Humanising Pedagogy within Higher Education: A Ten-Year Scoping Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

Humanising pedagogical practices calls for the integration of decolonial theoretical perspectives that are informed by subjective social realities and a social justice approach to educational research. This scoping literature review sought to establish the state of research on humanising pedagogy within higher education over a period of ten years, namely 2010 to 2020. We searched numerous electronic databases using a variety of relevant search terms. Studies included were published in English over the ten-year period and were all related to humanising pedagogy within higher education. A total of 11 articles and three scholarly books met the inclusion criteria. The study identified that humanising pedagogy is an emerging field of study as only a limited number of primarily conceptual articles were published during the study period. For the data synthesis, we utilised a thematic analysis approach. The results from the thematic analysis suggest that decoloniality and social justice, engaged principles and practices, and curiosity and creativity could have implications for the global South and pedagogical development in previously colonised educational and cultural heritage settings. Further research should be informed by methodological approaches congruent with social justice imperatives to advance empowered knowledge and research in this field.

Introduction

The process of "learning to perceive social, political and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" is known as critical consciousness (Freire, 1993: 17). Critical consciousness is imperative for students and educators as it provides them with the opportunity to become more fully human (Bartolomé, 1994; Freire, 1970; Salazar, 2008). Freire (1970) states that "mutual humanization" through the development of *conscientização* or critical consciousness is a goal that students and teachers should strive for (as quoted in Salazar, 2013: 131). In addition, critical consciousness has been viewed as a method by which students learn to "think actively and with intentionality and purpose" (Frymer, 2005: 6) about their contributions, and those of society, to the continuation of oppression, injustice and inequity. In this article, these ideas form the basis of what we term 'humanising pedagogy'.

We sought to scope the emerging evidence for humanising pedagogy in higher education and situated the review within a broader debate on this in the global South. Several questions remain to be explored in terms of the extent to which, and how, higher education settings inform current scholarship on humanising pedagogy. To address this need, we focussed the scoping review on higher education from the extant literature on humanising pedagogy. Our specific research question was: what is the nature and extent of research that has been published on humanising pedagogy within higher education in the stipulated ten-year period? Following this introduction, we unpack the scoping review method that we followed to conduct the study. We then discuss the relevant literature on humanising pedagogy and provide conclusions regarding the implications of our analysis.

Research Design

This study utilised a scoping review method which refers to a "preliminary assessment of potential size and scope of available research literature" (Grant & Booth, 2009: 95). A scoping literature review is appropriate for this study with its goal being to investigate the current state of knowledge (Grant & Booth, 2009), in South Africa and internationally, regarding the emergence of humanising pedagogy in relation to higher education.

We searched the following electronic databases for studies that addressed humanising pedagogy within higher education: EBSCOHost (Academic Search Premiere, E-Journals, ERIC, PsycINFO), Google

Scholar, ProQuest, SAGE, ScienceDirect, SPRINGERLink, and Taylor and Francis Online. South African databases utilised included Nexus Research Projects and the Southern African Bibliographic Information Network (SABINET). For our focused search we used the following search terms: "decolonising pedagogies", "humanising consciousness", "humanising pedagogy, andragogy and consciousness", "humanising higher education" and "humanising teaching and learning". The search was further demarcated to include only literature relevant to higher learning and not primary or secondary schools.

We included articles that met the following criteria: firstly, all the reviewed doctoral theses, scholarly books, conference proceedings, and journal articles had to have been published in English in the decade between 1 January 2010 and 31 December 2020. Secondly, all literature had to relate to humanising pedagogy within higher education. We identified 14 publications that met all the inclusion criteria, 11 of which were journal articles and three were scholarly books.

Findings and Discussion

The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) statement (Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff, Altman & the PRISMA Group, 2009) served as a guide for conducting this scoping literature review. Additional relevant literature was located by screening the abstracts, bibliographies and reference lists in relevant journal articles and computer databases. A total of 237 publications were initially identified and considered for inclusion after duplicate records had been removed. We utilised a data summary charting form (Table 1) to summarise and record information pertaining to the included publications (Levac, Colquhoun & O'Brien, 2010). In addition to elementary bibliographic information such as author(s), publication years, and country; the recorded information further included the research approach, design/method, sampling and participants.

The study produced both quantitative and qualitative data through employing a mixed-methods approach. The quantitative data were analysed through the categories of information recorded with the data summary charting form, and the qualitative data were analysed through the six phases of thematic analysis as identified by Braun and Clarke (2006). Table 1 is followed by a report of the quantitative results and a discussion of the qualitative themes that emerged across the publications included in the current scoping review.

