On Iranian School Teachers' Perceptions of the Principles of Critical Pedagogy

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Abstract

As a post-modern approach and a relatively new paradigm in thinking about education, critical pedagogy derives its interest from critical theory. This theory began with the assumption that social relations are infused with injustices and it is the responsibility of intellectuals to recognize and address power relations. Accordingly, critical pedagogy provides principles, inspirations, and recommendations to improve human education and to direct it to democratic and oppression–free direction. This study surveyed 200 Iranian school teachers' views concerning critical pedagogy at elementary, secondary, and high school levels. Adopting the instrument "the Principles of Critical Pedagogy Scale" developed by Yilmaz (2009) differences in teachers' views on critical pedagogy by age, gender, and the level they teach were examined. Data analysis utilized descriptive statistics, t-test, and ANOVA. The results indicated no significant difference between teachers' views concerning the given variables except for gender. Moreover, in spite of teachers' agreement and approval of critical pedagogy and its principles, the results indicate the absence of critical pedagogy in the Iranian educational system, which can be attributed to the centralized top-down educational management.
Keywords: Critical thinking, Critical Pedagogy, Teachers' Role, Praxis- Education, Conscientization.

1. Introduction

The concept of "critical perspectives" including critical pedagogy, critical language awareness, and critical literacy in the field of education has been appropriated by a group whose intellectual root is perceived as a realization of critical theory of pre-World War II Frankfurt School (Pinar & Bowers, 1992), which advocated a Marxist analytical model using injustice and class subjugation as the primary lens for understanding human experience (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994). Immerging from within the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, the concept

of critical pedagogy is often associated with the work of scholars such as Freire (1970), Giroux (1992), Luke (1988), McLaren (1989), and Simon (1992) in the field of education. These scholars have much in common in their understandings of critical pedagogy. Such realizations, along with propositions and introductions by leading figures, were influential in maintaining basic assumptions and principles of critical pedagogy. In a recent study, Aliakbari and Faraji (2011) reviewed critical pedagogy's principles. They refer to these principles as problem posing education; political educational system; use of authentic materials; paradigm shift in the assumed roles for teachers and students; learners' empowerment; avoidance of marginalization; and development of critical consciousness, praxis, dialogism, and learners' conscientization. To provide a common background for the research conducted, these principles are briefly introduced.

One principle of critical pedagogy is problem posing education, introduced as an alternative to banking model education in which the teacher is active and the student is passive in the learning process (Freire, 1970). Shor (1980) stated that problem posing education encourages critical learning. Such learning "aids people in knowing what holds them back and imagining a social order which supports their full humanity" (p.48). Through problem posing, students and teachers examine their experiences and perspectives in light of those of other people and in relation to large public issues and processes of domination and liberation. Such a multiplicity of perspectives under meaningful inquiry can illuminate students' understanding of why people act in the ways that they do (Nieto, 1995). According to certain theorists of the field (e.g. Giroux, 1997; Shannon, 1992; Shor, 1992), the most important theme running through critical pedagogy literature is the belief that educational systems worldwide are political. Keessing-Styles (2003) asserts that school and political analysis of life should be at the center of the curriculum. According to Shannon (1992),all of the decisions made by educators regarding program and lesson goals, the materials to be used, and the nature of teacher interaction with students "are actually negotiations over whose values, interests, and beliefs will be validated at school" (p.2).

The use of authentic materials constitutes another principle of critical pedagogy. The authentic materials help students link their knowledge to the existing problems in society and take necessary actions for their improvement. Ohara, Safe, and Crooks (2000) point out that a critical pedagogy lesson plan should be based on authentic materials such as TV programs, commercials, video movies, etc., which are representative of the culture that is to be examined by the students and which serves as the basis for discussion and critical reflection of the culture.

