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Broader Strokes: The Curricular and Pedagogical Possibilities of Multiage Educational Settings

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Abstract

Multiage classrooms seem to be an idea of the past, as students in most schools across the country are grouped by age. However, research by Goldman (1981), Rhoades (1966), and Eisner (2003) argue that multiage grouping has significant social, behavioral, and intellectual advantages for students. Using educational criticism and connoisseurship as a methodology, this article examines the accounts of a professor who taught in a multiage school environment within the United States, as well as observations of a multiage school in the Masaka district of Uganda. This study aims to understand how curriculum and pedagogy interact within multiage system, as well as whether those interactions help or hinder students. Through interviews observations, and classroom artifacts, it was found as Perez, Breault, and White (2014) argue curriculum functions as a space, not only a given content trajectory. Additionally, it was found that in creating a space where community was encouraged, the school was able to move toward pedagogy of love.

Keywords

Multiage Education, Uganda, Africa, Elementary Education, Care Theory, Curriculum as Spaces, Connoisseurship

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Multiage classrooms seem to be an idea of the past, as students in most schools across the country are grouped by age. However, research by Goldman (1981), Rhoades (1966), and Eisner (2003) argue that multiage grouping has significant social, behavioral, and intellectual advantages for students. Using educational criticism and connoisseurship as a methodology, this article examines the accounts of a professor who taught in a multiage school environment within the United States, as well as observations of a multiage school in the Masaka district of Uganda. This study aims to understand how curriculum and pedagogy interact within multiage system, as well as whether those interactions help or hinder students. Through interviews observations, and classroom artifacts, it was found as Perez, Breault, and White (2014) argue curriculum functions as a space, not only a given content trajectory. Additionally, it was found that in creating a space where community was encouraged, the school was able to move toward pedagogy of love. Keywords: Multiage Education, Uganda, Africa, Elementary Education, Care Theory, Curriculum as Spaces, Connoisseurship

As is often the case, I went to Africa to help but found myself helped in the process. I visited a crowded K-12 School in Uganda and felt impressed that the wide range of ages seemed to naturally co-exist. Intrigued by this observation, I chose multi-age classrooms as a topic for a literature review assignment and found them to have many possible benefits. In fact, separating students into grades based on ages is a relatively new development in the conceptualization of schools. In the United States, sorting students by age begins as consequence of the testing movement dating back to the 1840's (Reese, 2013). Large urban centers with limited resources further made sorting students by age the organizational strategy for most schools. As Bobbitt (1918) and others applied the factory model engineering principles of Taylorism (Au, 2011), children were further separated into grades. Graded classrooms allowed for ways to calibrate the curriculum and measure learning, which provided evidence for disciplining teachers. Yet some multi-age classrooms remained throughout the United States, particularly in rural settings.

Over time, educational researchers have found benefits to multi-age educational settings, including less aggressive (Rhoades, 1966) and more sociable (Goldman, 1981) behaviors than those in single-age classes. Bizman, Yinon, Mivtzari, and Shavit, (1978) found that children in age-heterogeneous kindergartens were significantly more altruistic than children in age-homogeneous kindergartens. In a multiage situation, children will more readily find friends at their own level. Fewer instances of isolation are also found in multiage classrooms (Adams, 1953; Zerby, 1961). Younger children are particularly helpful in reducing the isolation of socially withdrawn older children when assigned to them as playmates (Furman, Rahe, & Hartup, 1979). Goodland and Anderson (1987) even found multiage classrooms to support the overall well-being of children.

