



THE ROLE OF CRITICAL PEDAGOGY IN EDUCATION: EXPLORING THE VIEWS OF GREEK TEACHERS

Theodoros Vavitsasⁱ

Adjunct Lecturer,
Department of Philosophy,
& Postdoctoral Researcher,
Department of Primary School Education,
University of Ioannina,
Greece

Abstract:

The purpose of this research is to investigate the views of Greek primary school teachers on Critical Pedagogy. Specifically, by applying the qualitative research methodology of semi-structured interviews, we tried to explore the teachers' views on Critical Pedagogy, on the role that Critical Pedagogy attributes to teachers as reforming intellectuals, on the duties that the teacher bears, both inside and outside the classroom, as well as on the teacher's "obligations" towards their students and society. The findings indicate that: a) most teachers were not aware of Critical Pedagogy; b) about half of the teachers did not agree with the role of the teacher as an intellectual; and c) teachers placed particular emphasis on the educative role of teachers, which, in addition to knowledge, should impart values and attitudes towards life.

Keywords: critical pedagogy, intellectuals, Freire, Greek primary school

1. Introduction

Critical Pedagogy is a branch of Pedagogy and has its origins in Critical Theory and the Frankfurt School. In essence, it is the transfer of the ideas of Critical Theory into the field of education, and for this reason, it is considered to include various trends and currents of ideas. Critical Pedagogy emerged in the USA in the 1980s, which is related to both the Black civil rights movements and the movements of opposition to the Vietnam War, which emerged and developed during that period (Tsiami, 2013, p. 25).

A central pillar of the views of Critical Pedagogy is the view that education should be treated relationally, taking into account its interactions with the social spheres - political, economic and cultural-, which is why we could argue that it is a theory and

ⁱ Correspondence: email vavitsast@gmail.com

practice that aims to increase the critical consciousness of individuals, aiming at their emancipation and social transformation (Tsiami, 2013, p. 25).

Furthermore, Critical Pedagogy suggests and reveals that knowledge and educational systems touch upon complex and interdependent networks that express and realize dynamic relations. These relationships, such as student and teacher, subject and object of knowledge, teacher and administrator, educational unit and educational system, carry value and material orientations and have specific goals (Kontou, 2012, p. 85). This complexity of the aforementioned networks makes Critical Pedagogy *"accept the limited capacity of the school to induce social change on its own, but the cognitive contents and value standards are transmitted through teaching, so that it is possible to instill in individuals the belief in a struggle for a more just society"* (Tsiami, 2013, p. 28).

Emphasizing the grid of -mainly unequal- social relations, as well as the way they are structured and reproduced historically, both inside and outside the classroom, Critical Pedagogy considers that education should be approached as a social and cultural phenomenon with a political character, while the solutions it offers towards the transformation of society, both on a theoretical and practical level in the field of the classroom, promote the development of the student's critical thinking, which is based on a dialectical approach between theory and practice (Tsiami, 2013, pp. 29-34). In this light, students, as future citizens, are the ones who should take charge of the fate of society in the future and contribute to its transformation.

2. Literature Review

Among the most important representatives of Critical Pedagogy are Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren. However, before we get to their work and views, we consider it necessary to refer to the contribution of Paulo Freire, who is one of the pillars of Critical Pedagogy and whose contribution is considered crucial in the process of developing the ideas of Critical Pedagogy.

2.1. Paulo Freire and Critical Pedagogy

The Brazilian educator Paulo Freire is a key figure and pillar of Critical Pedagogy. Born in Recife, Brazil, having experienced and been affected by the Great Depression of 1929, he dedicated his life to improving the lives of the poor (Tsiami, 2013, p. 24). He fought for the eradication of illiteracy and through his works (e.g., *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*) provided the direction for human liberation.

