

Principles of the Freirean pedagogy integrated in a professional development workshop for new teachers

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Abstract: The study aims to present the principles of the Freirean Pedagogy and their manifestations in a professional development workshop for new teachers. The study was conducted according to the qualitative method of the case study type. The participants were 44 new teachers and the reflective diaries written by them were content analysed. The research results illustrate a contribution to the professional development of new teachers based on principles of a respectful dialogue, collaboration, empowerment, responsibility and commitment. These principles should be implemented in professional development programmes for new teachers as part of their professional and personal development. This might reduce the absorption difficulties new teachers face upon their induction to school as well as prevent their dropout from the education system.

Keyword: new teachers, Freirean pedagogy, teachers' professional development, case study.

I. Introduction

The professional development workshop for new teachers was designed according to the principles of critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire [1]. It was grounded in the comprehension that the principles of the critical pedagogy, e.g. dialogue, empowerment and responsibility are meaningful in the process of professional and personal development of teachers in general and new teachers in particular. Implementing these principles in the new teachers' workshop as part of their professional development might assist them in their induction into and absorption at school and prevent their dropout from the education system [2],[3],[4]. The study consists of the following sections: theoretical background, methodology, results and discussion, conclusion.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

New teachers

Many studies [5] indicate that the first years of teaching constitute a crucial period for teachers' professional development. Results show that the first year shapes teachers' image and professional perception. It is essential for their long practice in the education system as well as for their continued professional development at school and in teaching. The literature points out a considerable percentage (46%) dropout of new teachers during their first five years of teaching [2], [3], [4].

The major teaching difficulties identified among new teachers are managing the class, dealing with problems of discipline, setting expectations for the pupils, coping with pressure at work and vis-à-vis the parents and settling conflicts. Moreover, new teachers have to diversify their teaching methods and address learners' different capabilities [6], [7].

During their first year of practice, teachers are engaged more in trying to solve problems of discipline and class management. In these situations they frequently experience difficulties to find the appropriate way of teaching. For example, integrating disciplinary knowledge and didactic-pedagogical knowledge as well as planning a lesson compatible with the curriculum and adapted to the learners, ensuring an optimal learning which leads to attainments [8], [6].

The Freirean Pedagogy

The fundamental principles of the liberating-critical pedagogy are related simultaneously with theory and practice [1]. Implementation of the perceptions is associated with the perceptions themselves. The prominent principle is **dialogism**. Freire strives to create a new type of learning, whereby both teachers and learners become a learning community. Teachers do not view themselves as knowledgeable individuals and do not maintain that their knowledge is superior to that of others in the learning community. Learning is done through a dialogue whose objective is to set the goals and attribute a meaning to the process.

The second principle is **empowerment**. Teachers' role is to empower their pupils from a conceptual, cognitive, cultural and linguistic point of view. They should instill in their pupils the courage to consolidate an

Independent opinion and the resolution to believe in an informed way. Teachers should inculcate in their pupils learning competences, judgment and criticism. Thus, when they are outside the classroom, learners would be able to undermine the existing situation, the macro-cosmos. The empowerment process under the leadership of the teachers highlights pupils' development and is extensively described by [9]. She highlights the psychological-sociological aspect of empowerment and the fact that it is a prerequisite for personal growth.

The principle associated with teachers' figure relates to the desirable figure of **inquiring teachers** who penetrate the conceptual, linguistic and value-oriented world of their pupils. These teachers have to be constantly present in their pupils' lives and expand their cultural world, namely 'nurturing' in the language of education. However, [1] professes that one should not lead to dichotomy between the pupils' culture and the normative culture. He draws a path of **system and commitment** and a figure of most responsible educators who protect the boundaries, are professionals and researchers who study their pupils in depth. According to Freire, teachers should demonstrate the highest intellectual responsibility and prevent a tolerant dialogue which might lead to anarchy. Teachers should be competent in conducting a dialogue with their pupils in order to bring about shared learning and attain new insights, not necessarily agree but avoid shortcuts in the communication.

