

On Rethinking Our Classrooms: A Critical Pedagogy View

Sobre la reflexión en nuestros salones de clase: una perspectiva desde la pedagogía crítica

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This paper, as its title suggests, introduces some reflections on the importance critical pedagogy as well as awareness-raising practices have in education today, especially in language teacher preparation programs, and how they provide a new opportunity for pre-service teachers to re-think their pedagogical experiences for social transformation. Critical pedagogy (CP) as a philosophy of life helps teachers achieve a better understanding of what teaching really entails and raising awareness fosters reflection regarding our practices in educational settings, starting in the language classroom, exploring on the one hand, what pre-service teachers think and perceive about teaching and learning in the context they are involved in, and on the other hand, how those perceptions might influence their educational practices.

Key words: Awareness-raising practices, critical pedagogy, pre-service and in-service teacher education, reflection, transformation

Este artículo, como el título lo sugiere, presenta algunas reflexiones acerca de la importancia que la pedagogía crítica y las prácticas de sensibilización y concientización tienen en educación hoy, especialmente en la preparación profesional de los docentes de lenguas, y cómo estas tendencias brindan a los maestros en formación la oportunidad de repensar sus experiencias pedagógicas para la transformación social. La pedagogía crítica como filosofía de vida nos ayuda a entender mejor lo que el proceso de enseñanza realmente significa, y las prácticas de sensibilización y concientización tienen el propósito de promover la reflexión de nuestro quehacer diario en nuestros salones de clase y explorar por una parte, lo que los futuros maestros piensan y perciben sobre el proceso de enseñanza en el contexto en el cual ellos se desenvuelven, y por otra parte, cómo esas percepciones pueden influir en sus prácticas educativas.

Palabras clave: formación de docentes, maestros en formación, pedagogía crítica, prácticas de sensibilización y concientización, reflexión, transformación

Introduction

Pre-service teachers' conceptions about ELT teaching and learning comprise several perspectives. Some of them relate particularly to the subject matter knowledge (Richards, 1998) language teachers might have to teach their classes as well as the methodology to be implemented in order to create learning environments to encourage communication. Others give more importance to supplying learners with a number of grammar structures in order to understand the language. The main concern here is that these perspectives tend to view classrooms as "closed boxes" and "form only a small part of what we need to understand in terms of what matters in language education" (Pennycook, 2005, p. 467). Therefore, it would be significant to embrace CP as an alternative approach that relates the school context to the social context in a reciprocal relationship, as everything we do in the classroom is related to broader concerns (Pennycook, 2005).

This view might prompt prospective teachers to rethink their daily experiences in order to identify, on the one hand, the strengths they find in their pedagogical process, with clear objectives supporting them, and on the other hand, those weaknesses which affect this process, with the purpose of trying new ways to transform weaknesses into strengths. In this sense, CP has sparked an array of possibilities to start for those who have not done it yet, or maintain, for those who have begun this process, rethinking our classrooms in terms of empowering teachers and learners to think and act critically with the aim of transforming their contexts.

When I read Pennycook (2001) for the first time, I had not understood his purpose of talking about the politics of pedagogy, but when trying to understand his ideas, through another writer, Wink (2000), I realized that this is a significant issue that encompasses a pedagogy of change that will allow learners to gain social skills to actively participate in a transformed and inclusive democratic community (Kincheloe, 2007). Firstly, because it is necessary to reflect upon whom we are as well as what we do as teachers. Secondly, because it includes the importance of learning from and about our students and their contexts; this is how "liberatory education is fundamentally a situation where the teacher and the students *both* have to be learners, *both* have to be cognitive subjects, in spite of being different" ([emphases in the original] Shor & Freire, 1987, p. 33). Regarding this, Wink (2000) supports Freire's idea by stating that "critical pedagogy asks us to accept, respect, and even to celebrate the other" (p. xiii). Thirdly, because it helps teachers reflect on assumptions and paradigms *teachers* still have, as I mentioned above, in relation to the teaching and learning processes. Hopefully, it will help us experience new changes in both our personal and professional lives.

