

Teaching during the Pandemic Using a Feminist Pedagogy: Classroom Conversations and Practices

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Abstract : Background: The COVID-19 pandemic has had a serious impact on academia in general and social work education in particular, changing permanently the way in which we approach educating students. The new reality of the pandemic coupled with the much-needed focus on racism across the country inspired and required educators to get creative with their teaching styles in order to disrupt the power imbalance in the classroom and attend to the multiple layers of needs of diverse students in precarious sociological and economic circumstances. This paper highlights research examining educators with distinctive positionalities and approaches to classroom instruction who use feminist and antiracist pedagogies while adapting to online teaching during the pandemic. Despite being feminist scholars, whose ideologies developed during different waves of feminism, our commitment to having student-led classrooms, liberation, and equity of all, and striving for social change, unified our feminist teaching pedagogies as well as provided interpersonal support. Methodology: Following a narrative qualitative inquiry methodology, the five authors of this paper came together to discuss our pedagogical styles and underlying values using Zoom in a series of six conversations. Narrative inquiry is an appropriate method to use when researchers are bound by common stories or personal experiences. The use of feminist pedagogy in the classroom before and during the pandemic guided the discussions. After six sessions, we reached the point of data saturation. All data from the dialogic process was recorded and transcribed. We used in vivo, narrative, and descriptive coding for the data analytic process. Results: Analysis of the data revealed several themes, which included (1) the influence of our positionalities as an intersection of race, sexual orientation, gender, and years of teaching experience in the classroom, (2) the meaning and variations between different liberatory pedagogical approaches, (3) the tensions between these approaches and institutional policies and practices, (4) the role of self-reflection in everyday teaching, (5) the distinctions between theory and practice and its utility for students, and (6) the challenges of applying a feminist-centered pedagogical approach during the pandemic while utilizing an online platform. As a collective, we discussed several challenges that limited the use of our feminist pedagogical approaches due to instruction through Zoom.

Keywords : feminist, pedagogy, COVID, zoom

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