

A Study on Critical Purposes, Principles and Methods of Freire in Teacher Training Pedagogy

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Abstract

The present study is extracted from a qualitative research attempting to emphasize on critical thinking approaches in teacher training pedagogy through descriptive and analytical methods. In the first part, after a brief look over the history of critical thinking in education and educational trends in the world, several approaches in the field are discussed. One of these approaches is the recent attempts made by thinkers in the area of critical thinking and its promotion in teacher training pedagogies based on modern critical education. In the second part, the liberating model of Paulo Freire is investigated in teacher training pedagogy as a critical approach. In this model, the aims, principles and methods of education presented by Freire are introduced in teacher training pedagogy. Finally, it is induced that the emergence of critical thoughts in education, brought about huge improvements in educational methods and pedagogies compiled for teacher training programs. In this regard, the liberating model of Freire, as one of the prominent contemporary educational models, could be considered as an efficient solution for promoting elite teacher training programs all around the globe.

Keywords: Critical thinking; Teacher training pedagogy; liberating education; Paulo Freire

Critical Thoughts in Teacher Training Pedagogy

Emphasis on promoting critical thinking skills in education has had a long history. In his book titled Teaching Critical Thinking, Myers states that the history of such approaches goes back to Plato. Yet, modern universities focus on some brief informative aspects rather than developing Platonic critical thinking (Myers, 2001: 1). Generally speaking, critical thinking began with Socrates and his discovery dialogue in philosophy. In the renaissance, after the beginning of secular movement in Europe, critical thinking built its way to religion, arts, society, human nature, law and freedom. Seculars believed that human life was in need of critical and analytical investigation and research. Introduced Idols of Tribe as methods of our mind to deceive itself and gives the example of human inclination to see things through his own personal habits not in the way they really are (ZibaKalam, 2006: 93). Bacon's book, titled The Advancement of Learning, is among the pioneers in critical thinking. Another 16 and 17th century thinker who focused on critical thinking was René Descartes. Descartes book, Rules for the Direction of the Mind, discusses the need for a systematic agent directing mind toward thinking (Institute for Critical Thinking, 2000: 45). John Dewey commenced a novel method in contemporary education via problem solving and complained that majority of the existing programs lead learners to pile information in their minds (Chateau, 1990: 306). Dewey believes that "critical thinking is paying attention to a specific issue analyzed and scrutinized in an individual's mind" (Dewey, 1993: 3). Rajesh Tandon mentioned cooperative development process and studied the relationship between democracy and cooperation. He believes that two major currents of thought concerning cooperative development emerged in the mid-1970s. The first current was the approach focusing on adult education and systematizing the society. Freire pedagogy emphasized on knowledge as a liberating approach as well. He believed that critical thinking is a necessity for cooperation in development plans all around the world (Tandon, 2008: 288).

The Liberating Model of Paulo Freire in Teacher Training Pedagogy

Paulo Freire, being influenced by the Frankfurt School, tried to promote critical thinking in education and provide the grounds for students and teachers to demonstrate their innovation and creativity. His focus was on the low-income section of the society that was exploited by the capitalist world as tools for its wealth and success without worrying about their interests and motivations. Through his liberating model, did He found a non-authoritarian conversation among students and teachers in which everyone had the right to express themselves freely. In this model, no trainer can force the trainee to accept specific set of beliefs or values. The issue of political consciousness proposed by Freire is in fact a solution through which an individual must discuss topics like resistance, freedom, oppression, authority and domination over ignorance. This is the role Freire assigns for emancipator educators (Fairfield, 2009: 247). The main difference between Dewey and Freire is that science for Dewey is the logical investigation of different affairs and Freire considers it for social criticism. Critical inquiry is a solution through which basic issues could be discussed and solutions for social problems could be proposed.

The Purpose of Teacher Training Pedagogy in Liberating Model

1. The basic purpose of education in Freire's point of view is gaining critical consciousness with which an individual can provide the grounds for his own and other's self-actualization regardless of age, sex, religion, race etc. therefore, education for Freire, is beyond what we consider as individualistic. His approach toward gaining knowledge and better understanding of affairs based on critical consciousness is a group-based approach. This group could be composed of student and teacher, trainee and trainer and trainee and society. Selfishness has no place in Freire's educational thoughts. The attempt to reach critical self-awareness is only possible through collective attempt. Yet, in this process, no single authority has the right to impose his idea to others (Freire, 1999: 21). Freire is in fact trying to create an active conversational and critical atmosphere among individuals using exciting educational methods in which not only the hidden aptitudes of the students flourish, but also the educators gain a higher ability of understanding and reasoning (Frederick; Perencevich, 2009: 1). Freire's approach toward education is to provide the necessary grounds for rebuilding teacher-student relationship so that teachers can talk to their students based on the concept of expressing issues and problems in a cordial way (Bartlet, 2005: 358). Therefore, critical and liberating training is of two major purposes in Freire's point of view:

The first purpose is that education must assist the educators and their students to reach a better level of conscious understanding from the world. Second purpose is in close relation with the first one and states that education through developing knowledge in individuals helps educators and their students to become decent people and become aware of their position in the universe via their own will (Freire, 1982: 56). Thus, in the liberating model of Freire, Purposes of teacher training pedagogy could be listed as follows.