Though the standardized testing movement has further entrenched the Tayloristic qualities of control (Au, 2011) and, in doing so, reinforced the ontological assumption that children should come to the same place in their learning at the same time (Eisner, 2003), multiage classrooms remain throughout the U.S. and beyond. For example, Montessori schools, engendered from the ideas of Maria Montessori (1966), intentionally utilize multiage classrooms. In other instances, schools have experimented with multiage classrooms as a way of school reform. In Uhrmacher and Bunn's (2011) edited book, *Beyond the One Room School*, Regina Weir shares her account of observing a multiage elementary classroom for over a year, in which she notices a learning space filled with discovery and community. While multiage classrooms have their advantages and are used intentionally, there are also times when multiage is the only option. Brown (2010) found many instances in Africa where multiage schools are used as a means of necessity. With a growing number of both youth and adults entering school for the first time, or sometimes reentering school due to ongoing civil wars and conflicts, combined with limited resources, like teachers and books, multiage classrooms have become so common that there are multiage pedagogical approaches taught at universities throughout Africa. Although, Kivunja (2014) found teachers in Uganda and Zambia often lack multiage pedagogical training.

Feeling inspired by the literature supporting multiage learning, I struck up a conversation with one of my professors, Leslee, about her experiences as a multiage elementary teacher, to which she said:

> I was a classroom teacher and reading specialist in our school district. I found that several of the teachers in the primary classrooms were interested in developing a research based multiage program similar to the non-graded primaries mandated in Kentucky elementary schools. We were also interested in incorporating readers/writers workshop with a focus on the Multiple Intelligences theory to meet the needs of our individual students. Our principal, school administration, families and community gave us full support. What started as a few classroom teachers looking for ways to better meet the needs of their students, blossomed into many years of friendship and respect for the knowledgeable and innovative people who were so helpful to the multiage primary. With the support and hard work of many others, the staff began to see the results and positive benefits of our efforts. Our school was a transient, Title I school and yet our students consistently maintained the highest outcome testing scores in our district for many years while. Our students also showed a love and motivation for learning as well as high self-esteem shown on social/emotional testing. Our principal always told us that multiage classrooms enable every student to reach potential and "raise every boat in the harbor." He was right.

As I considered Leslee's experience and the developing argument of my literature review, I decided to team up with my professors, Dan and Leslee, to further investigate the curriculum space of the multiage school I found in Uganda.

While the curriculum is often treated as a given, a predetermined trajectory of content and skills, curricular discourse remains. Long lasting arguments from Dewey, Rosenblatt, Montessori, Eisner, Pinar, Greene, Noddings, and others inconveniently challenge the intellectual and moral realities of contemporary curricular reform efforts. In these traditions of curricular discourse, Perez, Breault, and White (2014) argue that curricula can be understood as spaces, "rooted in aesthetics, community, politics, and transactional pedagogies" (p. XVI).

The primary purpose of this study is to understand the curricular space of multiage setting I saw in Uganda.

Methodology

In an attempt to understand the curricular space of the multiage school in Uganda, we developed the following research questions: How do the curriculum and pedagogy interact at multiage school in Uganda? Are these interactions helping or hindering students? The interactions are defined in Eisner's (1988) ecology of school improvement, in intentions, structural realities, curricula, pedagogies, and evaluative pressures interactive with one another as members of an ecological framework. The reason we chose this particular school was for two major reasons:

- I had an opportunity to go back to Crane School, which made it convenient given the circumstances of research.
- In designing the research question we thought it was interesting the Crane School is multi-age out of necessity and wondered if the multi-age dimension dynamic help or hinders learning in the school.

To answer the research question, we turn to educational connoisseurship and criticism (Eisner 1998). This methodology has two main dimensions: connoisseurship and criticism. Connoisseurship, with regard to education, calls on refined understandings of curricula, pedagogy, and learning environments. Educational criticism, in turn, provides insights taken from the connoisseurship phase. In the criticism phase, descriptive, interpretative, evaluative, and thematic aspects work together to form a system of inquiry.

The descriptive and interpretive aspects are rendered through vignettes to answer the following questions "What does the situation mean to those involved? How does this classroom operate? What ideas, concepts, or theories can be used to explain its major features?" (Eisner, 2002, p. 229). Next, we offer evaluative insights to answer the original research question. Finally, we attempt to make sense of what is happening by considering existing theories in an effort to provide a broader perspective of our findings (Eisner, 2002).