Table 1: Summary of publications included in the review

Author(s); publication year	Aim	Research approach; design/method	Sampling; participants	Country
Abraham (2013)	Abraham examined the relevance of Paulo Freire's thinking in contemporary education.	Conceptual; Literature review	None reported	Sweden
Andrew (2012)	Andrew explores the value of innovation through dialogic podcasts.	Conceptual; Action research	Purposive sampling; 26 university students and seven tutors	Australia
Csikosova, Teplicka and Senova (2012)	The study investigates the implementation of new education methods.	Qualitative; Survey	Engineering students and lecturers at a technical university	Slovakia
Devis-Rozental and Clarke (2020)	The study explores how, within practice and or experience, educators applied, embedded, experienced or practised with a humanised approach.	Qualitative; Case studies	University students and lecturers	United Kingdom
Fataar (2016)	Fataar aims to highlight the need for a social-subjective approach to humanising pedagogy from a social justice perspective.	Conceptual	None reported	South Africa
Geduld and Sathorar (2016)	The authors map out the journey towards restructuring the B.Ed. programme in a transforming, post-apartheid, post-merger institution of higher learning.	Conceptual	None reported	South Africa
Leibowitz (2012)	Leibowitz aims to reflect on the role of higher education for the public good.	Qualitative; Case studies	University academic staff and students	South Africa
Lewis (2012)	The author explores using Rancière's aesthetics of politics and politics of aesthetics to become attentive to openings and blockages in reading Freire to ignite collective curiosity.	Conceptual; Literature review	None reported	United States of America
Pirsl and Sazhko (2013)	The authors aimed to humanise the education of science students in the Ukraine.	Quantitative; Survey	Students in higher education	Ukraine
Risner and Schupp (2020)	The authors aim to prepare dance educators to effectively teach an increasingly diverse student population and the persistence of these challenges for dance teacher preparation.	Qualitative; Research-based case studies	Students and dance educators	United States of America

Table 1 continued

Salazar (2013)	The study creates awareness of the need for humanisation in education.	Conceptual; Literature review	None reported	United States of America
Zembylas (2018)	Zembylas offers a perspective on decolonial theorisation for humanising pedagogy.	Conceptual	None reported	South Africa
Zinn, Adam, Kurup and du Plessis (2016)	The authors aimed to explore shared meanings of humanising pedagogy through reflexive practices.	Participatory through the use of visual and arts-based methodologies.	Four teacher educators	South Africa
Zinn and Rodgers (2012)	The authors argue for a humanising pedagogy in response to South Africa's dehumanising past. The article aims to explain the meanings and praxis of humanising pedagogy.	Qualitative; Hermeneutic phenomenology	Purposive sampling; 15 university staff and students; Both male and female; Race: 'black' and 'white'	South Africa

Publication Location

The aim of the publications sampled was to draw attention to the ways in which higher education and aspects thereof could be humanised. Of the 14 items found, five journal articles were published in South Africa (Fataar, 2016; Geduld & Sathorar, 2016; Zembylas, 2018; Zinn, Adam, Kurup & du Plessis, 2016; Zinn & Rodgers, 2012), and two journal articles (Lewis, 2012; Salazar, 2013) were published in the United States of America; whilst the remaining four journal articles (Abraham, 2013; Andrew, 2012; Csikosova, Teplicka & Senova, 2012; Pirsl & Sazhko, 2013) were each produced elsewhere (as can be seen in Table 1). Three scholarly books were included: one published in the United Kingdom (Devis-Rozental & Clarke, 2020), and one each in South Africa (Leibowitz, 2012) and the United States of America (Risner & Schupp, 2020).

Research Methodologies

The majority of the studies were of a conceptual nature (Abraham, 2013; Andrew, 2012; Fataar, 2016; Geduld & Sathorar, 2016; Lewis, 2012; Salazar, 2013; Zembylas, 2018). Three of these conceptual studies incorporated literature reviews (Abraham 2013; Lewis 2012; Salazar, 2013), while another three were purely conceptual (Fataar, 2016; Geduld & Sathorar, 2016; Zembylas, 2018).

