Creating Culture Circles- A Case of Continuing Professional Development Workshop for Israeli Special Education Teachers

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Abstract.

The focus of critical educational philosophy is not only on criticising traditional education (Banking education), but also on promoting a pedagogy for liberation, whereby education is a cultural action for freedom. The main strategy or tool of critical pedagogy is the culture circle, a dialogical problem-posing method of education. The current qualitative case study examined the use of culture circles in a continuing professional development workshop for Israeli special education teachers. Given the over-representation of culturally and economically oppressed populations in the special education system, it would be appropriate to raise the awareness of the SE teachers of this situation. Findings revealed that while developing culture circles during the workshop, most of the teachers moved from proposing hurried and shallow solutions, to offering carefully thought-out ideas for joint analysis, following an in-depth review and definition of the problem. Despite starting the process with an idealised perception of society and an over-inflated sense of self-efficacy, when group participants completed the workshop, they had acquired the ability to acknowledge and even contend with the unjust conditions and imperfections of the Special Education System. It seems that, participating in culture circles can help teachers to both understand their current reality fully and deeply and to set meaningful goals for the future.

Keywords: culture circle; special education teachers; teacher's professional development.