In critical pedagogy, teachers and students are asked to adopt new roles. Freire (1970) asserts that the teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but the-one-who-is taught-in-dialogue-with-the-students, the one who while being taught also teaches. In Kanpol's (1998) view, a critical pedagogue will seek education by understanding that "authority" has multiple meanings and can be democratically negotiated. The teacher is an authority over his/her subject mat-

ter. The teacher is not the only authority in the classroom. Teachers and students share each other's knowledge. Teachers can use their authority to create relationships which, in turn, enhances an education relationship that challenges schooling notions of oppressive race, class, and gender stereotypes. Critical pedagogy requires a classroom environment that is democratic, where students' viewpoints are highlighted through discussion and debate and there is shared power and dialogue among teachers and students. In Momenian and Shirazizadeh (2009), the term critical pedagogy is like a tree with some very central branches, or the basic principles. "Empowerment" is one of those main branches of great moment in critical pedagogy. It is mainly concerned with developing in students and teachers the self-esteem to question the power relations in society (McLaren, 2003; Peterson, 2003).

One aim of critical pedagogy, according to Freire (1970), is to return to marginalized groups their lost voices and identities to think about their situation and find out why things are the way they are. Critical pedagogy focuses on power relationships between different groups and on how power is used. According to Kincheloe (2007), students must be able to identify who gains and who loses in specific situations and they must be made aware that privileged groups often have an interest in supporting the status quo to protect their advantages.

Praxis also constitutes another principle of critical pedagogy. The key in praxis is the ongoing partnership among action, reflection, and dialogue. For Monchinski (2008), praxis is a complex activity by which individuals create culture and society and become critically conscious human beings. He also refers to self-determination and rationality as characteristics of praxis.

For Freire (1970) dialogue is a conversation with a focus and a purpose that shows that the object of the study is not the exclusive property of the teacher. Knowledge is not produced somewhere in a textbook and in offices and then transferred to the students.

Another principle of critical pedagogy is conscientization, or raising students' consciousness of the injustices and inequalities surrounding them. Walker (2008) maintains that conscientization cannot exist without or outside praxis; the two exist in unity and express the permanently dialectical characteristics of the way people are and the way they transform the world. He also states that similarly, critical consciousness cannot exist without a sense of historicity. By understanding how the actions of people in the past have led to the current situation of reality, people can then understand how their own actions will have an impact on the future. Only with historicity and praxis does the attainment of a critical consciousness become a reality. In an attempt to examine the possibility for adopting critical pedagogy in the Iranian context and the extent to which teachers support implementing such an approach, the present study is intended to explore teachers' attitudes toward critical pedagogy. In so doing we can learn about the extent our educational system resists against or accommodates critical thoughts and ideas.

2. Review of Literature

In recent years, critical pedagogy has gained much interest and much practice has been done in this area. McLaren (2003) defines critical pedagogy as "a way of thinking about, negotiating, and transforming the relationship among classroom teaching, the production of knowledge, the institutional structures of the school, and the social and material relations of the wider community, society, and nation-state" (p. 35). For Kincheloe (2005), critical pedagogy is concerned with transforming relations of power that are oppressive and lead to the oppression of people. Kincheloe (2008) considers identifying sources of power; the political nature of education, the understanding of the politics of knowledge, justice and equality in education; the rejection of economic determinism; the lessening human suffering; change in relationship between student and teacher; and the promotion of emancipation and intellectual growth as central characteristics of critical pedagogy.

A number of studies have focused on the justification and evaluation of critical pedagogy and the clarification of its principles. Scholars (Arnett, 1993; hooks 1994; Popkewitz, 1997 and Schutz, 1998) have written on the potential and advantages of the use of dialogue as one principle of critical pedagogy in critical approaches to teaching. Milner (2003) emphasized the relevance and importance of critical pedagogy in achieving racial awareness by promoting completeness. In Milner's view, critical pedagogy is significant to pre-service teachers because it encourages viewing students as complete persons with histories and knowledge that existed before and outside of the classroom.

There are also a number of comparative studies in critical pedagogy literature. Andrade (2007) conducted a comparative study of Freirean critical pedagogy and the Indian culture of pedagogy in order to explore the possibilities in reinventing Freirean critical pedagogy in the context of Indian formal education. He examined the tensions and limitations that emerged and needed to be addressed. He argued that despite having originated in a very different context from that of Indian classrooms today, Freirean critical pedagogy can offer a useful contribution to address the crisis in Indian education. Edwards (2009) compared two different schools of thought: critical pedagogy, which labors to educate justice-oriented citizens; and democratic education, which endeavors to educate participatory citizens. The results showed that they are not only more similar than different, but also that they can (and should) learn from one another.