Therefore, this paper is a reflection on the importance critical pedagogy and awareness-raising bring today for pre-service teachers in terms of rethinking language classrooms leading to social transformation. In order to do this, I will start by addressing

some ideas on what rethinking our classrooms implies. Then, in the same line of thought, I will define critical pedagogy from the perspectives of Giroux, McLaren, and Apple (2006); McLaren (2003a, b); Shor and Freire (1987); Wink (2000); and the critical applied linguist Pennycook (2001, 2004, 2005). I will also present my understanding of what CP entails. Afterwards, I will define awareness-raising and discuss how it becomes an exploration of what pre-service teachers think and perceive about teaching. Some research studies on these concerns will be cited through the document. Later on, I will address some pedagogical implications that necessarily go towards the complex role teachers and learners are facing today in our society.

Rethinking Our Classrooms

Rethinking our classrooms¹ is an idea I took from the book by the same name (Christensen, Karp, & Bigelow, 2000), which has made me consider the prefixes RE and UN in order to analyze and value what I have been doing for several years as a teacher and a teacher educator. We sometimes forget that our classrooms and the outside world have a reciprocal relationship: Even though classrooms are not totally determined by the outside world, they are part of it and are affected by the real representation of our society, where friendship, love, responsibility, loyalty, as well as violence, arguments, conflicts, and sadness come to pass. This is because our learners express who they are and what they have learned in their families and, as a consequence, in the society they belong to.

This idea has helped me clarify that rethinking our classrooms is not only about describing what is happening there, but interpreting critically and proposing possible paths to make our classrooms, “places of hope, where students gain glimpses of the kind of society we could live in and where students learn the academic and critical skills needed to make it a reality” (Christensen et al., 2000, p. 4). These become thought-provoking ideas for prospective teachers who want to transform their school settings by working on values such as respect, tolerance, justice, and equity. Regarding this, Freire (as cited in Christensen et al., 2000) suggests that teachers should attempt to “live part of their dreams within their educational space” (p. 4). It is worth noting that activities where students represent roles allow them to climb into themselves and explore their feelings from the inside.

This is a challenging idea in the sense that traditional paradigms have emphasized only the way in which teachers should teach by implementing the methods that best support language teaching, instead of concentrating their attention on classroom students’ learning process as

1 Rethinking our classrooms is an important contribution teachers in Milwaukee (USA) offer to work on; it includes topics such as injustice, inequality, and power relationships.

well as socio-cultural classroom practices that have to do with students' lives, needs and experiences. These classroom practices should be critical, socially participatory, experiential, academically rigorous, activist, joyful, visionary, and culturally sensitive.

We can say critical, socially participatory and experiential as pre-service teachers might foster reflection (theme of further discussion in this paper) among students about their experiences as well as question their realities by debating critical topics and developing real world projects that move them outside the classroom setting, through which students might be provoked to develop² “their democratic capacities to question, to challenge, to make real decisions, to collectively solve problems” (Christensen et al., 2000, p. 4).

We can say academically rigorous and active since students need to be inspired to achieve levels of academic performance through which they can write and speak to real audiences, read books and articles that really matter in every kind of context in order to become agents of change who are not only reflecting and assuming critical positions but also taking actions.

We can say joyful, visionary, and culturally sensitive as classroom life should make students feel involved as well as cared about, “pre-figure the kind of democratic society we envision and thus contribute to building that society” (Christensen et al., 2000, p. 5), as well as understand that the school context is culturally diverse and accept the difference. Consequently, students should understand the ways their lives connect to the broader society they belong to. This is one of the most important issues that critical pedagogy addresses, to start rethinking education from students' points of view and their contexts to reach the goal of social transformation.

In the following lines, the discussion will go around the relation between critical pedagogy and awareness raising that become the platform underpinning rethinking our classrooms.