Paulo Freire, believing strongly in the liberating power of education, engaged in pedagogical action by participating in adult education programmes, teaching pupils, students and adults himself (Tsiami, 2013, p. 24-25). Embracing the dialectical and unbreakable relationship between theory and practice, he built *"a pedagogical theory which, on the one hand, was based on a specific epistemological position, with elements from critical theory and Marxism, and, on the other, made sense only in interaction with educational and social reality"* (Tsiami, 2013, p. 25). Furthermore, Freire conceives pedagogical process and practice as being related to politics, arguing the position that those who do not

understand the political dimensions and consequences of the pedagogical practices they use are mistaken, referring to the notion of consciousness as a strictly pedagogical rather than a political concept (Liambas & Kaskaris, 2007).

Given the above, it is clear that Freire gave a political character to Pedagogy, both in theory and in practice, attempting to demonstrate the dialectical relationship between the science of Pedagogy and politics. Understanding social reality in terms of a class struggle between oppressors and oppressed, he considered that emancipation entails for individuals the critical awareness of the existing situation on the part of the oppressed and the taking of action on their part to overthrow it (Tsiami, 2013, p. 26). Freire (1970), himself, considered that the education of the oppressed, as a humanitarian and liberating education, takes place in two stages: in the first stage, the oppressed uncover the world of oppression and undertake to change it by its action, and, in the second stage, when the reality of the oppression has now changed, the education ceases to belong only to the oppressed and becomes the education of all people, in the effort of social liberation, mixing in both stages, and always with radical action, the culture of oppression with the culture of liberation.

We see, then, that Freire begins to lay the foundations of a Pedagogy which will aim at the social liberation of the oppressed. Freire did not try to elevate, nevertheless, education as the highest stage for social transformation, but he did try to make it clear that without education social transformation cannot be achieved (Tsiami, 2013, p. 28). Freire (1970) argued that a 'banking view' of education prevails, noting that knowledge is presented as a gift given by those who consider themselves knowledge holders who consider themselves ignorant, thereby projecting ignorance and ignorance as a system that concerns others, which he sees as a characteristic of the ideology of oppression.

Opposing this 'banking conception' of education, Freire (1970) highlights the following tactics and methods, which derive from such a conception and reinforce the teacher-student contradiction, and which, in his opinion, reflect the oppressive society as a whole:

- 1) The teacher teaches and the students are taught.
- 2) The teacher knows everything and the students know nothing.
- 3) The teacher thinks and the students are objects of the teacher's thinking.
- 4) The teacher speaks and the students obediently listen to the teacher.
- 5) The teacher applies disciplinary measures and the students suffer the measures.
- 6) The teacher proposes and imposes their judgment, and the students comply with it.
- 7) The teacher acts and the students have the illusion that they are acting through the teacher's action.
- 8) The teacher determines the curriculum and the students (who are not even consulted) conform to it.
- 9) The teacher confuses the authority of knowledge with his own professional authority, which he contrasts with the freedom of the students.
- 10) The teacher is the subject of the learning process while the students are mere objects.

It is clear that Freire seeks to expose every aspect and manifestation of pedagogical theory and practice that promotes and continues to reproduce and perpetuate the oppression of the oppressors on the oppressed. Freire is one of the first exponents of a radical Pedagogy whose task is the social transformation and liberation of the oppressed from their oppressors. The humanist, revolutionary pedagogue cannot wait for people to realize the contradiction in which "banking" education tries to keep them, but, instead, his efforts must converge with the students' efforts to critically view reality and to seek a mutual humanization, while at the same time he must imbue his efforts with a deep trust in people and their creative powers, and to do this, he must be a companion of the students in his relations with them (Freire, 1970).

It is at this point that Freire introduces the concept of the cultural worker, and adds to the role of the educator a new component: that of the "intellectual". The educator as an intellectual opposes 'banking' education and promotes reflective education, in which people develop their ability to critically understand the world in which they find themselves. In this way, they manage to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality that evolves and changes, and, for this reason, the teacher-pupils and the pupils-teachers reflect simultaneously on themselves and the world, without separating this reflection from the action. Thus, they establish an authentic form of reflection and action (Freire, 1970).

