



Critical pedagogy in the eyes of Jesus Christ's teachings: A historical study

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Abstract

Even though previous research points to the effectiveness of Jesus' use of parables as a pedagogical technique, there is limited research regarding the other pedagogical techniques used by Jesus during his ministry and their attendant robustness and significance in early childhood classroom settings. The current study used a historical research design to explore critical pedagogy in the eyes of Jesus Christ's teachings and their related significance in early childhood context. The four New Testament Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) translated into English from the original Greek are primary sources of the data. Documentary analysis procedure was used in analysing the data. The study's findings revealed that Jesus used various forms of critical pedagogy. On many occasions, he used parables, questions and poetry to achieve his teaching goals such as critical thinking, internal change and harmonious living. Even though he had frequent interactions with individuals and small groups, he also lectured large crowds. Though, he hardly ever used re-enactment as a teaching technique, he used it with such dexterity that it has become an essential teaching tool for his followers. His private and public use of prayer gave his learners content but also a model to follow. For learning in the affective domain, he used apprenticeship. By the means of humour and silence, he modelled both how to teach and how to live a life worthy of emulation. When teaching in early childhood settings is defined by lived experiences, activity-based learning, small group work, individual activity, care and concern for others, and reflections, then it has footprints of the critical pedagogy Jesus Christ used.

Keywords: Educational; Theories, Pedagogy; Critical; Jesus Christ; Affective

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1. Introduction

The desire to transform society is underpinned by the belief that change is possible through the process of raising awareness and promoting a desire to take transformative action (Matthews, 2014). Guilherme (2017) argues that critical pedagogy has the potential of developing critical thinking because it equips the learner with the ability to find innovative ways of dealing with challenges in society. Jesus Christ exemplifies a teacher who used critical pedagogy to greatly influence the course of human history during the second millennium. The Times Magazine concluded that without any shred of doubt that the single most powerful figure not merely in these two millennia but in all human history has been Jesus of Christ (December 6, 1999). Whereas many would doubt this conclusion, only a few would deny Jesus a place among the great teachers of all times in the world. As a founder of Christianity, Jesus has greatly shaped and continues to shape political, intellectual, social and spiritual thoughts worldwide. The life and teachings of Jesus have over the years been subjected to critical scrutiny and as well been questioned, rejected, acknowledged and depicted for over two thousand years.

Even though, extensive academic research has explored the effectiveness of critical pedagogy (Matthews, 2014; Pynen et al., 2014; Guilherme, 2017; Martin, 2017), much less research has investigated the educational theories inherent in the pedagogical techniques of Jesus Christ. The need to explore Jesus' pedagogical techniques is exemplified in many ways; for instance, different pedagogies were used under different circumstances and contexts to achieve a certain effect on the audience. The lessons therein would help early childhood teachers draw from Jesus's example to enhance and promote effective teaching in their early classrooms.

It is increasingly evident that critical pedagogy which provides an opportunity for a learner to reflect on issue to gain insights into it would continue to be a critical component of the quest to develop critical thinking of learners. Although, many academic researchers have acknowledged the need for greater understanding in this area (Apps, 1996; Palmer, 1998; Pratt, 1999) little is known about how Jesus used different forms of critical pedagogy to bring about change in the lives of people by creating awareness and promoting transformative action. However, childhood educators are grappling with effective ways of educating young people to acquire critical thinking skills which in turn, develop their problem-solving abilities. Different critical pedagogical techniques are currently employed in early childhood settings. Thus, there is the need for other funds of knowledge regarding critical pedagogy closely linked to the teachings of Jesus to be explored, unearthed and integrated into early childhood curriculum to enhance, promote and improve critical thinking in young children. It is therefore, worthwhile to investigate the pedagogical techniques of great teachers such as Jesus Christ.

To further our understanding, the research question which drives this study is: What teaching techniques did Jesus Christ use in teaching?

The rest of the article is structured as follows; first, the research methods and procedures used in the study are described. The results of the inquiry are then discussed. Finally, implications and directions for future research are offered.

2. Methods

2.1. Research design

Historical research design was used to explore the picture of Jesus Christ as a teacher as found in the biblical accounts historically accepted by Christendom.