1- Liberation

Education in Freire's point of view is experiencing freedom; since, the educator is liberated from his prison of silence and lecturing along with his students. These two individuals are liberated as they start learning. One identifies himself as a valued individual away from illiteracy, poverty or ignorance of knowledge and technology and the second one as an individual possessing the power of starting a conversation rather than imposing his rigid educating role on others (Freire, 1999: 14).

2- Political Consciousness

Freire rejects traditional education for it lacks any approach interfering with the reality. For him, the basic concept beneath his theory is wisdom, enlightenment and critical consciousness and considers dialogue as an educational method. The basic premise in Freire model of education is interaction with those oppressed politically, socially, culturally and economically. For him, the oppressed could reach a self-awareness or critical consciousness through which they can change the conditions. This is what he calls the theory of consciousness (Dinarvand and Imani, 2008: 158). In a pedagogy based on liberating model, the educator is of a proper level of political consciousness and can give a decent analysis of political and social conditions to his students.

3- Domesticating Pedagogies and Syllabuses

The liberating model attempts to expand the anti-colonial view toward education and this could only be possible in an atmosphere of cooperation and democracy. In his proposed pedagogy for Guinea-Bissau, Freire states: "We tried to avoid accepting packaged prefabricated solutions and evaded any form of cultural invasion whether explicit or adeptly implicit ones" (Freire, 1984: 17).

This pedagogy includes factors obtained from the culture and society of the country receiving it and western packages contradicting political and cultural system of the nation will not be proposed. Teacher training pedagogies in this regard, must prepare the ground for teachers to demonstrate innovation and creativity and create domestic working groups to compile national educational theories and pedagogies.

4- Developing Education Based on Critical Democracy

The point that Freire considers his educational approach critical and liberating, reveals that for him, democracy-based teaching is of vital importance in teacher training pedagogies. However, he classifies democracy into two dogmatic and dynamic forms. For him, an individual defending democracy is the one who elevates its level to a higher one as Karl Mannheim calls it "the Fighting democracy". This democracy does not scare people, hinders exploitation, is planned without the fear of dogmatism, defends itself without creating self-hatred and is fed by critical spirit not by the irrational soul (Freire, 1989: 104). the point worth focusing on is that teachers in this context could criticize even the democracy itself. Being beneficial does not convince everyone to utilize it. The process of developing critical consciousness for Freire includes creating problems for the issues believed to be basic in the society. Then, active cooperation of all individuals in the process and discussions around it will clear up the issue and demonstrate practical solutions for these problems (Ramella and De La Cruz, 2000: 277).

Principles of Teacher Training Pedagogy in the Liberating Model

Freire has not presented an elaborate list of principles for teacher training pedagogy; yet, his works on education contain inferences on the issue. There is a huge overlap between principles and purposes of education in his point of view but a little scrutiny will reveal principles as follows:

1-Paying Attention to Cultural and Traditional Backgrounds along with Minority Groups

For Freire, the planners' failure to combine minority values with the pedagogies, came along with rejecting students' mother language and this proves rigidity of the pedagogies for the benefit of those who planned them (Raghfar, 2003: 360). In this case, the educator has to try to provide the topics and issues of a basic nature to be discussed as a problem in the classroom. Issues like access to healthy fresh water for all, children's health, youth unemployment, and minimum wages are all among these problems. These problems from the heart of students' lives help the teacher stir mutual discussions among his students. Furthermore, it should be noted that teacher training pedagogies must consider cultural and traditional backgrounds of all present groups in the society.

2- Cooperation of Educators and Students in Compiling Pedagogy

Pedagogy in Freire's model is formed by facts from students' daily life and the pedagogy designed by the elite is not acceptable. For him, the pedagogy has to be compiled by professors, experts, parents, educators, students and local groups based on the facts extracted from social life (Dinarvand and Imani, 1998: 159). Freire strongly emphasizes on the role parents should play in decisions made by schools for students. He also mentions student councils. In fact, he believes in creating a democratic atmosphere in the educational system. In this atmosphere, all groups who may have connections with the educational system must be able to play their roles (Freire, 2007: 86). Accordingly, Freire started various novel lesson plans and pedagogies while he was the minister of education in Sao Paulo, Brazil. One of these novelties was the movement to reorient the curriculum in which he tried to build a working group to disorient power and give independence to schools in their attempts to reorient their curriculum around issues like social and critical ones (McLaren, 2005: 3- 4). Freire believes that the identity of individuals depends on the identity of others in the society. Therefore, oppression in an oppressed system lives along with the oppressor (Rozas, 2007: 265).