Design of the Study

I traveled back to Uganda to study the school that captured my imagination, Crane School. This study begins through an interview headmaster of Crane School, Paul. I interviewed Paul individually about his approach to teaching a wide range of ages and the curricular decisions he and the other teachers make, to which I used an electronic recorder to capture what Paul said. The electronic recordings were transcribed for the purpose of data analysis. I gave Paul a copy of the transcripts to ensure he was accurately represented, in order to give him an opportunity to clarify any possible misunderstandings.

After the interview, I observed the school for four days in an effort to describe and interpret the curricular space of the school. I recorded the observations in my research journal and took some video footage to better capture their educational realities. Through the use of vignettes we described and interpreted the curricular space of the school. In rendering our descriptions, interpretations, and criticisms, we drew from the literature as well as our own experiences to help illuminate new understandings concerning how the framework of multiage curricular space functions.

Pseudonyms were used to protect participants' identities as well as any individual names that happen to surface during the study. Any information obtained that could

compromise the identity of the participants and the school will remain confidential. All recordings and transcriptions will be kept in a secure location until the study is published.

Credibility

Credibility is established through structural corroboration, consensual validation, and referential adequacy (Eisner, 1998). Structural corroboration means the data from one source will be verified from the other data sources. Consensual validation means we check the accuracy of our descriptions and interpretations by confirming the transcripts from the interviews with Paul as a form of member checking. Referential adequacy is key for establishing credibility in educational criticism research (Eisner, 2002). To have referential adequacy means that we will be able to shed new light on the object of the study in a way that is useful to the larger educational field. "If the talk or writing is useful, we should be able to experience the object or situation in a new, more adequate way" (Eisner, 2002, p. 239). As the writings of a wine critic help the wine taster to notice the subtlety of flavors and have a more complete experience with a particular wine, we aim to help the reader to have a fuller appreciation of multiage curricula and their implications on teaching and learning.

Descriptions and Interpretations

"Dad!"

Paul, standing five and a half feet, is a very distinguished man in his community. He speaks softly and gently, regardless of who he is addressing. He is often smiling, something that is uncommon in the Ugandan culture. His smile is contagious, white teeth contrasting sharply against his dark skin. His eyes, on the other-hand, are slightly sunken in, and tell of the hardships and trials he has faced in his thirty-three years.

Born and raised in the Kirinda village of the Masaka district of Uganda, Paul has always had a love for learning. Paul was born in 1983, a time of severe violence and civil war in Uganda. Two main groups, the Lord's Resistance Army and Allied Democratic Forces, rebelled against the government, performing brutal acts of violence, and often kidnapping children to do their fighting. Paul reflects, "In those years, our parents used to put us in schools early … Not leave us at home for the rebels to find us there." The aftermath of the civil war was devastating, leaving hundreds dead and over 400 thousand homeless. To this day the people of Uganda feel the effects of this crippling civil war.

> So I studied primary for seven years, plus the other year for nursery. And thereafter, I went to secondary, um for 4 years. We have what we call "ordinary level" it takes only four years. From there I joined university. Before University you have to go for advanced level for three years. So I went to advanced level for three years. Thereafter I went to University for three years.

I first met Paul in 2012. The short, soft-spoken man drove us down the unkempt African road. Swerving to miss a hole in the road, he explained in his thick Ugandan accent that he and his wife had just purchased a small piece of land. As we bounced along the rugged road, he shared his dream to one-day build a school. It was clear that he cared tremendously about the youth in his village and that he valued education very highly. Prior to the purchase of the land, the couple, both holding a degree in education, had opened up their home as a school. However, it was becoming problematic, as there were too many students and not enough room. Shortly after our first meeting, Paul's dream became a reality and a small school was built.