Critical Pedagogy

First of all, it is worth emphasizing that critical pedagogy is directly concerned with social transformation and educational change. It has caused us to reflect on what teachers do every day in our school settings: the teaching practices and experiences we as teachers handle every day with our students, our colleagues, our language classrooms, even with ourselves. Regarding this, Shor and Freire (1987), two of the most important authors within critical education, explain that it is imperative to integrate teachers and students into a mutual re-creation of knowledge framed in dialogic pedagogy. In addition, Shor and Freire (1987) add to this perspective the idea of creating different possibilities to help teachers reflect on

2 Creating classrooms for equity and social justice is one of the most important issues to be addressed in rethinking our classrooms.

their professional development, and not merely establishing a set of techniques for “gaining literacy or expertise or professional skills or even critical thought” (p. 13). As such, these critical pedagogues, who are interested in dialogue and reflection by which teachers can become more active participants in education, affirm that “through critical dialogues about a text or a moment in society, we try to reveal education, unveil it, see its reasons for being like it is” (p. 13).

When we refer to the word “critical,” we have the tendency to adopt a negative view concerning any topic or situation. Nevertheless, Pennycook (2001) defines this term within pedagogy as “doing something with careful analysis” and being critical as “being engaged with social change” (p. 11). As I interpret this definition, I find that “critical” involves a permanent inquiry about what teachers have been, what we are, and what we will become in the future as teachers as well as how pre-service teacher education may help accomplish this goal. Furthermore, Pennycook (2001) adds two other meanings of “critical,” which are important and crucial; these words, referring to pedagogy, cope with “some of the central issues in language use that may finally move into a new state of being” (p. 21). Moreover, Wink (2000) asserts that critical means “seeing beyond, looking within and without and seeing more deeply the complexities of teaching and learning. Then, pedagogy is seen as the interaction between teaching and learning” (p. 30).

Thus, the concept of “critical” is particularly significant for language teachers as claimed by Hawkings and Norton (2009), because the subject matter we teach—language—serves as a mediator in how learners might construct their identity as well as cultural and social relationships in the world surrounding them. This is to say, language is a primary means through which representations and meanings should be deconstructed and negotiated as language is not neutral; it explicitly or implicitly conveys meanings, intentions, and assumptions.

By bringing these ideas together, we can conceptualize what critical pedagogy is. Wink (2000) argues that the most important legacy she has received from her study of critical pedagogy is that “all of us need to reflect critically on our own experiences and those of others” (p. 15). But, Are we able to do so? Do we have time to do it? Do we find it necessary? I think that the answers to these questions depend on the commitment we have concerning who we are as teachers. It is not easy to change paradigms that tie us to old ways in education, or, in our lives. It is much easier to teach a subject, eight hours a day, five days a week, 4 weeks a month, without worrying about the situations that may happen around us.

Wink (2000) illustrates that it is critical pedagogy that makes us reflect and read for more understanding of our past and future. The same author complements her definition by describing critical pedagogy as “the impetus that causes people to reflect and read for more understanding of their past and future, it gives us the courage to learn, relearn, and unlearn what I used to know about teaching and learning” (p. 23).

Similarly, McLaren (2003b) points out that CP is “A way of thinking about, negotiating, and transforming the relationship among classroom teaching, the production of knowledge, the institutional structures of school, and the social and material relations of the wider community, society, and nation-state” (p. 345). He clarifies that critical pedagogy does not constitute a homogeneous set of ideas. It deals with empowering the powerless and transforming social inequalities and injustices.

Through this last statement I can understand that critical pedagogy has a strong basis on social change, and transformation for our communities; there is an urgent need to foster reflection about these issues in our classroom settings, and become committed in our roles as facilitators, guides in the daily processes our students follow at school; we do not just teach a subject, it is not only about completing a program but goes beyond that. Being a teacher implies *time* to listen to our students’ problems, to make them feel loved and accepted and, above all, to make them feel that they are not alone in solving any problematic situation they might live at school or at home. We need to consider the different conditions, contexts, and individual characteristics our students face.