2.2. Subjects for the study

The four New Testament gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) translated into English from the original Greek are primary sources for this study. According to Reed (2003) currently, the Bible has been translated into a least 2,303 languages. The church's concern for a correct translation has brought about critical scrutiny of the original texts by some of the world's renowned scholars. Unless otherwise noted, the quotations in this paper are from the New International Version widely seen as a thorough and scholarly translation.

2.3. Documentary analysis

The documentary analyses procedure was used to analyse the data to unearth the teaching strategies Jesus used to educate his followers.

3. Results

The question about the techniques Jesus used to teach and its inherent capacity to bring about transformative action are at the heart of this study. Pratt (1998) defines teaching techniques as "activities that are meant to help people learn. Jesus employed various forms of teaching techniques such as parables, questions, poetry, lecture, reenactment, prayer, apprenticeship, humour and silence. The first five are common means to present material. They are relevant for several teaching goals. This list is arranged in a descending order: Jesus employed parables and questions most often and reenactment least often.

For educators of modern times, this study reveals a teacher who effectively use certain critical pedagogical tools to effect change in the lives of people. The last three techniques; humour, apprenticeship and silence, are less about "doing" and more about "being" in the hands of an effective teacher. These instruments help to develop learners' attitudes, feelings and perspectives about issues. Jesus taught and employed apprenticeship as the main teaching tool with his close followers. In the accounts of the four gospels, he used humour less often and silence only three times. Prayer is a bridge between the two groups of techniques. In one breath, Jesus used it to draw people together to engender his goal of friendly living. However, his own intense prayer life was also a model which underscored the need to live a worthy life. His constant use of prayer in his personal life, not just when he taught, blends into his use of apprenticeship as a teaching technique.

The diverse sections which define this part of the paper provide details about how Jesus achieved his teaching goals by this choice and use of diverse teaching techniques. Each begins with observations about the ways educators perceive each of Jesus's teaching techniques.

3.1. Parables: Truth in a nutshell

The parables of Jesus are justifiably famous, widely acknowledged as powerful, concise and insightful. In the academic enquiry into Jesus's teaching methods, their relevance is not in doubt. Meir (2001) argues that the parables used by Jesus constitute the surest way of having insights into the persona of historical Jesus. Meir further argues that Jesus's parables were not merely embellishments of his philosophical-theological stance on issues but they also constituted a critical part of his entire educational enterprise:

This part begins with a description of a parable and its basic components which is a combination of obvious, simple story and the veiled metaphoric prospects. Jesus did not use parables to entertain the crowds, even though his stories might have done so their usage was linked to teaching goals. The parables encouraged critical thinking by their reversal of predictable order. They created active listeners who had to think more deeply to make the connections that Jesus was making. They stimulated internal change by providing innovative ways to look at the world. Even the downsides inherent in the use of parables, the possibility of confusion or misunderstanding did not diminish the power of parables in Jesus's teaching.

3.2. Defining parable: Complexity cladded in simplicity

Even though parables played major roles in the teaching of Jesus, the term itself is not easily defined. Stein (1981) defines parable as an earthly story with a heavenly learning. However, because of the simplistic nature of this definition, scholars have described parable in terms of 'mascha' in Hebrew literature which is referred to as resemblance or comparison (Young, 1999) and the Greek version 'parabole' which means to place alongside (Donahue, 1988).

These expressions can be used to describe literary forms rather than the parables Jesus often told. Thus, the gospel writers were struggling to describe a literary form that was just emerging. They used the Greek word with an infusion of Hebrew thought. Stein (1981) argues that the term 'parable' has varied connotations than just stories with moral or spiritual truths. Stein concludes by asserting that metaphors, similes, similitudes and allegories can fittingly be described as parables. Stein further argues that a parable is a metaphor or simile drawn from nature or common life, arresting the hearer by its vividness or strangeness and living the mind with sufficient doubt about its precise application in active thought.

3.3. The nature of the parable: The unusual in the ordinary

Comparison is a key issue that is at the heart of parables. It is usually in the form of simile or metaphor. Jesus' parables use everyday realities to portray a word picture of an abstract theological concept. Whenever he places the two ideas side by side, the concrete clarifies the abstract. This in sync with the assertion by Donahue (1998) that "Jesus spoke a language of the familiar and concrete which touched people in their

everyday lives but which pointed beyond itself and summoned people to see everyday life as a carrier of transcendence” (p.10).