Six qualitative studies (Csikosova et al, 2012; Devis-Rozental & Clarke, 2020; Leibowitz, 2012; Risner & Schupp, 2020; Zinn et al, 2016; Zinn & Rodgers, 2012) were included, one of which used

hermeneutic phenomenology (Zinn & Rodgers, 2012), another participatory research (Zinn et al, 2016), and a third made use of a qualitative survey (Csikosova et al, 2012). The other three included a compilation of case studies (Devis-Rozental & Clarke, 2020; Leibowitz, 2012; Risner & Schupp, 2020). Only one study utilised a quantitative survey (Pirsl & Sazhko, 2013). The remaining study (Andrew, 2012) made use of case study action research.

Only one of the studies (Zinn & Rodgers, 2012) addressed elements of trustworthiness (Shenton, 2004), namely credibility and transferability. In the Zinn and Rodgers (2012) study, credibility was addressed by engaging in prolonged and persistent observation. Transferability was addressed in that the data were obtained from a diverse sample of participants, which increased the potential relevance of their findings to other contexts. These findings suggest that there is a need for empirical studies on humanising pedagogy within higher education.

Direct and Indirect Approaches to Humanising Pedagogy in Higher Education

The need to humanise education in South Africa emerged in response to historical dehumanising policies and processes and their current consequences (Fataar, 2016; Zembylas, 2018, Zinn & Rodgers, 2012). Twelve publications (Andrew, 2012; Csikosova et al, 2012; Devis-Rozental & Clarke, 2020; Fataar, 2016; Geduld & Sathorar, 2016; Leibowitz, 2012; Pirsl & Sazhko, 2013; Risner & Schupp, 2020; Salazar, 2013; Zembylas, 2018; Zinn et al, 2016; Zinn & Rodgers, 2012) adopted a direct approach. These studies attempted to bring about an increased awareness (Salazar, 2013) of the need for humanising education in terms of the teaching and learning environment (Andrew, 2012; Csikosova et al, 2012; Risner & Schupp, 2020), teacher education (Geduld & Sathorar, 2016; Zinn et al, 2016), and higher education (Devis-Rozental & Clarke, 2020; Leibowitz, 2012; Pirsl & Sazhko, 2013).

The remaining two publications (Abraham, 2013; Lewis, 2012) pursued an indirect route to humanising education. These articles examined the relevance of Freire's concepts and thinking in contemporary education to transform oppressive processes in order to humanise education. Seven publications included research participants in their studies. Two studies included students in higher education (Pirsl & Sazhko, 2013; Zinn & Rodgers, 2012). University staff and faculty members were participants in two studies (Zinn et al, 2016; Zinn & Rodgers, 2012). The remaining three studies drew perspectives from both students and university teaching staff as participants (Devis-Rozental & Clarke, 2020; Leibowitz, 2012; Risner & Schupp, 2020).

Themes of Humanising Pedagogy in Higher Education

The following three themes emerged from the thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) which was conducted across the literature collected: (i) decoloniality and social justice, (ii) engaged principles and practices, and (iii) curiosity and creativity. We discuss these, citing the relevant studies below.

Decoloniality and Social Justice

The first theme introduces the need for decolonial and social justice theory in humanising pedagogy in higher education settings. To begin with, it has been established in various studies that the call for decolonised education is not a new one (see for example Mamdani, 2016; Mbembe, 2016). A decolonial lens in humanising pedagogy enables the unpacking of the historical trajectories of coloniality in teaching and learning practices. Zembylas (2018) suggests that although there has been an increase in conversations about what decolonisation means for university programmes that are taught, little attention has been paid to the links between the decolonial project and the implications it might have for pedagogical strategies. Zembylas (2018: 1) points out that "there is a political and pragmatic need to reflect critically on what it means to decolonise higher education pedagogies by means of transformative education discourses and practices that reclaim humanity in knowing and knowledge-making". Essentially, critiquing Eurocentric processes of knowledge-making and meaning-making in higher education settings requires that we examine the narratives we create about what we have known to be normal and how this process continues to thrive under the tenets of colonialism. As Kelley (2000: 27) argues, "colonial domination required a whole way of thinking, a discourse in which everything that is advanced, good and civilised is defined and measured in European terms". This, as Heleta (2016: 2) argues, existed as a unique process where "colonial education played an instrumental role, promoting and imposing the Eurocentric 'ways' and worldviews while subjugating everything else". From this standpoint, it is imperative that any analytical task on humanising pedagogy in higher education involves the ways that coloniality has informed the conceptualisation of curricula in university spaces. This is a defining aspect as it relates to who quantifies and prescribes value to teaching and learning and to whom.

