curriculum at the classroom level by positioning themselves as educational autoethnographers and constituting themselves as critical subjects. In many educational systems, curricula are treated as fixed, prescriptive frameworks that teachers are expected to implement faithfully, thereby limiting their professional agency and interpretive judgment. In the Iranian context, although the national document of *Fundamental Transformation of Formal Education* calls for a transition beyond a centralized educational system and curriculum, it does not provide a clear methodological pathway for realizing such a transformation. As a result, the call for decentralization remains largely rhetorical. Using a philosophical–critical inquiry approach, this article critiques the epistemological and political foundations of centralized curricula and proposes an alternative centered on teachers' critical praxis. In the first step, drawing on the work of Paulo Freire, the necessity of teachers' critical engagement with centralized curricula is articulated. Freire's concepts of dialogue, conscientization, and praxis frame education as a transformative, ethically charged practice grounded in reflection and action upon the world. From this perspective, teachers are not neutral transmitters of content but historical subjects capable of questioning and reshaping oppressive structures embedded in curricular mandates. In the second step, the article develops a theoretical account of educational autoethnography and identifies three of its constitutive foundations: (1) a reflective and entangled epistemology that situates knowledge within lived experience, (2) a change-oriented critical consciousness aimed at transformation, and (3) narrative as a mode of both self-examination and collective awareness-raising. Grounded in the concept of educational praxis, autoethnography is thus proposed as a methodological and ethical practice that enables teachers to interrogate centralized curricular norms from within their own classroom realities. Finally, drawing on Alain Badiou's concept of the "truth event," the article offers a theoretical articulation of how autoethnographic engagement can

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generate curricular transformation. A decentralized curriculum is understood as the outcome of a truth procedure emerging from classroom events. Through fidelity to these events and to students' voices, the teacher becomes a critical, transformative, and emancipatory subject who reconfigures curricular practice from within.

Keywords: Educational Autoethnography, Centralized Curriculum, Paulo Freire, Alain Badiou, Truth Event, Praxis

Extended Abstract

Introduction

In educational systems, curricula are often perceived as rigid directives that educators must strictly follow, which limits their agency and creativity. This article explores how teachers can critically engage with centralized curricula, emphasizing the ethical responsibility to adapt learning experiences to meet diverse student needs. Using a philosophical critique approach, it draws on Paulo Freire's ideas of dialogue, praxis, and conscientization, promoting an auto-ethnographic method for teachers to reflect on their practice and challenge centralized norms.

Method

This article deals with its subject using a philosophical inquiry approach, moving between theory and practice to critique centralized curricula. It utilizes Paulo Freire's perspective and proposes educational Auto-ethnography for teachers to engage critically. Alain Badiou's philosophical concepts are employed to theorize how Auto-ethnography can address the issues of a centralized curriculum.

Discussion

Freire conceives education as a dialogical and transformative practice rooted in lived social and cultural realities. Praxis, as reflective action, enables teachers and students to question dominant structures rather than reproduce them. From this perspective, centralized curricula tend to function as instruments of transmission, privileging predefined knowledge and limiting responsiveness to classroom plurality.

Auto-ethnography provides teachers with a methodological space to critically reinterpret their position within such structures. By narrating and analyzing their lived experiences in relation to broader institutional and

cultural networks, teachers move from passive compliance toward reflective agency. Yet this shift requires conceptual clarification. Here, Badiou's ontology of situation and Event illuminates the structural gaps within centralized curricula.

For Badiou, every structured "situation" appears unified but is inherently multiple. Its organizing structure—what he calls the "state of the situation"—determines which elements are represented and which remain unrecognized. In educational terms, the centralized curriculum functions as this structuring representation. While it organizes knowledge coherently, it inevitably excludes certain classroom realities: students' existential questions, local cultural expressions, unexpected dialogues, moments of resistance or creativity. These elements exist within the lived classroom but lack formal recognition. Such exclusions mark a symbolic void—an evental site where something new may emerge.

Badiou distinguishes between knowledge and truth. Knowledge is repeatable, transferable, and already structured; it corresponds to the stabilized content of curricula. Truth, by contrast, emerges as something singular and unforeseen, disrupting established frameworks. When a student's question unsettles a lesson plan or reveals the inadequacy of prescribed content, an Event becomes possible. The Event exposes what the existing curricular structure cannot account for.

However, Events do not automatically produce transformation. Badiou emphasizes fidelity: a sustained commitment to pursuing the consequences of the Event. Applied to education, fidelity means that teachers recognize the significance of emergent classroom moments and resist reducing them to curricular deviations. Through reflective engagement, they reconfigure pedagogical practice in response to these occurrences. In this sense, teachers become subjects not by merely occupying a professional role, but by committing themselves to truths that challenge dominant knowledge.

Educational auto-ethnography becomes a practical mode of sustaining such fidelity. Writing is not simply documentation but critical self-examination. By reflecting on classroom Events and their cultural context, teachers deepen their understanding of structural exclusions and their own participation in them. This reflective writing cultivates responsible listening—an openness to students' voices and silences—and enables teachers to reinterpret curricular mandates creatively rather than mechanically. The classroom thus becomes a space where truth procedures may unfold within, rather than outside, existing structures

Conclusion

Shifting from a centralized to a more dialogical curriculum cannot be

achieved through abrupt structural reform alone. Educational systems tend toward stability, and imposed change often reproduces existing hierarchies. A more sustainable path lies in transforming the teacher's role from executor to critical subject.

Educational auto-ethnography supports this transformation by fostering reflexivity, ethical responsibility, and cultural awareness. Through writing and critical self-analysis, teachers reconstruct their relationship with students, colleagues, and curricular structures. This process strengthens their capacity to evaluate centralized curricula critically and adapt them to students' lived realities. Writing also extends fidelity beyond the individual classroom: by sharing reflections, teachers sensitize others to overlooked possibilities and expand collective awareness.

Ultimately, this article argues that teachers become transformative agents when they remain faithful to emergent truths within their classrooms. Auto-ethnography offers both a methodological tool and an ethical orientation for sustaining this fidelity. By engaging critically with curricular structures and responding attentively to the multiplicity of classroom life, teachers can gradually open spaces for more meaningful, culturally responsive, and truth-oriented educational practices.

Keywords: Educational Autoethnography, Centralized Curriculum, Paulo Freire, Alain Badiou, Truth Event, Praxis

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