McLaren (2003a) provides a clear description of the three foundational principles for critical pedagogy. The first is related to politics, the second concerns culture, and the third deals with economics. He understands curriculum seen from two points of view: a theory of interest and a theory of experience, and concludes by mentioning that critical pedagogy deals with numerous themes situated in distinct fields of research and criticism, such as feminist pedagogy, critical constructivism, and multicultural education. He also points out a difference between schooling and education. The former is mainly a mode of social control; the latter has the potential to transform society with the learner functioning as an active subject committed to self and social transformation.

In an introduction to critical pedagogy at a National Congress of Research in Bogota in September 2006, Professors Giroux, McLaren, and Apple mentioned that this philosophy of education has definite political roots that emerge from social and economic difficulties the working-class society has lived in the USA, challenging education from its traditional practices on the way to social change. Hence, these ideas have nurtured my vision of critical pedagogy. I realized that we teachers ought to be more reflective, critical, and sensitive toward the educational, social, and political changes we face in our country, as well as realize how these changes may affect our communities.

Likewise, Pennycook (2004) introduces a critical view to pedagogy in the sense of critical analysis of classrooms where learning takes place; he also presents different relationships (power, discrimination, racism, and so forth) among people within an academic community based on the roles they play in it. He asserts that “The classroom is a microcosm of the larger social and cultural world, reflecting, reproducing and changing the world” (p. 479).

Understanding these pedagogues' thought, we teachers are invited to continue reflecting and discussing critical issues of pedagogy that go beyond the instructional aspects of teaching and that unveil "the political content of everyday situation that happens in the classroom" (Benson, 1997, as cited in Pennycook, 2001, p. 16).

To conclude, CP can be considered as an opportunity to re-evaluate what we teachers are doing in our classrooms, how we are treating our students, how we are implementing methodologies and strategies that really fit in our students' contexts, and how we are integrating teachers and students into a mutual "re-creation of knowledge framed in a dialogic pedagogy" (Shor & Freire, 1987, p. 8). As teacher educators we are not only sharing knowledge and understandings, but engaging our pre-service teachers in permanent reflection as a starting point of transformation which may develop, as Shor and Freire (1987) remark, in the long run into their choices for social change.

Making Sense of What Awareness-Raising Entails

Up to this point, I have presented important insights about critical pedagogy in accordance with theoreticians such as Giroux, McLaren, Shor and Freire, Wink, as well as Pennycook. Now, I will discuss *awareness-raising and reflection* as exploration processes underlying pre-service teacher education programs that have to do with the continuum preparation that begins from initial teacher preparation (pre-service teachers) and continues with in-service teachers courses (Carter & Anders, 1996).

As a starting point towards reflective teaching, awareness arises to bear in mind the aspects I mentioned above through an exploration of what pre-service teachers think and perceive about teaching as a concept. Ellis (1997) argues that awareness-raising practices "are intended to develop the student teacher's conscious understanding of the principles underlying second language teaching and/or the practical techniques that teachers can use in different kinds of lessons" (p. 27). Gebhard and Oprandy (1999) believe that awareness is related to discovering and rediscovering teaching beliefs and practices. Moreover, Clavijo (1998) asserts that "teachers' beliefs are an important consideration in understanding classroom practices" (p. 4).

Likewise, Richards and Lockhart (1995) suggest that teachers' beliefs are derived from different sources, namely, teachers' own experience as learners and experience of what works best, through which we demonstrate our thoughts about teaching as a profession. Gebhard and Oprandy (1999) consider that pre-service teachers have participated in teaching "as students in classrooms since they were very young" (p. 3), therefore, the authors invite them to "rediscover classroom life, so that they might have opportunities to become aware of new things in a very familiar place" (p. 3). It is worth highlighting that pre-service teachers need to reflect on the responsibility they have on their hands and teacher preparation programs need

to prepare them for the reality of their jobs. The purpose of developing awareness-raising practices is to provide pre-service teachers a better basis for understanding how and to what extent their perceptions play a role in their thoughts and in their teaching.