When I returned in May of 2016, I was amazed at how much had changed. The small piece of land had quadrupled. As we drove onto the complex, Paul honked his horn, and then waited for a student to open the 20-foot gate with razor wire on top. As the gate was opened, I stared wide-eyed. What had once been just a small plot of land was now a beautiful compound with many orange and white stucco buildings. To my right, there were garden plots, an office building, two school buildings and a kitchen. To the left was the orphanage, latrine, and dormitory. In the center of the compound, was a large pile of thin logs, "to build a cafeteria for the students to eat in," Paul explained. A group of boys played soccer with a ball of tattered rags tied together, stained red from the soil. A group of girls sat outside of the orphanage playing dominoes. As we drove onto the compound, many came running after us. As soon, as we stepped out of the vehicle, about 30 students came running up to Paul, yelling "Dad, Dad!"

I watched intently as Paul interacted with his students. There are 652 students who now attend school at Crane Primary and Nursery School. He knew every child by name, and greeted each one as they approached us. To many of his students, Paul is seen as a father figure. To forty of the students who have been orphaned, Paul has stepped in to be their father all of the time. To the rest, Paul is a disciplinarian, an advocate, and an encourager to the children throughout the school year.

It is common in Uganda for children go to school from 9 o'clock in the morning to 5 o'clock in the evening. Often, those who are able begin attending Crane School when they are three years old and are often 21 years or older before going to college. However, in Uganda classrooms are not segregated by age. Paul described it this way:

> As far as the age group. We don't have an age group, because you may have a person as old as 19, or 20, or even 30 being enrolled in primary. So it all depends on one's ability, your learning skills, how you integrate things you've been taught by your parent, [and] the way you grasp the content in class.

As we talked, Paul told of many classrooms in which held a wide range of ages. He said that the widest age range he has ever had in one classroom at Crane Primary and Nursery school had 6-year-olds as the youngest, and a thirty-year-old as the oldest student in the brief history of Crane School. There are various reasons for this large spread of age. According to the United Nations (UNdata, 2016), Uganda is said to be the second youngest country in the world because nearly half of its population of 40 million is under the age of 15. Many families have multiple children but do not have enough money for school fees. Some families may be able to pay for school fees for one child, but the others many have to work in order to earn money to help support their families, and to save up for school. Other students may start school and have to drop out to work for a time, to earn money for their families or school fees. Consequently, students may start school at many different ages. Another reason that multiage classrooms exist in Uganda is because of sickness. Due to Malaria and HIV/AIDS students or a parent may become ill, forcing the student to miss a long period of school. At the time of this study two students and Paul were battling Malaria.

With my eyes fixed on multiage educational settings, I began my observation in primary one class. This class is composed of over 80 five-, six-, and seven-year-olds. In the following vignette, I attempt to paint a picture of what a multiage classroom in Uganda looks like.

"It's Loud"

Walking into the classroom, one may be overwhelmed by how crowded it is, even before the children enter. The classroom is set up in 8 long rows of benches and tables, each row contains three 10-foot benches. Three large blackboards occupy the entire front wall. On

the first blackboard, the date, and school motto are written in white chalk. The handwriting is precise. Covering every square inch of the remaining three walls are very large yellow, pink, and green sticky notes. Some notes have vocabulary words; others have sentences and pictures written on them. One yellow note reads, "important places in our community." Under this heading are labeled pictures of a mosque, a church, a school and a hospital. An orange note has "foods we eat" written on it, followed by a drawing and label of a cassava, Irish potatoes, bananas, and beans. There are hundreds more around the room, all reviewing content that has been previously taught.