Freire's work is particularly broad and deals with a variety of educational subjects (see Freire, 1985, 1987, 1998, 2006, 2014). At this stage it is not our intention to delve further into Paulo Freire's views, as what we wanted to demonstrate is his engagement with radical pedagogy, as well as the concepts and terms he introduced that form the basis and foundations of Critical Pedagogy. That is why we will deal with the views of the Critical Pedagogy theorists who, using and extending both Freire's views and their own particular work, contributed to the development of Critical Pedagogy.

2.2. Henry Giroux

Henry Giroux is one of the most important representatives of Critical Pedagogy in the USA, whose contribution to the shaping of its themes dates back to the 1980s (Grollios, 2008). Giroux, in collaboration with other pedagogues, attempted to build a different approach, which approach was a critique of the functionalist and deterministic assumptions of liberals and radicals, having as its central feature the attempt to study the terms of Pedagogy, so that education could become a force for democracy, despite the fact that, as Giroux himself acknowledged, it transmitted key elements of the culture and ideology of hegemonic social classes and groups (Grollios, 2008).

Moreover, Giroux attempted and succeeded in identifying and critiquing the technocratic, hermeneutic and reproductive logic in education theory, discussing concepts that he considered essential for the construction of a new pedagogy: ideology, hegemony, culture and resistance, contrasting the culture of positivism in the field of the curriculum, thus highlighting the value of dialectics for its renewal, while pointing out the main weaknesses of contemporary radical educational theory and practice (see Giroux, 1993, 1994, 1996). Finally, he proposed to deal with both the content of school

knowledge and the processes of learning and their contradictions, in order to construct, for this purpose, alternative pedagogical practices, which, at the same time, would be linked to the political struggle for socialism (Grollios, 2008). It is, therefore, clear that Giroux tried to give a purely political direction to his positions and views, which attempted to bring something new to pedagogy and aimed, directly, at using education in order, on the one hand, to denounce and highlight the contradictions of the capitalist mode of production and organization of society and, on the other, to bring about the socialist transformation of society.

To summarize the points which Giroux highlighted, and which make his contribution to the effort of structuring a decisive and valuable Critical Pedagogy, which features, as pointed out by Grollios (2008), are the following:

- 1) He highlighted the differences between conservative, liberal and radical perspectives on the hidden curriculum, in order to contribute to a theory of schooling that addresses both reproduction and transformation.
- 2) He critically examined the structural and cultural tradition in Marxist thought, to address the problem of structure-consciousness dualism and to present a theory of ideological critique based on the reproduction, production and reconstruction of the relations between ideology, texts and social practices; at the same time, he placed particular emphasis on the issues of citizenship education and literacy, highlighting their relation to broader logics and ideologies of education and formulating an alternative theory of ideological critique.
- 3) He emphasized the importance of perceiving teachers as intellectuals and the significance of the contradictory roles of teachers in schools, particularly those struggling for social transformation.
- 4) He demonstrated the importance of analyzing and critically examining mass culture.
- 5) He attempted to approach problems of the curriculum based on the languages of possibility and critique.
- 6) He underlined the validity of the traditional model of curriculum design and, building on the overt-hidden curriculum distinction, formulated alternative values and procedures for teaching social studies in schools.
- 7) He critically examined the behavioristic and humanistic model for curricular objectives, so as to propose a different way of selecting objectives, which refers to the relationship between students' experiences and the socio-political forces that shape the dominant culture.
- 8) He discussed contemporary aspects of the relationship between the teaching of writing and reading with critical thinking.
- 9) He demonstrated the importance of cultural studies for the formation of public spheres and social transformation, while showing that there is a need for a shift in the content of teacher education towards social theory, cultural politics and citizenship formation.
- 10) He drew on the contribution of the social reconstruction tradition to the debate on the relationship between school and democracy in the US, as well as elements of

feminist theory and liberation theology, to formulate an approach to citizenship education and a theory of power grounded in ethics.