The parables of Jesus are not mere simple comparisons of the physical and the metaphysical worlds but comparisons in a story form that had a wider appeal across ages and cultures. For instance, the parable of the lost sheep is a story of the lost being found, a worry and sadness being changed into rejoicing (Mt. 18:13). A modern city dweller might not have experienced the loss of a sheep, however, the experience of losing something precious is a common experience of humankind. Both the desolation of loss and the happiness of finding resonate with all manner of people. The story, therefore, transcends the cultural divide between a poor rural dweller and sophisticated urban dweller in Ghana.

On the superficial level, the parables are simple stories about everyday issues which appeal to only ordinary people. However, to describe them in this limited sense without probing the deeper meaning underlining the issue is likely to diminish their power and its relevance. However, always underneath the surface lies another layer of meaning, another possibility to delve into. For example, in the parable of the lost sheep, the deeper meaning explores profound theological concepts such as the reality of human separation from God, the unconditional love of God, his desire for relationship, the possibility of forgiveness and the cosmic nature of that relationship.

Young (1989) argues that parables have wider appeals that could speak to the less educated and yet could also engage the mind of the scholar on a deeper level. Possibly, Jesus would express this perception in another way and say that a parable hides “these things from the wise and learned and reveals them to little children (Mt. 11:25).

3.4. The purpose of the parable: Moving towards light

Stories can only serve as useful pedagogical tools if only they can assist the teacher to achieve his or her educational goals. The parables of Jesus were a significant factor in achieving his teaching goals. They provided an environment for learning at the deeper level. The stories immediately caught the attention of the learners, they engendered critical thinking skills by challenging the accepted view of reality, and encouraged the active participation of learners, and as well facilitated internal and external change. They built in the learners’ previous experience, allowing for learning to continue long after the teaching time was over. In short, they were ideal teaching looks for Jesus’s purposes.

Arresting the attention of the learner is one of the major concerns of any educator since most of Jesus’s teaching took place outdoors, outside of a structural learning context, he needed to attract people’s interest and hold their attention for long enough to engage their thinking. The parables were attractive because of the imagery and the poetic language Jesus used. The listeners could easily identify with the people and the activities in them: a lost coin, wedding feast, and a farmer sowing his seed.

Another goal of Jesus’s teaching was to help learners develop critical thinking skills which were needed to help people see taken for granted issues in innovative ways. Jesus was an expert at using parables to question the status quo. Thompson (1978) observes that many of the parables that Jesus told were meant to call into

question established order in society. Parables call for active participation of the learner. As Crower (2002) observes “there is never a ready-made message that is transmitted from one to another, it is a construction” (p.10). Moreover, Meier (2002) maintains that parable develops critical thinking of the listener because they are meant to tease the mind of the audience into active thought. This enabled a learner draw meaning from the scenario that has been created. Again, another goal of Jesus’s parables was to develop an internal change in the learner and to reorient the learner towards God. Parables tend to achieve this goal because the emphasis is placed on a new perspective about reality.

Finally, in using parables, Jesus was acknowledging the essence of effective education which recognises the need for a lesson to build on learners’ previous experiences and knowledge. By beginning with the familiar, a teacher can more readily move to the unfamiliar. In his parables, Jesus used objects and story subjects that were familiar to his learners such as birds, fish, sheep, water wine, fig trees, seeds and grains.

3.5. Good questions: Instruments for critical thinking

Teachers learnt and practice the art of asking relevant questions to encourage learning long before Jesus began to teach in Palestine. Socrates, a Greek philosopher is famous for using questions for pedagogical purposes. The Socratic Method is widely respected and used today by educators who recognise the need to develop critical thinkers.

Like Socrates, Jesus used questions extensively while interacting with his followers. Gunn (1998) observes that the four gospels recorded more than one hundred different questions posed by Jesus.

3.6. The Socratic method updated

Paul (2005) asserts that in Socratic teaching the focus is on giving students questions but not answers. The sole aim of this pedagogical tool is to develop an inquiring and probing mind by consistently probing the mind with questions. Thus, the emphasis is placed on developing a critically minded person who is eager for discovering rather than helping a learner to acquire a body of information about a subject. However, learners tend to acquire information as well.