Three young teachers stand near the entrance, waiting for the children to arrive for the day. Around nine o'clock the students, dressed in blue and white uniforms, file in quietly, one by one. They take a seat, giggling and whispering excitedly to each other as they notice visitors sitting in the back. When all eighty students have entered the room, one teacher named Ruth, who the students call "teacher," quickly quiets the energetic young students by saying "Good morning class." To which all eighty students stand and reply, "Good morning, Teacher." Ruth then immediately started to review the science content taught in previous lessons. She says in a melodic voice, "Rain, rain, rain." To which the children reply in heavy accents, "Rain-y, rain, Rain-y, you are so good! You bring us water, (rain falling), for drinking, (pretending to drink) for bathing (wash arms) for washing (wash feet), for cooking (stir a pot), oh rain-y you are so good! (Jump)." They repeat this a second time in Luganda, this time it is noticeably softer. When all eighty-six high-pitched voices join together once again in English, it is incredibly loud. It is so loud, in fact, that one may be tempted to cover his or her ears at times. The lower primary grades can be heard across the entire compound. The students go through rhymes about plants, the sun, and soil as well.

When the students have finished reciting, Ruth takes control again. In a conversation with her before the school day began, Ruth explained that many of the students have been up working for their families before the sun was even up. Some have had to walk over five miles one way to fetch water for the day. These challenges have resulted in quite a few exhausted students. She also knows that many have lost one or both parents to sickness or malnutrition, leaving these children to look after their younger siblings, a burden very heavy for a first grader to carry. Yet, she also knows how much their futures will be affected by education. Ruth understands how crucial it is for the students to enjoy school and develop a love for learning.

In the next phase of the lesson, Ruth sings out, "I am so happy!" The children reply excitedly, "I am so happy!" Ruth says, "Jump, jump." The children chant, "I like jumping!" while jumping as high as they can. Ruth says, "Clap, clap!" The students begin clapping in perfect rhythm while chanting, "I like clapping." Ruth says, "Squat, Squat." "I like squatting," reply the students as they squat down as low as they can go. "Dance, dance," continues Ruth. The students reply, "I like dancing," and begin moving their hips in the traditional Ugandan dance. "Dance, dance," she repeats. "I like dancing," reply the students, getting more into their dance. The mood has changed. The students who seemed tired or sad before are now laughing and smiling.

The temperature has risen noticeably in the classroom, as over 80 little bodies jump and dance, and the sun rises higher over the Equatorial country. The temperature is now well over ninety degrees Fahrenheit in the classroom. When the students have finished singing, Ruth picks up a long, wooden, pointing stick. She points with the 10-foot long stick to the top of the first black board, and says, "What is today's date? The students recite, "Today is Tuesday, the sixth of June, 2016." "What class are you in?" Ruth asks. "I am in Primary One," The students reply in unison. "What is your school?" "My school is Crane Primary and Nursery School. The vision of my school is 'We aspire to inspire.'" "What are we going to learn now?" "We are going to learn English."

Ruth instructs the students to sit down, and all of them do immediately. Due to the lack or resources, the students have very little paper. With limited resources, the teachers must write every question out on the black board or ask them orally. The students will number their small notebook and write their answers there. Ruth writes all five of the questions she deems the most important on the board, her handwriting meticulous and slow. The first question is a picture of a book. Beside it Ruth has written, "This is a _____." She moves on to the next question. During this time, a second teacher walks around sharpening students' pencils with a knife. When Ruth has finished writing, the students get right to work. The students write their answers on a small piece of paper and turn them in to one of the other teachers.

This routine continues throughout the day. The teachers each teach two or three subjects. Because of the lack of resources, most of the instruction is given orally. Singing and dancing is incorporated whenever possible. Dancing is an enormous part of the everyday culture in Uganda. When a student is called on to answer a question, and answers correctly, Ruth leads the students in saying, "Clap, clap, clap. Clap, clap, clap, for you, for you." If the students answer incorrectly, Ruth just smiles and says, "not quite," and quickly moves the attention off of that student. The facial expressions of most of the students indicate they are thoroughly engaged throughout the day. The children are often smiling after singing and dancing, and they appear to be excited to find out what they will learn next.