- 11) Studied the relationship between literacy and critical pedagogy and empowerment, as well as the relationship between democracy, educational reform and critical pedagogy.

2.3. Peter McLaren

Another important representative and theorist of Critical Pedagogy is Peter McLaren. McLaren (1995a), in his work, refers in a particularly trenchant way to culture, calling it a "*culture of the rapture*", which consists of the remnants of the decay of urban culture, which, now stripped of its arrogant pretense of good manners and cultural lyricism, has been replaced by an absolute obsession with power, fueled by the voraciousness of the global trajectory of capitalism, breaking down any distinction between the real and the imaginary (Kontou, 2012, pp. 67-68). As a result, the capitalist fear fueled by the "*culture of predation*" (see McLaren, 1995b) is set in motion globally through the installation of new crises, social and economic, subordinating everything social, cultural and human within the capital, commanding: "*Have fun*" (Kontou, 2012, pp. 67-68).

Writing in late 1990s America (Kontou, 2012, p. 69), McLaren, in what we have quoted above, encapsulates the basic features of the conception of contemporary society against the background of which and in conjunction with which Critical Pedagogy is developed. Also, he provided the first important indications of the association of this theory with the work of Adorno, Horkheimer and Habermas (Kontou, 2012, p. 68). According to Kontou (2012, p. 71), "*McLaren argues that this culture is in crisis, which he attributes to a particular 'unholy symbiosis of culture and technology'*". In itself, the above notion is a particularly important and anti-capitalist position - implying also the 'controversial' role that can be attributed to technology - which is combined by McLaren with additional references to impoverishment, increasing poverty, etc.

In the given postmodern conditions of the dominance of the "*culture of predation*", education shares with the mass media the common goal of maintaining students - and potentially active citizens - at a level of "*stupidity*", because the knowledge provided is based on the memorization of "*dead facts*", which are preserved for selection and retrieval within a "*time capsule of frozen memories*" having been de-historicized from their context (Kontou, 2012, pp. 72-73). We see, then, at this point, McLaren's strong critique of the knowledge provided to students through education, pointing in a particularly poignant way to the maintenance of students at a level of 'stupidity'. As we can understand, McLaren completely deconstructs the education provided, which 'paves the way' for a new, radical and Critical educational proposal.

It is precisely at this point that McLaren introduces the concept of narratives - both outside and within educational institutions - in an attempt to create a common place for the constitution, contestation, assertion and/or transformation of cultural identities as, as he defines them, narratives give meaning to life, being a contract between individuals, groups and the social universe in general (Kontou, 2012, pp. 73-74). Then, as Kontou (2012, p. 74) points out, if it is not possible to escape from narratives, resistance and

change may be achieved in order to make the individual ready to critically read the narratives that are already being read by him or her, thus revealing, between them, an ideological and not merely dialogical character, a position that constitutes one of the most central and important conditions of operation of Critical Pedagogy. For McLaren, Pedagogy is understood as a process by which teachers and students negotiate and produce meaning, as well as a way of representing themselves, others, and the communities in which they live (Kontou, 2012, pp. 75-76). That it is presumed that Critical Pedagogy denotes a dual commitment to self-empowerment and social transformation, while, consciously, it advocates solidarity with weak, subordinate and marginalized groups (Kontou, 2012, pp. 75-76).

To sum up, then, for McLaren, Critical Pedagogy links intellectual practice to an alternative - emancipatory 'politics of truth', systematically taking into account the role of power in the production of forms of knowledge, but also the very role knowledge plays in the processes of construction and legitimation of life forms, that take place both through the constitution of particular ways of "*naming and understanding experience*" and through their coordination "*with popular desires and everyday needs*" (Kontou, 2012, p. 76). It is clear, then, that McLaren, using a sharp discourse, is also trying to give a liberatory character to Critical Pedagogy. He sets as his goal intellectual and practical emancipation, by highlighting the interdependence of knowledge forms with power, as well as the involvement of power from the understanding and 'naming' of an experience to popular needs and desires.