Critical pedagogy has been considered useful in fields other than education, including teacher training (Bartolome, 2004; Keesing-Styles, 2003), intercultural studies (Hovey, 2004), post-modernity (Giroux, 2004; James, 2008); and technology (Holst, 2003, as cited in Yilmaz, 2009). Shor (1996) discussed his experiences with trying to engage in critical praxis in his Utopia course, highlighting the success, challenges and lessons he and his students learned when trying to practice critical pedagogy. Similarly, Horan (2004) identified some of the success

and challenges that she and her students experienced when attempting to put the theory of critical pedagogy into practice.

Regarding teachers' awareness of critical pedagogy, a good number of studies are reported as well. Abdelrahim (2007) investigated the relationship between gender and experience in teachers' awareness of critical pedagogy. His study employed a mixed-method approach in which the qualitative part, one-on-one semi structured interviews with English language teachers, preceded and shaped the quantitative part in terms of data collection and analysis. The overall findings of both sections indicated that there is no significant difference between gender and experience in teachers' awareness of critical pedagogy

Hollstein (2006) evaluated the extent to which per-service social studies teachers, both during their junior year of undergraduate studies at Ohio University, and immediately prior to their student teaching experience, understood, assimilated, and used critical pedagogy. Three themes emerged as the conclusion of the study. First, participants lacked an understanding of critical pedagogy due to lack of immersion. Second, participants were unable to apply critical pedagogy in a lesson plan. Third, the participants inadvertently subverted the aims of critical pedagogy for social activism for change.

In spite of the fact that critical pedagogy has its roots in the work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, the study by the Brazilian scholars, Cox and Assis-Peterson (1999), investigating what 40 Brazilian English teachers knew about and thought of critical pedagogy in ELT showed that they were unaware of critical pedagogy and its outlook in Brazil was not positive. In a recent overview of critical language pedagogy in Brazil, Jorge (2009) explains that familiarity with and action concerning this concept is split across elite and grassroots sectors in Brazil, including language teachers.

Yilmaz (2009) conducted a study in Turkey to determine the views of elementary school teachers concerning critical pedagogy by gender, education, seniority, and place of school. The results showed that teachers were moderately in agreement with the principles of critical pedagogy. There was a significant difference among their views according to educational background, professional seniority, and the environment of the school where they worked, while there was no significant difference among their views according to gender. Due to the scarcity of the investigations in the Iranian context, the present study intended to investigate teachers' familiarity with critical pedagogy in this context.

3. Statements of the Problem

Edmondson and D'Urso (2007) claimed that those who make educational policy almost never engage in classroom practice. In other words, these policy makers in many cases completely disregard the expertise and concerns of classroom teachers and impose the most specific modes of institutional practice on them. It seems that such a condition is also present in the Iranian educational system. In spite of

the fact that critical pedagogy has attracted much attention all over the world, it appears as somehow a new issue in the Iranian context, where it is not practiced by teachers nor is it supported by those who are involved in educational policies. The educational system in Iran represents a top-down approach with a noticeable emphasis on authority and discipline. Textbooks are developed and distributed by Ministry of Education for all levels and teachers are expected to organize classroom activities in directions which fulfill textbooks requirements.

To maintain the centralized and nation-wide homogeneity of the education, at the final years of the elementary, secondary and high school levels, students have to participate in the yearly national examinations which are the same for all the students in the country. Therefore, individual attempts to change this educational system or make improvements in its principles are limited. As a result, in the Iranian educational system, education does not lead necessarily to self-development, critical thought, and social progress.

The awareness of the significant role of teachers in classroom settings and of the advantages of critical pedagogy in education and the fact that every educational policy implemented reflects underlying assumptions regarding concepts of school, society, and values, as an exploratory study justified research in the Iranian context. Accordingly, the present study investigated the extent to which a sample of Iranian teachers are familiar with and support a critical approach to pedagogy. It was hoped that knowing about the participants' attitudes provide us with an introspective vision of the ways through which teachers have been educated with regard to critical pedagogy. The study can also be helpful in determining whether Iranian teachers are ready to implement such an approach in their lesson planning. Knowledge about teachers' degree of support for critical pedagogy principles can be determinant in embedding them in the curriculum of the target population. The study can also be effective in creating an optimistic view for teachers' to benefit from the advantages of critical pedagogy.