3.7. Jesus’ questions: Prodding and provoking

Gunn (1998) outlines the features of several questions Jesus usually posed to the scribes. For instance, Jesus once asked the scribes: “Why are you thinking about these things?” (Mk. 2:8). Gunn further maintains that some of the features underlining the questions can be described as original, practical, personal, rhetorical, stimulating, definite, searching, silencing, clear and brief. However, an attempt to determine the nature of the questions reveals the complex and multi-layered nature of Jesus’s questioning techniques: Jesus asked what seems to be a practical question when two men, disciples of John the Baptist, began to follow him. The gospel of John describes the episode:

Turning around Jesus saw them following and asked "What do you want?" they said, Rabbi, where are you staying "Come", he replied," and you will see" so they went and saw where he was staying and spent the day with him (John 1:37-39).

From an analytical perspective, on one level, Jesus asked a straightforward practical question and the men responded with a practical and an evasive answer. The invitation Jesus extended to them suggests more than an opportunity for them to see where he was living, rather it offers a possibility for a deeper relationship. This is borne out by the fact that they spend the rest of the day with him. Another example, of Jesus questioning technique, unfolds in an episode recorded in Luke's gospel:

One of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have a dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping; she began to wet her feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair kissed them and poured perfumed on them. When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself "If this man was a prophet he would know who is touching and what kind of a woman, she is: she is a sinner" (Lk.7:36-39).

After telling his host a story, Jesus asked him "do you know this woman? "Apparently, the question was purely a rhetorical one. In responding to Jesus's question, Simon, the host was more emphatic in his response. However, Jesus challenged Simon to see the woman in a new perspective but not as a despised outcast but someone who has done something Simon could not do. In one breath, Jesus's question was a rhetoric one but at the same time, he was urging Simon to new insights and personal change in his attitude towards the woman and by implication towards all manner of people Simon considered outsiders.

Thus, questioning was an effective tool used to help people think critically. The probing nature of the questions encouraged internal change. Gunn (1998) argues that Socrates often used a long series of leading questions to bring an idea to the fore. However, Jesus questions were different. They were short, sometimes unanswerable, always challenging the learner to think more deeply to see anew, rather than to conclude. Hence, Jesus often used one or two questions to raise awareness and promoting a desire to take transformative action.

3.8. Poetry: An ancient form with pedagogical intent

Poetry is an art form with a long tradition as a pedagogical tool. However, it is often neglected in modern western education which focuses on science-based knowledge. Those who are in favour of the use of poetry learning recognises its power to assist memorization, to convey abstract thought and emotional intensity to sharpen creative thinking, to engender intellectual understanding of difficult situations, and to provide the means to deal with emotive issues (Bhgwati, 2001).

The use of poetry forms an integral part of Jesus' teaching techniques because it creates empathy and understanding at a deeper level; it expresses the inexpressible and gives words to the inarticulate (Trueblood, 1964). Jesus words commonly termed as Beatitudes fit this description:

Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh (Lk. 6:20-1).

3.9. Jesus lectures: Lively and learner-centred

In religious education, the lecture format is the sermon. Gunn (1998), argues that the difference between academic lecture and sermon is that the former appeals' mainly to intellect while the latter appeals' largely to the emotions (Gunn, 1998). However, the question that arises is whether one can classify his public addresses into segments. It appears that two lecture formats can be discerned within this context, a sermon which could be liken to a conversation held in a public space in one breath, and in small groups whenever it was appropriate to do so. His speeches in synagogues were usually in the form of lectures. Whenever he taught outdoors, the format varied but it sometimes took the format of a lecture in small groups. This is significant because the needs, interests of the audience determined the pedagogy that was appropriate within a particular context. This explains why lecture and small group approaches were used in different occasions. For instance, questions were posed to him while he was explaining certain issues to his audience and he has to stop and respond to the questions ((Mk 10:11-2). Moreover, there were instances, he has to stop lecturing to attend the existential needs of his followers ((Mk 10:11-2).