One of Freire's unique principles is connected to the shared knowledge created by teachers and pupils. This is the 'Circle of Knowledge'. His writings comprise instructions how to work through to the circle of knowledge process, presenting considerable achievements. Every dialogue in class begins with the pupils' problems, their world. Their problems are existential and should be the key to each formation of knowledge. Both teachers and learners create the knowledge without hierarchy. The educators have to enter the pupils' world for the purpose of building a fruitful and promoting dialogue. The educators are not fixated but are open to changes in their knowledge. They build it through a discussion with their pupils. Hence, this knowledge is in fact a mix of teachers' academic knowledge and the pupils' practical knowledge. This is a knowledge formed by a synthesis through a dialogue.

A further principle is connected to the **consolidation of a critical position**. Educators must lead their learners to critical reflection and encourage them to do so. When pupils disagree about a point they have to present good arguments. This is a social and economic liberation, in addition to being political. Teachers should uncover the disguise, the ambiguity of reality. They should expose the lie and demonstrate that the elite groups that govern the country are interested in continuing the state of poverty in order to have a cheap labour force and so on. The researcher [1], who believed that the poor and oppressed would manage to liberate themselves by means of education, viewed the teachers-educators as followers of his revolution. The dialogue and circles of knowledge are the mechanism which will allow the poor to abandon the oppressed class and be liberated. Leaving the negative-social-economic-political circle where they are now requires courage and guidance.

Teachers' mission then is **illumination of reality**. They must display the gaps, exploitation and oppression, identify the reasons for the existing situation and adhere to the truth. Freire considers teachers as people with **motivation**, capable of bringing the people facing them to a state of active search and evoke their motivation. Following teachers' education according to the pedagogy of liberation, learners will want to know, inquire and discover. Their sense of inquisitiveness will lead them to uncover reality and investigate it. Thus, they would be able to generate a change in themselves and their life. Moreover, Freire presents an original position regarding rewards, the outcomes of the learning products. In a conventional school the outcomes are measured through tests, score sheets and punishments whereas Freire believes that the real outcome is the learning process itself[10].

Teachers' professional development

Researchers concur that teachers' quality is the most important factor at school, impacting pupils' learning and attainments. Consequently there is a sense of real urgency associated with the need to educate teachers on a high level of quality [11]. The professional literature discusses the concept "teachers' professional development" in various contexts and its definition is not uniform. Some sources underscore teachers' empowerment and development while others use the general term "professional development" as an expression of the entirety of learning channels which teachers attend in order to improve the quality of their teaching. For example, courses, in-service training programmes, workshops, learning in small groups, individual mentoring and so on. The various models which engage in teachers' professional development can be divided into three categories: psychological, professional and sociological [12],[13]. According to [14], only by reflection about their teaching can teachers become more competent, more skilled and in general better teachers. Teachers' professional development is a continuous and constant process[15]. Studies of teachers' practice illustrate teachers' awareness of their development stages as adult learners. Three stages were defined in teachers' professional development [16]: beginning, middle and end of their career. Teachers' life-long learning does not focus merely on the professional aspect but also on the multiple facets of their individual, social and professional personality. Good teachers are those who learn throughout their lives not only as teachers but also as informed and thinking people, active members of the community and society. Life-long teachers see to it that

their pupils are also life-long learners. Teachers' professional development is mostly grounded in learning while working. All teachers are connected to their personality and previous life experience and represent a special system of pedagogical beliefs and practical conduct in teaching. In this context, professional development is considered as an individual development combined with reciprocal social and cultural relations of individuals with their environment [17].

Professional development frameworks for new teachers in Israel

The Israeli Ministry of Education designed a professional development programme for new teachers. This programme is based on the assumption that the stage of induction into the teaching profession includes the internship year and the first year of practice which follows it. This stage has a crucial impact on the continued professional life of education practitioners regarding their willingness to persevere in the profession as well as their job perception and professional identity consolidation [6].

There are two professional development frameworks for new teachers: a 40-hour peer group workshop which takes place in a teacher education college and a 20-hour individual tutoring by a teacher-mentor at school. The workshop conducted in the college is designed for professional development and empowerment through support by the peer group and by a professional practitioner. During the workshop the participants present their difficulties, hesitations, feelings, dilemmas, experiences and problems in the field. The workshop allows new teachers to look at things from the perspective of a peer group, facilitating identification and sharing, collaborative learning from the experience of others. The fact that the workshop takes place in one of the teacher education institutions aims to: 1. allow continuity of training and professional development in a teacher education college; 2. facilitate a free and open discourse in practice outside the workplace; 3. view the workshop particularly as a place for reflective discourse of professional development rather than a place for in-service training course which is content-oriented or regional practice centers-oriented. The support programme of new teachers at school underscores the following goals: assistance and cognitive, emotional and social support while learning the new teachers' preferred issues more thoroughly. A special emphasis is put on viewing the learning as a process which empowers the teachers so that they function as independent teachers in the school setup. Furthermore, great importance is attributed to developing competences of assertiveness, facing a class and conducting a promoting educational dialogue [18].