3.1. Research Questions

The present study sought answers to the following questions:
1. Do Iranian school teachers support the principles of critical pedagogy?
2. Is there any difference between teachers' views on the principles of critical pedagogy according to their gender, age and the level they teach?

3.2. Research Hypotheses

Based on the research questions cited above, the study targeted testing the following null hypotheses:
1. Iranian school teachers do not support the principles of critical pedagogy.
2. There is no difference between teachers' views on the principles of critical pedagogy according to their gender, their age, and the level they teach.

4. Methodology
4.1. Participants

A convenience sampling method was used for subject selection. Participants of the study included 200 (105 male and 95 female) teachers who were teaching at elementary, secondary, and high schools in Eivan in the province of Ilam, west of Iran. Since subjects' ages ranged from 23 to 49, they were categorized into 20-29, 30-39, and 40-49 age group categories. Their educational degrees ranged from associate diploma to master of arts degrees, including 61 associate diplomas, 128 bachelor of arts and 11 master of arts holders. Care was also taken for their years of teaching experience according to which subjects were grouped into 1-10, 11-20 and 21-30 years of teaching experience categories.

4.2. Instruments

In the present study, the *Principles of Critical Pedagogy Scale*, which is a likert–type measure, was used to elicit information from participants. This questionnaire, developed by Yilmaz (2009), consists of 31 items with three sub-dimensions. The first dimension is called "Education System Sub-Dimension" which consists of 15 items. The second sub-dimension called "Functions of Schools Sub-Dimension" consists of 11 items. The third and the last sub-dimension, "Emancipator School Sub-Dimension", consists of five items.

Factor load values of the scale items ranged from .31 to .80. Bachman (1990) considers this method as one of the most powerful ways of estimating construct validity. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient of the scale turned out to be .75. The scale was answered as follows: 1- Strongly Disagree, 2- Disagree, 3- Fairly Agree, 4- Agree and 5- Strongly Agree. Total scoring of the answers showed the extent to which participants agreed with the principles of critical pedagogy. The reason for choosing this scale relates to the social and religious similarities between Iran and Turkey, where the scale was developed (Yilmaz, 2009). Permission to use the questionnaire was obtained from its author.

4.3. Data Collection Procedure

In the first week of April 2010, the questionnaire was administered to elementary schools. The researchers distributed the Persian translation of the questionnaire among teachers in one third of elementary schools in the city. In the next week, secondary school teachers received the questionnaire. Because there were not many secondary schools, the questionnaire was distributed among all secondary schools in Eivan. In the third week the Persian translation of the questionnaire was administered in one third of high schools.

5. Results and Analysis

After questionnaire administration, the data obtained were used as input to get the results for data analysis. The purpose was to explore how Iranian schoolteachers' support CP and whether their views differed according to the given variables. Descriptive statistics were used to show the frequencies and means of the gathered data. To compute *t*-test and One-Way ANOVA to compare the means, the nominal data of the questionnaire were changed into interval data by assigning values 1 to 5 to the scales on the questionnaire. Then the numbers were added to obtain the total score of the questionnaire in general and for each sub-dimension in particular.

5.1. Investigation and Analysis of the Responses to Question 1:

The first question was "Do Iranian school teachers support the principles of critical pedagogy?" and the null hypothesis related to this question was that Iranian teachers do not support the principles of critical pedagogy. In order to examine this question in detail, distribution of teachers' answers on each sub-dimension of critical pedagogy is presented in table 1.

Given the items in Education System Sub-Dimension, teachers mostly agreed with the following items: "Education is an important source of inequality", item No 1 and "Power relations in society are influential on education," item No 13. Their answers to these items corresponded to "Strongly Agree" in the answer sheet. Among the items of "Functions of School" sub-dimension, the teachers mostly were in agreement with the following items: "School must work to ensure social justice," item No 1 and "Discipline is an indispensable part of schools," item No 3. Here again their answers corresponded to "Strongly Agree" in the answer sheet.

    Among the items of the Emancipator School sub-dimension, the teachers mostly agreed with the following items: "Teachers must share their authorities and responsibilities in the classroom with students," item No 3 and "The function of schools is to prepare children for future," item No 5. Their answers to these items corresponded to "Agree" in the answer sheet. In order to find out teachers' attitude toward the whole questionnaire, frequencies and percentages of teachers' attitudes on the principles of critical pedagogy in general were calculated and provided in table 2 below.