By the same token, Richards and Lockhart (1995) mention some findings in a study of teachers' beliefs carried out in 1991 with teachers of English in Hong Kong. They express that their primary role in the classroom was: "(1) to provide useful learning experiences, (2) provide a model of correct language use, (3) answer learners' questions, and (4) correct learners' errors" (p. 37). There have been other research studies in terms of assuming new challenges and characterizing pre-service teachers' perceptions of effective teachers.

For example, Lin and Gorrell (2002), in a study about the road to pre-service teachers' conceptual change, compiled the experiences of a series of seminars to test that learning to teach is improved through the application of a constructivist orientation. The purpose of the researchers was to observe how external events challenge pre-service teachers' ideals about teaching and learning by a seminar structure in helping them construct knowledge, engage in reflection, and effect a conceptual change. The authors concluded by stating that a constructivist approach to teacher education provides changes in the pre-service teachers' views about teaching and learning which influence their teaching practice. The authors also underline that student teachers may construct their own learning through an interaction among their beliefs, their prior knowledge, and their experiences.

Viáfara (2004) in his Master's thesis showed important findings concerning the role of reflection in pre-service teachers' development in the Licenciatura Program at Universidad Nacional. The research attempted to explore how the student teachers' constant reflection on their practice interacted with their pedagogical knowledge and so they rebuilt and produced new knowledge. A reflective cycle was developed in which student teachers seemed to become aware, revise and update their pedagogical knowledge. The findings pointed to self-appraisal as one of the most meaningful patterns present in this reflective process. One of the implications the author stated was that as teacher educators, we need to assume an open attitude to provide conditions in the teaching practice so students can benefit and learn from this reflection.

Furthermore, the conclusions of a study carried out by Wood (2000), regarding the experience of learning to teach, brought to light, on the one hand, that the problems such teachers are likely to encounter include inability to respond in a meaningful way to their students' learning needs, to develop meaningful assessment, or to adapt easily to curriculum change. On the other hand, teacher educators need to review the objectives of initial teacher education programs and the ways they assess the performance of student teachers.

Finally, we cannot get away from the fact that CP is present in the contextual understanding of schooling and helps pre-service teachers become aware of the need to

create a wide diversity of ideas and approaches in the language classroom where learners and teachers have the opportunity to interact spontaneously, recreate their world, and see schools as places “where students can find their voices, reclaim and affirm their histories, and develop a sense of self and collective identity amidst the language of larger public loyalties and social relations” (Giroux & McLaren, 1989, p. xii).

It is necessary, then, to engage both pre-service teachers in self-reflection for examining and confronting beliefs and the perceptions they have towards teaching as a concept and as a practice. I consider that teachers should be open-minded *to learn* (Wink, 2000) new trends, apply them according to the context they are immersed in, and see if those trends go well with their students’ learning process; *to relearn* (Wink, 2000) what we once thought was appropriate to be developed with our students, and that maybe now, it does not suit our students’ interests and needs at all, and finally *to unlearn* (Wink, 2000) traditional paradigms which have tied us down regarding our real mission in the process of helping our students be themselves, of reading the world that surrounds them, and finally, of learning from mistakes.

The Role of Reflection

Regarding the previous ideas I have stated, it is important for teacher educators in undergraduate programs to create spaces for reflection about teaching and learning processes. Loughran (2002) states that for “understanding the nature of reflection and the value of reflective practice it is important to see it as the notion of a problem, a puzzling, curious or perplexing situation” (p. 33). The author analyzes the value of reflection as a meaningful way of learning about teaching in order to understand what teaching entails, and reminds us of the importance of reflective practice and how it influences the subsequent actions in practice. An important issue he emphasizes is that experience alone does not lead to learning and that reflection on experience is essential to make meaning from the situations that enhance understanding of teachers’ experiences from a variety of points of view.

The author supports his research on reflective practice, which furthers practice through reflection and which involves careful consideration of both “seeing” and “action” to enhance the possibilities of learning through experience. Through tasks based on student-teachers assertions about practice, the author compares traditional teaching with reflective practice, and how practicum experiences become more meaningful when student-teachers reconsider their experiences not as isolated events, but as events from which common understandings might be reached. He concludes by stating that an appropriate focus on experience in teacher education can be influential in the development of effective reflective practice and how it might be important in the development of student-teachers’ professional knowledge. Reflective practice becomes then a way of beginning to help teacher preparation programs integrate theory and practice in meaningful ways.