The professional development workshop for new teachers

In light of the general objectives set by the Ministry of Education regarding professional development courses for new teachers, a teacher education college at the south of the country developed a workshop for new teachers. The workshop emphasised the establishment of a dialogical educational infrastructure based on the principles of the Freirean pedagogy through collaboration, responsibility and commitment to dialogue-building processes. The workshop comprises contents and sources from the world of new teachers. For example: nurturing and empowering new teachers for learning and teaching in line with the Freirean dialogue; fostering new teachers' ability to become dialogical, attentive and containing teachers who respect their pupils and their community; cultivating dialogical culture between new teachers and the absorbing school and vice versa; creating experiential and growing encounters between new teachers and experienced teachers, between teachers and pupils and between parents and teachers; exposing new teachers to social-educational dilemmas by dialogue processes at school; inculcating tools and competences for the implementation of various dialogues at school as a learning and growing organisation; encouraging the use of dialogical methods for creating an optimal and meaningful educational effect; inculcating tools of critical reflection and critical observation as a basis for the development of an equalitarian educational worldview; developing and consolidating a personal and professional identity designed to introduce a change in the education system and the community; developing a responsible, respectful and caring life approach in the education community by means of a dialogue designed to improve the educational climate [19].

Research purpose

Present the principles of the Freirean pedagogy in a professional development workshop for new teachers.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in the qualitative approach of the case study type. The case study enables thorough comprehension of what is happening in a small group. The research population consisted of 44 new teachers who attended a professional development workshop. This workshop is obligatory for all new teachers who have completed their internship year and are working as teachers at school. The participating teachers wrote reflective diaries throughout the academic year which were content analysed on a single teacher and group level [20].

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results illustrate an integration of the principles of Freirean pedagogy principles in a professional development workshop for new teachers. Learning based on the theory of the Freirean-critical pedagogy enhanced the professional and personal development of the new teachers and assisted the process of their absorption at school.

Dialogue

The dialogue in Freire's critical pedagogy is the methodological means of the approach as well as its moral basis. According to [10], the dialogue is a way of seeing and experiencing the world. The dialogue consists of respect, love, cultural acquaintance and hope [21]. It brings about a democratic model of social relationships and constitutes the foundation for teachers' authority which is not grounded in formal authority. The dialogue creates reciprocity [22], [23], whereby teachers believe they have important things to learn from the pupils to the same extent that they [teachers] have something to teach the pupils. Within the framework of the dialogical process teachers learn every topic again, since they learn it with the pupils [24]. By means of this dialogue, teachers get acquainted with the pupils' lives and the things which are meaningful for them. Moreover, they do not assume that one knowledge is better than another knowledge. Teachers rely on the learners' cultural world. Cultural acquaintance is part of the Freirean dialogue. Society comprises many cultures which are grounded in origin, age, geographic area, socioeconomic status and so on. The cultural acquaintance and the acknowledgement of the differentiation and legitimisation of each culture are necessary in the dialogical relationships established between individuals and groups in society. Respect as part of the equalitarian dialogue is a mutual respect [10], [23].

Learning through a dialogue is based on the perception that the starting point for learning and developing is previous knowledge and discourse which show respect the learners [22], [25]. One can identify here a liberating learning which transpires through a dialogue. Such a learning requires teachers to be extremely observant of what is happening. They should be attentive and sensitive, change roles according to the development of the learning situation and relate emotionally to pupils' condition [26].

The professional development workshop for new teachers encompassed the principles of the Freirean dialogue. The learning and teaching in the workshop were based on a dialogical process which respects the new teachers. The lecturer attempted to get acquainted with their culture and needs, demonstrated sensitivity and conducted herself with the hope of achieving possible change processes. One of the teachers wrote: *"Throughout all the encounters I felt people listened to me, respected my opinion and I could express my thoughts without any apprehension"*.