In Leibowitz (2012), Subreenduth, in Chapter 10, borrows from two social justice theorists, namely the work of Kevin Kumashiro and bell hooks, in order to advocate for decolonising pedagogies. Subreenduth argues that if educators are to engage in decolonising pedagogies, that they ought to do more than merely read but participate through dialogue in diverse, socio-political environments.

Similarly, Fataar (2016) contends with the lack of theoretical development of educational research in the South African context. Here, the concern is that much of the research is insufficiently located in the sociology of education more broadly, and through Fraser's (2009) social justice orientation more specifically. This line of thinking is useful for humanising pedagogy in higher education as it draws on redistribution as a key element for advancing humanised methods of teaching and learning. The dimension of redistribution focuses on "the pedagogical transfer (redistribution) of school knowledge" (Fataar, 2016: 19). Fataar expands this framing by introducing two other dimensions in social justice, namely recognition and participation, that could further this advancement. Here, Fataar (2016) operates from a recognition that the life knowledges of students can be integrated into schooling knowledges that they are taught. Fraser's (2009) perspective is another dimension of social justice and does not simply see teaching as a unidirectional process where teachers share what they know with students and learners. Instead, it solidifies the view that knowledge sharing is collaborative and "that knowledge is participative and generative, not simply consumed" (Fataar, 2016: 9).

A social justice orientation in humanising pedagogies within higher education is useful in the context of the global South for the following reasons. By drawing on the concept of social justice as pedagogical justice, Fataar (2015, 2016) has been able to show that understanding the social realities of educators and learners in their subjectivities is important for pedagogies grounded in the full human experience. We argue that the value of this framing for the global South lies in its commitment towards enhancing principles of humanising pedagogy by viewing knowledge as something to be passed on (redistributive) for the benefit of empowerment. Secondly, by seeing students as carriers of knowledge systems that can and should inform curricula, thereby diminishing epistemic 'othering' (Keet, 2014). Finally, a participative dimension strengthens humanising pedagogy primarily because involvement in educational or learning processes encourages critical reflection. Learning processes are often underpinned by principles and practices, which are elaborated on in the second theme.

Engaged Principles and Practices

The second theme was based on the principles that teachers who practise a humanising pedagogy understand this approach and, secondly, the types of practices they employ. Humanising pedagogy, as a field of inquiry, is guided by principles and practices that may assist teachers and students to develop consciousness of their freedom to access or produce knowledge and to take constructive

action (Salazar, 2013). In that regard, the existence and expansion of students' humanity are at the heart of a humanising pedagogy (Zinn & Rodgers, 2012). Gore (1993) summarises the tension between theory and practice of pedagogy through the notions of pedagogical practice and pedagogical project. Gore describes pedagogical practice as offering concrete suggestions intended to help educators, in contrast to pedagogical projects that promote educational theory through abstract political rhetoric. Sustaining the work on humanising pedagogy is located in the practical application of humanising pedagogy, where statements of awareness (Zinn & Rodgers, 2012) meet the realities of practice.

Csikosova et al (2012) researched new methods of education at a technical university in Košice, Slovakia. They identified a qualitative change of character, forms and conditions for mutual relations between pedagogues and students at the university. In addition, students appreciated the opportunities to participate in e-learning. Lastly, Csikosova et al (2012) reveal that e-learning would be effective in cases where teacher and student observe the frame of mutual communication, respect each other, and accept the cultural norms and specification of a given country. The study by Andrew (2012) identified three themes regarding how best to humanise e-learning and engage online writing students via dialogic video. The first theme concerned the benefits of students seeing their tutors, including knowing one's tutor's personality, the informal nature of conversations and discussions, and lastly reducing the isolation of online studies. The second theme dealt with unlocking understanding. It consisted of using different media that solidify learning, and variations in dynamics that aid engagement and consolidate moments of serendipity. The third and final theme was associated with students becoming part of online discussions and feeling as if they were actually attending a university lecture in person.