Table 1. Frequencies and Distributions of Teachers' Views on the Sub-dimensions of

Critical Pedagogy

Sub- dimensions of Critical Pedagogy	Scale	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Education System Sub-Dimension	Strongly Agree	45	22.3	22
	Agree	57	28.2	28
	Fairly Agree	44	21.8	22
	Disagree	44	21.8	22
	Strongly Disagree	10	5	5
Functions of Schools Sub-Dimension	Strongly Agree	102	50.5	51
	Agree	61	30.2	30.5
	Fairly Agree	29	14.4	14.5
	Disagree	6	3	3
	Strongly Disagree	2	1	1
Emancipator School Sub-Dimension	Strongly Agree	119	58.9	60.1
	Agree	58	28.7	29.3
	Fairly Agree	15	7.4	7.6
	Disagree	2	1	1
	Strongly Disagree	4	2	2

Table 2. Frequencies of Teachers' Answers to the Whole Critical Pedagogy Scale

Scales	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Strongly Agree	93	46	46.5
Agree	68	33.7	34
Fairly Agree	26	12.9	13
Disagree	10	5	5
Strongly Disagree	3	15	15

As clearly shown in Table 2, teachers' perceptions of the principles of critical pedagogy in general corresponded to the scale 5 namely, "I Strongly Agree". So, the first null hypothesis is rejected and it can be said that Iranian school teachers support critical pedagogy principles.

5.2. Investigation of Teachers' View in Relation to their Gender

Another purpose of the study was to find out if there is any difference among teachers' views on the principles of critical pedagogy according to their gender. To answer this question, both descriptive and referential statistics were run. As seen in Table 3 below, the means of the two groups are 49.10 and 47.01 for the first sub-dimension of critical pedagogy; 42.84 and 41.68 for the second sub-dimension; and 22.09 and 20.95 for the third sub-dimension respectively.

Table 3. Results of Descriptive Statistics and T-test for Differences between Teachers' Views according to their Gender

Sub-Dimensions and Total Scale	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	t	Sig (2-tailed)
Education System Sub-Dimension	Male	95	49.105	7.235	198	1.926	.056
	Female	105	47.019	8.008			
Functions of Schools Sub-Dimension	Male	95	42.842	6.125	198	1.505	.134
	Female	105	41.685	4.703			
Emancipator School Sub-Dimension	Male	95	22.094	2.767	198	2.644	.009
	Female	105	20.952	3.285			
Critical Pedagogy Total Score	Male	95	113.431	12.047	198	2.247	.026
	Female	105	109.533	12.429			

It can be observed in the table that there is little variation between the answers given by male and female participants. Because the two groups were independent from each other, four independent t-tests were computed to see if the difference between the means of the two groups was statistically significant. The results of computing independent t-tests are also shown in table 3.

Because the observed value for t (t=2.247, p<.026) is greater than the critical value (1.64), the related null hypothesis is rejected and it can be concluded that there is a significant difference between teachers' views on the principles of critical pedagogy based on their gender. In order to examine this question in detail, the significance of the obtained values for "t" in each sub-dimension was also examined. Comparing school teachers' views according to gender in the "Functions of Schools" sub-dimension, the observed value for t (t=1.505) appeared to be smaller than the critical value (t=1.64), indicating that there is no significant difference among teachers' views for this sub-dimension. Accordingly, it might be suggested that views of the male and female teachers who participated in the study were not so different on this sub-dimension. However, the difference between male and female teachers' views in "Education System" (t=1.926, p<.056) and "Emancipator Schools" sub-dimension (t= 2.644, p<.009) appeared as significant.

5.3. Investigation of Teachers' View in Relation to their Age

Another intent in the second question of the study was to check if there is any difference between teachers' views on the principles of critical pedagogy according to their ages. Again, for this purpose, both descriptive and inferential statistics were run. In order to check the differences between the means statistically, the participants' ages were coded as A, B, and C age groups respectively covering 21-29, 30-39, and 40-49 years old. Because of three age groups ANOVA was used as an inferential statistics. The results are provided in table 4 below.