Authority and responsibility

The liberating authority is a dynamic process in which teachers plan the gradual delegation of authority to their pupils. They function systematically and meticulously through acquaintance with their pupils, and the teachers can build a structured process whereby they play a crucial role [27], [23]. They form a collaborative authority or a democratic authority through a dialogue with their pupils regarding the pupils' ability and wish to take part in consolidating the learning process [26]. Teachers' ability to use their authority proportionately without being too strict is connected to the structure of authority in the education system within which they work. Furthermore, the authority of the liberating teachers is manifested by the degree of responsibility for the learning process. This responsibility is unequally shared between the teachers and their pupils. Teachers assume responsibility for the process, thus turning the pupil from an object (one anonymous pupil among many others) activated by someone into a subject (a unique pupil at the personal acquaintance level), active and critical [28]. If at the beginning of the way teachers assume great responsibility for the dialogue and the structure of the process, then later on the pupils' sense of responsibility develops and the teachers' commitments decrease [24]. Throughout the workshop, the lecturer demonstrated a liberating authority. The new teachers were aware along the entire way of their great responsibility for learning, professional promotion and coping with their personal difficulties. One of the teachers wrote in her diary: *"I obtained a deeper insight that only I was responsible for my actions, my learning as well as my successes. I learnt that I could not blame others. If I was late for class or failed to submit an assignment on time – the responsibility was mine. I will educate my own children as well as the pupils at school to assume responsibility for better and for worse"*. The lecturer undertook to lead the new teachers to professional and personal attainments, assume responsibility and believe in their capability in order to reduce their apprehensions upon their induction at school.

Empowerment

Empowerment is the basic liberating process in Freire's critical pedagogy. Empowering people has a political-educational meaning. As a liberating process it is always a social rather than an individual experience

and as such it is usually a status empowerment [24]. The empowerment process is implemented through a dialogue and reference to the involved pupils as subjects. The empowerment process places pupils at the centre and relates to multiculturalism at school and in society. It refers to the individual's growth as an active, collaborative and social process since the individual and society create each other [26]. According to [9], empowerment is a psychological-sociological process which personally and professionally promotes the individuals while developing their self-confidence.

The issue of empowerment was constantly interwoven in the diaries of the new teachers. One of the prominent examples of the empowerment process and its benefit to one's personal identity was expressed by the words of one teacher: *"Learning in the workshop and the encounters with other new teachers showed me that I was not alone as a new teacher at school... I was not the only one who experienced problems and had difficulties with all the school requirements... others felt it too and thought like me and this strengthened and empowered me a lot"*.

From an educational point of view, the learning process is negotiated and led by the teachers, based on a teacher-pupil joint authority. This process enables pupils to grasp the meaning of critical knowledge which is outside their immediate experience. At the same time, they establish connections between the personal understanding of themselves, of the world and of the options of changing what is obvious and evident in our life. Empowerment signifies granting an ability, allowing, facilitating [28].

All along the way, the lecturer of the workshop took care to empower the new teachers, set challenges to them and allow them to lead. She enabled them to express their voice in a critical way, think about their needs and capabilities and learn them. Moreover, she taught them to acknowledge the problems they faced and provided them with tools for coping. The empowerment existed on the group level rather than only on the individual level. It was manifested by granting a status and identity as a group. Consolidation of empowerment processes, observed throughout the workshop, might constitute a basis for creating social change mechanisms [19].

V. CONCLUSION

Examining the professional development workshop of new teachers through the lens of the Freirean pedagogy highlights the reciprocal learning processes which transpired in the workshop. The empowering and continuous dialogue which became the way of teaching and conduct in the workshop facilitated the new teachers' induction at school, increased their self-confidence and promoted their sense of self-efficacy in the dialogue with the pupils, colleagues, management and parents.

The principles of Freire's critical pedagogy integrated in the workshop attest to the relevancy of the powerful concepts and awareness of the importance of their implementation in professional development programmes of new teachers. The teaching and learning processes underscore the existence of a learning process which is not merely designed for acquiring knowledge but also for creating the learners' capability and motivation, changing their life reality by themselves. The new teachers can in fact generate changes in the education system through a Freirean dialogue. The benefit and importance of the workshop resides in raising new teachers' awareness of their ability to facilitate the foundation of a society which advocates values of social justice, equality and democracy [29], [30], [1]

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