His lectures soon became a dialogue or small group discussions, sometimes Jesus responded to learners needs by abandoning his lecture and going with them to meet their request. The ebb and flow of people interrupting, demanding and questioning gave a dynamic lively dimension to the situation. Even lengthy public discourses were enlivened by Jesus constant interactions with individual and smaller groups within the crowd. His discourses were interspersed with stories, poetry, and humour and probing questions. His approach to teaching encouraged active involvement of learners even when he was speaking to large crowds. In fact, some scholars believe that Jesus only used lecturers when no other methods seemed feasible and actually preferred to teach small groups and individuals (Gunn, 1998). Jesus did not seek to enlarge his audience and often tried to escape from the considerable number of people who wanted to hear him. Jesus put a low priority on lecturing because individual needs and individual dialogue defined his public discourse. Possibly, he could fittingly be described as a reluctant lecturer, preaching to large groups when they came to him, but always willing to stop his speeches to meet individuals and address their needs. This is significant because the needs, interests and individuality of learners determine one's choice of pedagogy.

3.10. Re-enactment in education: A slice of life

As a teaching tool, re-enactment differs from the role-play teaching technique which tends to be spontaneous at least on the part of the learners. Re-enactment requires preparation on the part of the learner because it takes several rehearsals to equip learners with the requisite competencies to enable them to re-enact an

episode. For example, re-enacting a war dance in certain traditional societies in Ghana, takes time before the participants can dress and move in a battle-like formation

Jesus' use of re-enactment: Building on the tradition of the Seder meal, the first pass over meal was re-enacted. It became part and parcel of Jesus' religious practice. As he celebrated the Passover just before his death, Jesus used the enactment to create another layer of memory through the symbol of bread and wine.

The symbolic re-enactment is certainly a useful teaching technique for creating the type of change Jesus hoped for such as helping learners to identify with Jesus in his death, believers could experience the forgiveness of sins and the inner transformation which is a requirement for living in the Kingdom of God.

3.11. Prayer: The cosmic shift from earth to heaven

Prayer is defined as "the solemn request or thanksgiving to God or an object of worship. It is a type of communication and it involves something or someone beyond the one who prays (Morain, 2001).

In religious education, it is appropriate to use prayer as a critical pedagogy and a means of engendering certain learning experiences. The entire gospel accounts of Jesus' life, reveals that prayer constituted a key component of Jesus' life and thinking. Even whenever he was busy, he found time to pray. In the last days before his death, he pleaded with disciples to pray with him, as he sought strength for the suffering he knew was about to befall him. On the cross, Jesus' last words was a sympathetic prayer for those who have masterminded his death. "Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Lk. 23: 34). At the request of his learners, Jesus taught them a prayer for daily usage which is currently used widely in church service and as a model for correct prayer. Thus, Jesus used prayer as a teaching technique to engender unity among disciples and as a hands-on demonstration of a practical way of living in the 'Kingdom'.

3.12. Apprenticeship: An age-old model for learning

Hands-on experiences if one of the effective means for skills acquisition and Jesus used it as a pedagogical to give his apostles insights into how to propagate the gospel in order to touch hearts souls of their audience. This presupposes that the significance of apprenticeship was two-fold: first to ensure their understanding of his message. Second, to turn them into effective teachers: He appointed them by "designating them as apostles that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach" (Mk. 3:14). In doing so, Jesus was following the ancient traditions of teaching by apprenticeship. His choice of this teaching style was justified because these eleven adult learners who were already established in their various professions became such effective learners that they helped change the world. This is significant because hands-on experiences are effective means of helping learners acquire specific skills which in turn, enable them understand what they are learning thereby making it possible for them apply whatever they have learnt in real life contexts.

3.13. Jesus and his apprentice

Jesus initiated the move in his quest to train his disciples to acquire the requisite pedagogical skills and content knowledge regarding how to touch the hearts and minds of their audience to lead lives that would please their maker. Even though, apprenticeship was an informal training but the experiences gain was insightful and life-changing because of its practical oriented nature. Moreover, they were ear and eye witnesses regarding his use of demonstration and its attendant explanations that he provided to questions that were posed to him. By allowing them to live with him, Jesus was fulfilling the criteria laid down by Fuller and Unwin (1998) for apprenticeship learning, which included “ensuring that individuals have access and experiential knowledge” (p.6).

In line with this Jesus often sent his disciples in groups of two for teaching practicum (Lk. 10:1-23). Thus, they were given a platform to develop their practical and intellectual capacities through the application of concepts and theories in practice. As they watched his interactions with learners and experienced the learning atmosphere he created, they learnt people skills. They saw in real-life situations a teacher who was compassionate, challenging and compelling even in tricky situations.