3- Stating the Problem Rather than Solving It

Before Freire, John Dewey had proposed teaching problem solving to revolutionize traditional education. However, Freire believed that problem solving is a static process in education and does not lead to the development of critical consciousness in educators and students. The reason was that problem solving is a one way learning in which the relationship between the student and the teacher is vertical. This hinders the balanced growth of the trainer and the trainee. In this regard, the student can teach the same level of knowledge as he could learn from his teacher. Thus, the curriculum does not merely focus on preparing the students for higher levels. This model tries to alternate the traditional method of teaching by the teacher and learning by the student with new approaches. Students and educators of this model enter the school with a critical approach (Leonard, 2004: 162). This approach could be created through the atmosphere of democracy in classroom for this is the only way for the learners to learn about each other's rights. They also learn that the teacher is not the king of the class.

Methods of Teacher Training Pedagogy in the Liberating Model

In Freire's critical approach, the educator has to enter into dialogues with an illiterate individual to talk about current conditions and offer tools for learning reading and writing. This teaching could not be conducted vertically from top to bottom. Yet, it has to be from inside to outside of the illiterate individual with the aid of the educator. Therefore, Freire looks for a method through which educator could use along with the learner. This tool must coordinate learning concept with the learning trend (Freire, 1989: 94). Here are some of the methods proposed by Freire for the teacher training pedagogy:

1- Dialectic-Based Education

Freire believes that dialectic is a channel through which an understanding could be formed to reveal the potential power of the society (Molana, 1992: 95). It should however be noted dialectic does not necessarily induce agreement. It aims to cooperate to solve a challenge. Therefore, it should be stated that the base of dialectic is the challenge and its purpose is to overcome this challenge without removing the opponents or contradictory opinions (Gadotti, 1994: 81). Plans compiled for training teachers must consider the important point that the teachers who cannot coordinate himself with the dialectic will never be able to create a critical atmosphere in the classroom. Thus, Freire introduces dialectic as the mutual attempt to solve a problem and believes that we do not have to express our worldview or impose them on others. We have to get ready for a discussion on different ideas (Fairfield, 2009: 249). Here, the teachers try to enter their daily experiences into pedagogies for they are fully aware of the power of education in making changes in social and political lives of their learners (Gallavanand Leblank, 2009: 27- 28).

2- Critical Learning

In liberating model, the main purpose of education is creating critical spirit in the educator and the learner. Therefore, pedagogies approved for teacher training centers must choose methods that guarantee the growth of educators. Critical education supports the type of education in which the learner and the educator try to cooperate critically and help each other in a mutual way. This approach is in fact an attempt to overcome traditional relationships between educator and learner at schools. Modern education tries to rehabilitate the students after the classic hierarchy system. The educator and the learner in modern system are encouraged to

overthrow the hierarchy and gain their identity through education. This will eventually end in personalized teaching methods. Critical learning is an attempt to give critical consciousness form traditional structures of education (Fitzpatrick and Sinclair, 2003: 162).

3- Forming Cultural Circles

Cultural circles play an essential role in the process of education proposed by Freire. These circles change static roles into dynamic ones so that educators and students employed completely different methods. Freire States:

"We formed a new popular institution, a cultural circle in which the teacher was substituted with a coordinator. The lecture was substituted with dialogue. The students were alternated with cooperators. The foreign system of education was replaced by a compact plan offering domestic lessons. In our cultural circles, we tried to elaborate on issues through group discussions and look for a movement to clarify them. The topic of these discussions was proposed by the groups (Freire, 1989: 84)."

Therefore, one of the methods that could be of great help in teacher training programs could be training teachers for new roles in their cultural circles. Educators in these cultural circles try to establish a deep relationship between culture, society and the educators.

Conclusion

Selecting the curriculum especially for teacher training courses is of an utmost importance for Freire, for he believes that careless selection of pedagogy will lead the educational system to a system similar to banking system. He tried to lead the educational system toward a system in which statement of the problem is important. There are clear distinctions between banking and educational systems. Banking system is the system in which the teacher talks about an issue and is the regulator. Nevertheless, in the statement of the problem, the content is neither given nor it is imposed. Content in this system is redirection of things toward individuals interested in learning about them. Since Freire believes an unbiased educational system is more of a legend, he encourages active participation of students in political and social issues. In the traditional method, students or the educators lacked any form of participation in educational affairs. For Freire, an educational system with vertical top to bottom organization is a tool for imposing ideas of dominant culture to the new generation. Thus, he believes that any standard educational operation with everything planned and designed in advance, will not end in democracy and is in fact anti-democracy.

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