Pineda (2002) points out that reflection entails two issues: The first one is thoughtfulness about educational theories and practices that has to do with the “permanent critical analysis of educational traditions” (p. 12). It involves seeing ourselves to improve our teaching performance; in other words, adopting a critical position. The second one is “an in-depth exploration of one’s teaching practices as a means to construct a solid conceptualization of teaching. It implies analyzing one’s view of teaching and learning, because exploring one’s teaching experiences helps understand the nature of teacher development” (p. 13).

In the same train of thought, Gilpin (2001) considers reflection as a way of thinking and interpreting in order to improve our pedagogical experiences. Dewey (as cited in Gilpin, 2001, p. 111) asserts that reflection “begins from a felt difficulty and then leads to analysis and generalization.” Schon (as cited in Gilpin, 2001, p. 111) comments that “it is not static: implicit in its meaning is action.” For Zeichner (as cited in Gilpin, 2001, p. 111) “it is a process of informing practice with reason.” Likewise, Gilpin (2001) lists five essential components when doing reflection. They are: noticing, reasoning, change of some kind, questioning, and effective involvement. When I refer to reflection, I mean to think about an issue or a situation, to analyze how that situation occurs, its implications, to assume a position, and to take an action towards it.

Barlett (1997) refers to “the relation between an individual’s thought and action” (p. 204) as a fundamental idea of reflection. Therefore, when we talk about reflective teaching, it is worth noting that we teachers can improve our daily experience through reflection; this is why this author claims that “reflection is more than thinking and focuses on the day-to-day classroom teaching of the individual teacher as well as the institutional structures in which the teacher and student work” (p. 204). It is through reflection that pre-service teachers start becoming aware of their role as teachers and learners. They require a personal and influential attitude to constantly examine their ideas and actions about teaching and what encompasses it.

Nowadays, reflection in my university context is an enriching process that involves teachers and students; it gets started in the early semesters and goes until they finish their research projects in tenth semester. Some of my colleagues, who belong to the pedagogy and research areas, work together in this line of thought with their students on research projects that have gone beyond language teaching instruction, addressing themes such as students’ voices regarding their language learning process, as well as other projects related to gender identity, gender positioning, social exclusion, ecological awareness, and educational policies, among others. Hopefully, these teacher educators will guide prospective teachers towards a critical understanding of teaching.

Several teacher researchers have focused on these concerns and have obtained interesting findings that have helped to foster pre-service teachers’ reflection on their roles as future

teachers. In a study developed at a university in southern Georgia by Minor, Onwuegbuzie, Witcher, and James (2002), pre-service teachers' educational beliefs and their perceptions of the characteristics of effective teachers are addressed. Researchers suggested the need for teachers to challenge their own beliefs when these beliefs contradict what they experience in their field. Grounded on researchers such as Doyle, the authors of this study stated that the characteristics pre-service teachers bring with them (experiences, knowledge, disposition, beliefs, and perceptions) upon entry into formal preparation programs greatly influenced their development as both students and practitioners of teaching. Their findings fell into three factors that dealt with *instructional and management skills, ethical and well-tempered behavior, and knowledge and enthusiasm of/for the subject and the student*. According to the researchers, this study constitutes a basis for engaging pre-service candidates in self-reflection for the purposes of examining and confronting entering beliefs and values they hold regarding various aspects of teaching.

In Colombia, Castellanos (2005) carried out a research project that focused on how pre-service teachers construct their image as teachers. Four student-teachers from eighth semester of a TEFL teacher education program participated in this study. The findings revealed that pre-service teachers created identifications with certain role models of professional teaching and benefited from the collaborative interaction with their professors, peers, and cooperating teachers. Their images reflected the beliefs they held about teaching and learning. The researcher concluded by mentioning that it is important to raise awareness about collective and dynamic views and experiences related to language teaching and learning.