Fataar (2016), on engaging the social-subjective in educational theorisations, encourages pedagogies that support the ways in which young people mobilise their educational resources and networks across different spaces to facilitate their own learning. Students' full humanity is honoured when educationalists confirm students' aspirations through critical reflection and action (Salazar, 2013). Related to humanity, Devis-Rozental and Clarke (2020) argue that a focus on well-being and other associated positive psychology constructs are needed to humanise higher education. These authors propose that the creation of a community of humanised higher education will contribute positively towards the mental health of both students and staff alike. Teaching and learning transpire in the relationship with the world, others and oneself (Zinn & Rodgers, 2012). Moreover, learning is vast and extends outside the self to embrace the other and the natural world where mutual vulnerability

and mutual exchange is found (Zinn & Rodgers, 2012). Therefore, education is not merely for the benefit of the individual but likewise the community, nation and the world as we are connected to each other and to the world (Zinn & Rodgers, 2012). For instance, in Africanist settings, the concept of Ubuntu or relational connectedness (Mbiti, 1969) presents a humanising pedagogy in its implementation (Mapaling & Plaatjes, 2019). In this regard, learning necessitates hope for a future that includes oneself (Zinn & Rodgers, 2012). The self is a site for curiosity and creativity, a discussion of which follows in the subsequent theme.

Curiosity and Creativity

The third and final theme was based on humanising pedagogy being enacted in higher education in ways that invite or inspire curiosity and creativity. Lewis (2012) asserts that curiosity is a creatively synesthetic moment where what can be sensed is sensed differently, in new variations, combinations and radically heterogeneous chains of equivalence. Additionally, he asserts that curiosity should be embraced openly and that those moments of sensorial appearance should be studied. Lewis (2012) emphasises that the pensiveness in Freire's writing is the quality that constantly causes disruptions in the distribution of roles. Lastly, Lewis (2012) holds that curiosity involves remaining attentive to the pensiveness of both students and teachers. Commenting on dance as a meaningful pedagogy for students living with disabilities, Risner and Schupp (2020: 40) state that "through dance, students with disabilities learn that their experiences and their voices are recognized, accepted, and included". For these students, new possibilities are crafted through the creativity offered through dance by sharing their multiple perspectives and social realities.

While the focus of this article is the emerging scholarship on humanising pedagogy, it is important to note that the nature and function of humanising pedagogy is informed by the need to address institutional structures that continue to uphold Eurocentric forms of knowledge production in learning spaces. In South Africa, the call by the #FeesMustFall student movement for a decolonised education and decolonised universities reached its zenith in 2017. The voices of students raised key questions about the emergence of humanising pedagogy as a result of their lived experiences and its potential impact towards fostering empowered lives for those marginalised on the basis of race, gender, social class, and other factors in institutions of higher learning. These questions centred largely on the historical context within which teaching and learning practices are situated and developed. Implications of a humanising pedagogy are provided in the conclusion that follows, and thereafter, limitations of the current study and recommendations for future studies are discussed.

Conclusion

This scoping literature review aimed at determining the present state of publications in English on humanising pedagogy within higher education between 1 January 2010 and 31 December 2020. The review identified a dearth of published research studies in the field of humanising pedagogy that met the inclusion criteria of the study and, based on this, we conclude that humanising pedagogy is an emerging field of study. Moreover, researchers in the field of humanising pedagogy have produced mainly conceptual studies, which are appropriate in emerging fields of study. The three themes, namely (i) decoloniality and social justice, (ii) engaged principles and practices, and (iii) curiosity and creativity, bear implications for the global South and further implications for pedagogical development in African educational and cultural heritage settings.

Certain limitations of the current study are acknowledged. This study was a scoping literature review to chart primary themes regarding humanising pedagogy within higher education. As a result, the findings of the study are preliminary and cannot be generalised. Scoping reviews aim at identifying as many relevant studies as possible pertaining to a particular research question (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Levac et al, 2010). These limitations could be due to a paucity of writings on humanising pedagogy scholarship as it relates to the decolonial project in institutions of higher learning.

If researchers in the field of humanising pedagogy are to make a significant and meaningful scientific impact, the research profile of this field will need to accelerate, and researchers will need to prioritise the use of recent developments in methodologies that are appropriate to address the urgent systemic needs for social justice in different socio-political contexts (Macleod, 2004; Pillay, 2017; Wilson, 2001). We believe the findings of this scoping review support and extend this argument allowing researchers and educators to rethink the ways in which we approach humanising pedagogies within higher education. This is in terms of the questions that we ask, our reasons for asking these questions rather than others (Mapaling & Plaatjes, 2019), the theoretical positions we choose, and the methodological choices we make in attempting to answer them.

We recommend that future research should include publications in other languages in addition to English. In addition, the future viability and development of the field of humanising pedagogy would benefit from additional empirical research employing methodologies informed by social justice and systemic theory and practices while continuing to refine conceptualisations of humanising pedagogy.

Acknowledgements

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