3.14. The humour of Jesus: More than jokes

Provided it is not used to hurt or humiliate other people, a sense of humour is useful. In teaching, it is an answer to boredom and a mechanism for creating a congenial atmosphere for learning. However, it helps learners to look at familiar ideas from different standpoints. Hence, it is an effective tool for developing critical thinking skills. It is a teaching tool with great potentials. Until lately, Jesus’ extensive use of humour has been a neglected aspect of teaching, partly because it is often obscured by translating from the original languages into modern ones (Morain, 2001). Jesus used hyperbole and irony to convey certain critical issues in his teaching. A closer look at these devices helps to portray how their usage contributed to the explanation of certain concepts.

3.15. Derailing the humdrum train of thought

As a literary device, it serves several purposes: It paints highly exaggerated picture to surprise and amuse the listener; it allows listener to believe a reality by depicting a greater falsehood; and it leads the listener into the world of the narrator through a sympathetic appreciation of the narrators’ perspective (Morain, 2001).

According to Stein (1978), Jesus’ use of hyperbole is characteristic of semitic speech. It certainly produces startling images: a lustful man plucking an eye (Mk 9:47), a camel struggling to go through the eye of a needle (Mk. 19:24). One memorable use of hyperbole came as Jesus advised those with a judgmental attitude. He asked why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your eye.” (Mt. 7:34). The hyperbole creates a cartoon-like image of a large piece of lumber sticking out of someone’s face. The discrepancy of self-righteous do-gooder and his less handicapped brother amuses the listener but also creates innovative ways of thinking about attitudes and actions of people from different viewpoints.

3.16. Irony: A study in contrasts

Irony is normally categorised as a humour, even though it may contain a tragic side to it. Stein (1978) argues that irony is a subtle use of contrast between what is stated and what is more or less wryly stated. Stein distinguishes between two types of irony and finds examples in Jesus' teaching. In the story of the rich fool (Lk 12: 16-20) for example, the irony emanates from an event or result that is opposite to what one would normally expect: the surprising conclusion to the carefully made plans of the rich man. The second type of irony exists when the intended meaning of a statement is the opposite of the literal meaning. An example is found in Luke 7:34-35. Jesus's critics are complaining about his association with "sinners". Jesus describes these holier-than-thou critics as 'wisdom's children'. Thus, as a teacher, Jesus used irony to point out the possibility of change and of reversing the irony so that what is not true becomes true.

3.17. Silence is golden

As it is usually common in many cultures, the teaching of adults is a word-based and sound-filled profession. The lecture method which is a dominant teaching technique in many classroom settings tends to encourage a learning situation filled with the sound of the teacher. In a scenario where the learners become active participants, they tend to generate more sound. This sort of learning context does not make room for learners to reflect on issues which in turn, help them reflect on their everyday experiences. Because most learners live in a sound saturated environment, the concept of silence in learning context might seem alien. Even for those who acknowledge the need for silence, the reality of silence may prove distressing. Both teachers and learners may see silence as a failure through the lack of skill in the teacher or lack of excitement from the learners. Nonetheless, meticulously use of silence is a powerful tool because it encourages listening, removes barriers between the teacher and the learner and creates space for multiple ways of knowing instead of word-based knowledge acquisition. Teachers who fear repressive silence may equate noise to active learning. However, sometimes educators need to step back from activity and reconsider the possibility of silence.

3.18. The startling silence of Jesus

From the description of the Gospels, the learning environment in the New Testament times was a word-based one. Heated arguments, comments from the crowds, spirited debates and clever verbal exchanges marked intellectual encounters between Jesus and his learners. Jesus arguing with the Pharisees and the teachers of the law brings to the fore the emphasis on logic and verbal dexterity in public discourse. In these learning contexts, Jesus silences are striking, because he never appeared at a loss for words or lacked the verbal skills to interact with the most learned scholars of the day.

The first recorded episode which highlights Jesus' use of silence as a teaching tool depicts a scene of life and death:

At dawn, he (Jesus) appeared again in the temple courts; where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such a woman. Now, what do you say?"

They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "If anyone of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her". Again, he stooped down and wrote on the ground. At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until Jesus was left (Jn. 8:2-9).