Another interesting study which shows how three pre-service teachers from the program of philology at Universidad Nacional de Colombia reflected upon their practicum was developed by Ayala (2006). His purpose was to evidence how such a reflective process is carried out, and to reveal the topics considered. The analysis of the data collected through journals, lesson plans, and interviews demonstrated that pre-service teachers thought about their teaching considering different issues such as suggestions from others (critical people), the preparation required for their lessons, the value of using the correct materials, and the necessity of presenting topics of study as part of a logical syllabus in their practicum. These students-teachers also considered the kind of teaching methodology to be implemented with their students according to the needs analysis they conducted before starting their practicum. Finally, the participants reflected on the use of the target language in class because they used the language as an object of study more than a means of communication to fulfill the topics and lessons of the syllabus.

To conclude, Rodgers (2002) claims that reflection helps us understand that our students' learning is central and that our teaching is subordinate to and in service of that goal. Therefore, reflective teaching guides us towards the examination of schools and their effects on society. I sum up by noting that reflection provides us with the opportunity to stop and

think about ourselves, our attitudes, behaviors, perceptions, our students, their contexts, to assume a position towards them, and take an action towards change.

Conclusion and Pedagogical Implications

Throughout this paper, I have reflected on the importance of critical pedagogy and awareness-raising in rethinking our classrooms today. Thus, these places become scenarios where different representations and visions of the world are shared. What happens in the outside world may have an impact on what happens in the classroom, and all that we do in the classroom (what we teach, how we teach, the materials we use, how we assess students, how we respond to them) has broader implications. Learners might see their teachers as those who can listen to them expressing their personal points of view about situations that are not necessarily academic. It is hard work, but when teachers show their commitment towards their students, and these trust them, the possibility to reflect and change points of view towards life is open and might contribute to the creation of school settings where positive attitudes and values are reinforced in order to adopt critical and impartial views towards their own actions.

There are five pedagogical implications I want to address directly concerning the complex roles of teachers today in our society. The first one deals with the responsibility we as teachers have in our communities (a long time ago, teachers used to be leaders, listened to by their communities). I think it is time to start getting back that position again, even though our voices are not still heard.

The second one refers to viewing teachers as transformative intellectuals (Giroux & McLaren, 1989), professionals who are willing to reflect upon the ideological principles that inform our practice, who understand that we do not have to provide them with all the knowledge they are supposed to possess, but to guide them to learn how to learn, how to face and confront themselves, how to become professionals. The third one has to do with the need to create an environment that helps pre-service and in-service teachers both understand and reflect upon our roles as society's transformers and generators of change. When you can identify the sources of power, recognize your own position in relation to power, and understand the political nature of what you learn, you can develop your own social actions.

The fourth one stresses that although it is significant in pre-service teaching to focus on preparing professionals who know what, how, and why to teach, pedagogy should be focused also on the interaction between teaching and learning. That is to say, to consider learners, their contexts, their needs and interests, asking also about what, how, and why these learners would like to learn. As Shor and Freire (1987) assert: "Liberatory education is fundamentally a situation where the teacher and the students both have to be learners; both have to be

cognitive subjects, in spite of being different” (p. 33). It is then a dialogue that develops a kind of critical reading or critical understanding of society.

The fifth one advocates the creation of more communicative classrooms, where students and teachers participate actively and where the attention is not only focused on how students better learn a language, but how teachers along with students talk and listen to each other; this can help solve problems students might face on a personal level within a group.

Teachers need to think about our role as teachers must go beyond teaching a class, for instance, we might become guides, facilitators, mediators as well as listeners, making our students feel that their voices are heard and are important to us, that they are human beings with the right to be wrong, and above all, that we are teachers and students who are learning to construct a new generation of ideals in regard to the kind of people we are forming in our society. As mentioned by Corson (2001), teachers need to redefine their roles in schools in order to determine their interactions among themselves, students, and communities.

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