Table 4. Results of Descriptive Statistics and ANOVA for Differences between School Teachers' views on the Principles of Critical Pedagogy according to age

Sub- dimensions and Total Scale		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig
Education System Sub-Dimension	21-29 Years	13	45.076	7.793		
	30-39 Years	104	47.807	8.034	1.338	.262
	40-49 Years	83	48.010	7.218		
Functions of Schools Sub-Dimension	21-29 Years	13	41.230	4.781		
	30-39 Years	104	42.442	5.542	.309	.734
	40-49 Years	83	42.132	5.452		
Emancipator School Sub-Dimension	21-29 Years	13	21.153	3.078		
	30-39 Years	104	21.221	3.282	1.168	.313
	40-49 Years	83	21.891	2.841		
Critical Pedagogy Total Score	21-29 Years	13	107.923	12.874		
	30-39 Years	104	111.641	12.879	.562	.571
	40-49 Years	83	111.831	11.697		

The results in Table 4 reveal that the means for each age group in the Critical Pedagogy Scale in general and in each sub-dimensions of critical pedagogy in particular are very close to each other. As Table 4 above reveals, the observed value for F (F= .562, p< .57) was smaller than the critical value and the difference among the means was not significant for the three age groups. In order to understand teachers' perceptions on the sub-dimensions of critical pedagogy another one-way ANOVA was also computed for each sub-dimension. As it is shown, for all three sub-dimensions, namely, "Education System," "Functions of School," and "Emancipator School" the obtained values for F were smaller than the critical values at p<.05, which means that there is no significant difference among teachers' perceptions for each sub-dimension according to their age.

5.4. Investigation of Teachers' View in Relation to the Level They Teach

The fourth intent of the study was to examine if there is any difference among teachers' views on the principles of critical pedagogy according to the level they teach. Again, both descriptive and inferential statistics were computed for teach-

ers' views according to the level they teach. The results are presented in the following table.

Table 5. Results of Descriptive Statistics and ANOVA for Differences among School Teachers' Views on the Principles of Critical Pedagogy according to the level they teach

Sub- dimensions and Total Scale		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig
Education System Sub-Dimension	Elementary	70	48.142	6.740		
	Secondary	60	48.900	7.903	.833	.415
	High School	70	47.114	8.412		
Functions of Schools Sub-Dimension	Elementary	60	42.357	4.907		
	Secondary	70	42.100	5.856	.036	.965
	High School	60	42.228	5.654		
Emancipator School Sub-Dimension	Elementary	60	22/00	2.565		
	Secondary	70	21.733	2.851	3.004	.052
	High School	60	20.758	3.647		
Critical Pedagogy Total Score	Elementary	60	112.357	11.003		
	Secondary	70	111.883	13.343	.710	.493
	High School	60	109.985	12.848		

Table 5 shows that the difference between the means and standard deviations is not great for critical pedagogy in general and two sub-dimensions. This is not true for the second sub-dimension "Emancipator School". In order to examine this issue statistically, four one-way ANOVA were run. It is clearly understood from the Table that the differences among teachers' attitudes toward the principles of critical pedagogy in general is not statistically significant (F=.710, p<.493). Regarding the first and second sub-dimensions of critical pedagogy, "Education System" and "Function of School," the obtained value for F is not significant at p<.05 either. Nevertheless, the differences among teachers' attitudes towards the third sub-dimension of the principle of critical pedagogy appeared to be statistically significant. Stated differently, the results reveal that teachers' views on the emancipator role of school were different, but regarding the education system and

functions of schools sub-dimensions, they had the same views based on the level they teach.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

Because of the important role teachers play in an educational system, this study investigated whether school teachers support the principles of critical pedagogy in general and sub-dimensions of critical pedagogy in particular. Teachers' views were also examined according to certain variables including age, gender, and the level they teach.

As was shown, the results obtained in this study rejected the null hypotheses related to the first question and it can be concluded that Iranian teachers generally support critical pedagogy and its principles. However, no significant difference was reported between teachers' views on the principles of critical pedagogy according to all the variables, with the exception of gender. This somehow relates to the Iranian culture in which men have more freedom and courage in expressing their own personal ideas. From sociological perspectives, women are seen as cowards, conservative and the ones who accept society as it is. They are unable to relate school problems to a wider context as their society. Moreover, since the observed t and F were not significant at the $p<.05$ level of significance, the null hypotheses were rejected for teachers' age and level they taught. Thus, it can be claimed that there is no difference between teachers' views on the principles of critical pedagogy according to their age and the level they teach.