A Safe Space

Schools in Uganda face enormous pressure, as a result of limited funds, scarce resources, and high stakes standardized testing. Yet, when I discussed these issues with Paul, he seemed far less concerned with test scores that seem to determine the success of the school. I asked him what he hoped his students would learn, expecting to hear reading, writing, arithmetic, and problem solving skills. Instead, this was his response:

> We want to teach them discipline. We teach them how to socialize. We teach them character habits, we give them skills, vocational skills. Umm…we also emphasize religion. Because we respect each and every religions faith, so that if one does not believe in the bible. So here on Monday… in the morning hours we give one and half hours to the Catholics, the priest comes here and collects prayers with them. For the Muslims, their Sheikh comes to get their prayers. The "born-agains," we come here and we have our prayers.

I asked how he knew if his students learned from him or his school. He explained that he believed that a student has learned when they or their discipline has changed. I proceeded to ask for an example of a specific student. Paul:

> Yes! We had a student Kyomuhendo and that one. . . was very stubborn. By the time he joined us he was very stubborn. But one year after the person changed, and now, he is one of the most disciplined children we have. Another example this is Mark. We have street kids who are educated here. From the places where they were before they were here, they were telling the others "we are stubborn, we are doing a lot of dubious acts. When they joined, it was not easy. They would even steal from the school. They would steal food and objects from the school, but now days, they have changed.

In Uganda, many children are orphaned or abandoned. With nowhere to go and no one to take care of them, they turn to the streets. They steal to survive. If anyone is caught stealing, no

matter the reason, the penalty is death or severe beating. The villagers often perform "mob justice" on thieves regardless of age.

The street children sleep on roofs or on the ground around buildings. Sleeping in the open leaves the children even more vulnerable to Malaria and yellow fever. Many children also turn to drugs and alcohol to numb the emotional and physical pain that they feel from starvation, injury, and loss of loved ones. On the streets, small packets are sold for 500 shillings, (less than a penny). These packets contain liqueur that is 60 percent alcohol, enough to burn their throats and mouths.

To most, these children are useless. They are pests in the community, being thieves, liars, and beggars, resorting to violence when threatened. They break every rule of society in order to survive. Most schools in Uganda will not accept street children, even if they have the funds. However, Crane Primary and Nursery School, has partnered with a local organization that houses street kids. Currently, there are over fifty street kids who attend school at Crane. I was shocked to hear this, but I was even more shocked when I heard that most of them had not paid the school funds for 2015 until 2016. Paul simply said, "They will pay what they can when they are able to. We know we will get the money eventually." Creating a space for children to be loved and to learn was far more important to Paul than money, regardless of the fact that the school is very under funded.

Crane is a very crowded school. The 652 students represent a very diverse population. Of the 652 students, 40 of them are complete orphans. This means that they do not have a single living relative. Paul, his wife, and the other teachers and students, are the closest thing these children have to family. These students live at the school all year long. As mentioned, 50 of the students are considered "street kids." These students stay at a home nearby, with over thirty more children, over 80 total. Others come from far away because of the reputation of this school. These students reside at the dormitory during the school year and return home over breaks. Children who live within ten miles will usually walk to and from school. Each student has a story. Many of these stories are heart-breaking and speak of tragedy far greater than their years. Yet, when they enter the gate of Crane Primary and Nursery School, the students have a place where they can feel safe and cared for.

One final trait that sets Crane Primary and Nursery school apart from surrounding schools, is that they refuse to beat children. In Ugandan culture, it is acceptable and common to beat kids with a rod or stick when they misbehave. However, at Crane, Paul refuses to let that happen:

> Beating kids isn't allowed. Sometimes teachers may do it in hiding. Kids are normally beaten for being stubborn, failing to do what teachers tell them to do, stealing others property. As a school, we encourage the use of other punishments than beating.