Jesus was a celebrated religious teacher hence, everyone expected him to have a clear moral response. He had earlier taught about sexual morality, setting a high standard for thought and behaviour. However, the crux of the matter was how he would respond to the question. His silence was deliberate. By ignoring the question, he handed back to them the decision regarding the women's fate. However, his comment compelled them to do introspection about their own moral standing. His silence freed them to re-examine their own lives and behaviour and conclude as to whether they have shortcomings or not in matters relating to their conduct in the public space. However, it takes a teacher who is well-informed about the relevance of silence as a pedagogical tool to provide the opportunity and space for such learning to occur. In this episode in question, each of Jesus' learners recognised their own hypocrisy and went. Each had experienced a profound unique opportunity for profound learning through the gift of Jesus' silence. Silence is significant in early childhood settings it enables children to reflect on any tasks assigned to individual children.

4. Discussion

It can be discerned from the discussion above that a majority of the elements that defined Jesus's critical pedagogical approaches can make significant impact on children's development in early childhood settings because lived experiences defined his teaching. This is significant because teachers cannot ignore the question of which techniques are useful for facilitating effective learning within the early childhood context because in every learning context, they must decide how to teach in an effective and efficient manner. Whether they lecture, ask questions or create space for silent listening, teachers are promoting learning by one means or another. For instance, Jesus employed diverse teaching techniques, each of which enhanced some aspects of his teaching goals to meet the needs of individuals who made up his audience. This is significant because individual's needs, and interests are factors that determine choice of instructional strategies in early childhood settings. Parables, questioning and poetry helped to develop critical thinking skills, making it possible for learners to think in innovative ways. Poetry and parables further served as means of developing retentive memory of learning which in turn, helped them apply what they have learnt in

real life situations. In particular, parables made it possible for learners to explore the minds and hearts of other people thereby engendering empathy and breaking down barriers between diverse groups of people. This is significant because spiritual values such as care and concern for others define our humanity which in turn, create a society where the weak would find strength through the protective powers of the strong ones while the poor and the hopeless would have hope live because of the magnanimity of those who have. However, developing the values of care and concern for others do not happen by chance in early childhood settings but through effective critical pedagogy such as demonstrations of these values with the teacher as a pacesetter. However, what is worth interrogating is the significance of silence as critical pedagogy within the early childhood settings. Silence plays a significant role in developing critical thinking in children because it provides an opportunity for them to reflect on a task assigned to them which in turn, give them insights into how to resolve it.

5. Conclusion

The study revealed the potential exists for the use of Jesus' critical pedagogy in kindergarten classrooms. Particularly, the study demonstrated that critical pedagogy is useful to teachers as a way of developing critical thinking in children. The use of critical pedagogy allowed Jesus' followers to develop deeper understanding of spiritual matters. By extension, its usage in kindergarten classrooms is likely to enhance and promote the development of children's spirituality in terms of inculcating in them the need to show love, care and concern in their day-today-interactions with others. Moreover, critical pedagogy may help point out the nuances inherent in the teaching and learning processes thereby, given insights to teachers regarding the potentials of individual children and the support that is needed to help each one of them to unearth their potentials. It is therefore, suggested that future research should explore critical pedagogy inherent in the teachings of other religious leaders and how it supports the developing of critical thinking in young people.

5.1. Implications for teacher practices in early childhood settings

The study established the possibilities that exist regarding the use of activity-based learning contexts as basis in promoting children's development in diverse ways. Particularly, the study provided insights into how early childhood teachers can use curriculum determinants such as children's lived experiences, individuality, needs and interests to inform effective curriculum planning in early childhood settings. This is significant because it would give teachers' insights into how children's individuality informs, teachers' choice of learning activities and how to incorporate them into children's daily activities in classrooms to promote their holistic development. Precisely, children's context plays a significant role in their learning because it situates learning within their settings and the uniqueness that each of them brings to the teaching and learning contexts with respect to interests, needs and potential. This understanding is significant in that more reflective practice can proceed thereafter, to select learning activities to address different developmental needs of children. Importantly, the study also identified the strength of silence as an effective means of helping young children to gain deeper understanding regarding what they have been tasked task to unravel.

Because they bring different perspectives to bear on the tasks assigned to them which in turn, give them insights regarding how to resolve it. Also, the observational evidence therein, in terms of challenges children face further informs teachers the appropriate steps to take in dealing with it.

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