The results obtained in this study were different from those of Yilmaz's (2009) research conducted in Turkey. Although Turkish teachers moderately agreed with the principles of critical pedagogy and there was a significant difference among their views according to teachers' educational background, professional seniority, and the environment of the school where they worked; as was observed in the study, except for gender, there was not a significant difference among Iranian teachers' views on the principles of critical pedagogy. The very fact that administration of the same instrument in two countries produced different results accounts for the differences between the two educational systems.

The absence of critical pedagogy in Iranian classroom settings, in spite of its overall support by teachers, may be related to characteristics of the education system and to ignorance of critical thinking in teacher training in Iran. Some characteristics of the Iranian educational system, such as limited class time, demanding work, little space for free debate, and avoiding discussion of controversial topics and issues may hamper learning through problem posing education, which is a major principle of critical pedagogy. In the Iranian educational system, teaching is adjusted to meet the requirements of examinations. Instead of broadening the minds of students, the material presented in schools is remembered until the term exam is over. This is because the required courses are not designed to broaden

students' thoughts but to provide another highly specialized view of a different discipline.

Findings of the present study provide motivation to investigate the possibilities of introducing critical pedagogy as professional development to Iranian teachers or in teacher education programs. In the Iranian educational system, due to the absence of standard textbooks on critical pedagogy and the absence of critical pedagogy education in teacher training, teachers have no time and instructional resources to integrate critical pedagogy into their daily instruction. Teachers, therefore, seem to need a breadth of knowledge on critical pedagogy to enable them to invite students to practice genuine reflection. They need to be provided with good schemes of work and appropriate content, methodology, and critical skills in order to be able to teach according to the principles of critical pedagogy. In teacher education programs, teachers are just taught about dealing with their students emotionally, and with methods of evaluation and new methods of teaching.

It is worth mentioning that critical pedagogy as a whole does not have the potency to be the successor of other pedagogical approaches. What can be derived from these discussions is that critical pedagogy and its principles can be embedded in the Iranian educational context provided that it does not contradict its culture and tradition. Kumaravadivelu's (1994) argument shows critical pedagogy's position in this regard when he speaks of new pedagogical realizations that constitute the post-method condition. He argues that we should abandon the notion that there are preconstructed methods which can be implemented full scale in the classroom and can assure pedagogical success. The recommendation is that teachers respond more directly to the needs and learning styles of the students and that they be sensitive to cultures and social conditions relevant to the classroom context when they adopt suitable pedagogical practices.

Also, due to the absence of courses on critical thinking in teacher training, teachers have no instructional resources to integrate critical thinking into their daily instruction. In fact, for better implementation of critical pedagogy, teachers need a breadth of knowledge on critical thinking to enable them to invite students to practice genuine reflection.

7. Implications of the Study

While teachers had positive views toward the implementation of critical pedagogy, findings of this study indicate an absence of critical pedagogy in Iranian schools. The results of this study can make educational policy makers review their educational policies and teacher training programs for the training that includes the principles of critical pedagogy can direct teacher training toward this purpose. Being familiar with the main issues in critical pedagogy, policy makers should consider the requirement for implementing critical pedagogy in education. Providing and presenting critical lessons in educational curriculum, they can help

students develop essential skills and prepare them to critically examine the power structure that exists in society in order to create an equitable and fair education and world. Other implications of the study can be a call for modifying the educational procedures to problem posing ones to make learners duly involved in the learning process.

8. Suggestions for Further Research

Inspired by the findings, a number of recommendations are put forward which may be beneficial for further studies. It is suggested that this study be replicated on a national scale and that include a large number of subjects to elevate the generalizability of the findings. Researchers are also suggested to conduct the same study with more variables added to see whether variables other than gender may lead to differences among teachers' views on the principles of critical pedagogy. The instrument of this study was limited to a questionnaire; further studies can adopt other instruments such as interviewing teachers and students in order to understand their awareness of critical pedagogy and its principles. Perhaps observing classes, interviewing students and teachers, and checking the materials used in classes or in evaluations can provide a deeper understanding of practices that purport to be influenced by critical pedagogy.

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