The other forms of punishments for students may include:

- kneeling down, a common sign of respect in Uganda
- writing an apology letter
- paying restitution for broken or stolen items.

Paul believes that these forms of punishment are more effective. He continued to explain that if a teacher is caught it is considered corporal punishment and can lead to the immediate expulsion of the teacher. Crane School continues to move toward non-violent means of pedagogy.

Themes and Implications

As we looked across the field notes, transcripts, and artifacts from my trip to Crane School, we noticed two major themes in which our research questions can be addressed: curriculum as a space and a pedagogy of love.

A Curriculum Space

A mentioned, Perez, Breault, and White (2014) found curricula function more like a space rooted in aesthetics, community and politics than it does a trajectory of accumulating content knowledge. We notice this curriculum space at Crane School, where songs and dance breathe life into the explicit curriculum. A community of family and tolerance provides learning well beyond behavioral objectives and content standards. The politics of water, food, land, and religion spill into what the children chose to read, write and talk about. This space is occupied by competing pedagogies of liberation and oppression (Freire, 2014). A banking system transfers content like a gift of mercy, from teachers to students and eventually into entrance exams conceptualized by colonizing systems of the dominance. However, Noddings (2012) argues that teachers must instead create an environment in which teachers are able to, "meet individual needs, impart knowledge, and encourage the development of moral people," (p. 777). Noddings argues further that impactful teaching has its foundation in relationships, stating, "Every human life starts in relation, and it is through relations that a human individual emerges," (p. 771). We found Paul and Ruth building relationships with their students based on love and empowerment. While oppressive functions of punishment were apparent, spanking was being eradicated from the school.

Toward a Pedagogy of Love

We certainly do not intend to impose our own colonizing ways through editorial commentary, we felt hopeful at the overall possibilities of a better world for the students of Crane School. As Noddings (2012) states

> A climate in which caring relations can flourish should be a goal for all teachers and educational policymakers. In such a climate, we can best meet indicidual needs, impart knowledge, and encourage the development of moral people . . . A climate of care and trust is one in which most people will want to do the right thing, will want to be good. (p. 777)

At Crane School, we found a curriculum space built on aesthetics, family and political desperation. Singing and dancing functioned as the practical way of orchestrating the classrooms. With the exception of a few, we found teachers who were focused on creating the "discipline" and development of the whole child, not just While it was not an option to separate students into grades based on age, the pragmatism of the multiage school allows for a family atmosphere within the community where love flows toward a better tomorrow for the students. Water was an important theme of the curriculum, which allowed for dialogue. We found the interaction of the curriculum and pedagogy at Crane School does seem to help more than it hinders. As Greene (2000) argues "the creation of communities in classrooms may be one of of the most difficult and yet most essential undertakings in the schools of the future" (p. 273). We can see how the multiage classroom leads to community, which leads discourse. We can see a space where liberation is possible. We can see a place where it is possible to dream for a better tomorrow.

Limitations

We struggled to write this article because of the political and social biases of our critical eye. This was simply an attempt to make sense of the implications of multiage classrooms by necessity. We wondered if broader strokes with curriculum and pedagogy would allow for a better way to learn. Therefore, this article is limited to the ontological interpretations of what it means to learn. This article only focuses on one school, and we only observed that school over the course of a few days. This article is not meant to speak for anything beyond the curiosity of the authors and the possible implications of multiage settings.

Future Research

This article focused on one school from a larger study. As a class assignment transpired into a study about multiage learning environments, this particular aspect of the study became too big to fit into an article with other multiage educational environments. We made the decision to write about this particular setting because it required every last available page to try and describe and interpret Crane School. Thus, we plan to report on the curricular and pedagogical interactions at other multiage settings. We also think it would be interesting to continue exploring Freirian ideals in Africa. We did not intend to go into Freire, but our findings kept pointing toward a pedagogy of love (Freire, 2014).

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