In this context, the following research questions were formulated:

- 1) Have the research subjects come into contact with Critical Pedagogy?
- 2) What is the subjects' view of Critical Pedagogy?
- 3) What is the subjects' view of the role Critical Pedagogy attributes to teachers as intellectuals?
- 4) What is the subjects' view of the duties that teachers bear as intellectuals, both inside and outside the classroom?
- 5) What is the subjects' view of the teacher's "duties" both to his/her students and to society?

3. Material and Methods

The present study was conducted in the framework of the qualitative research method with semi-structured interviews as a methodological tool for data collection. We considered the use of interviews as the most appropriate method for this research as we wanted to explore the subjects' own views on Critical Pedagogy. Regarding the choice of the 'semi-structured' format, this was chosen as it provided us with the possibility to modify the wording of the questions in order to obtain additional explanations, as we could even omit or add - depending on the situation - some questions (Robson, 2010, p. 321).

The use of the interview enabled us to collect "*rich and very illuminating material*" (Robson, 2010, p. 324), so that the research questions could be explored to the best of our

ability. In addition, we had the opportunity to listen to non-verbal cues, which gave us a fuller and clearer picture of the meaning of the subjects' responses (Robson, 2010, p. 323).

The purpose of our research is to find out the perceptions that teachers, as public intellectuals, have about cultural identity, the way it is constructed, as well as the role of collectives in contemporary society. In other words, to explore teachers' views on whether intercultural education should aim at deconstructing the identities of groups that differ from the majority group in the name of "equality of cultures" or, on the contrary, whether it should not touch on identity, but try to change the perception of the nation-state and demonstrate the role of social constructions.

The research participants-subjects were fifteen (15) teachers who work in primary education. The teachers' years of service were distributed as follows: up to ten (10) years of service were three (3) teachers, eleven (11) to twenty (20) years of service were five (5) teachers, and twenty-one (21) years of service and above were seven (7) teachers.

The sample of teachers was selected randomly and the questionnaire, the questions of which they were asked to answer, consisted of thirty-two (32) questions. It goes without saying, of course, that since the data collection tool was the semi-structured interviews, there were instances where either some questions were added or others were dropped depending on the flow of the interview.

4. Results and Discussion

Using semi-structured interviews, we attempted to explore teachers' views on Critical Pedagogy and the view of the teacher as an intellectual and the obligations they bear. The first question asked whether teachers had come into contact with the concept of Critical Pedagogy. Unfortunately, ten (10) of the fifteen (15) teachers had not come in contact with Critical Pedagogy before the interview we conducted with them. It was indicatively reported:

"(...) here in the province, because I... almost all these years, if you exclude the first three years of my career when I worked in Thessaloniki, the others here in the province, we have not done such... such seminars, such workshops, trainings, etc." (p. 12).

Critical Pedagogy is a branch of Pedagogy that can offer a lot to teachers, both on a theoretical and practical level, while it can enrich the educational task with the tools and means it proposes. It is, therefore imperative that teachers be trained in this discipline, which should be taken into account.

Then, by explaining some important elements and positions of Critical Pedagogy to the teachers, as long as this was possible, we tried to explore their opinion about this particular pedagogical direction. The views of teachers who had been in contact with Critical Pedagogy were, in general, positive. Some of the views expressed were:

"Uh, I think that... we give the child the opportunity to open his horizons, to search, uh, to be able to answer questions, to 'why', to 'how', uh... critical pedagogy that is... uh, it

doesn't set a narrow framework, it leaves open, open paths for thinking and I think that the child if we teach him, uh, to work through those... ways... uh, he will become more dialectical (...) more communicative, I think it will make him good...". (p. 1),

"First of all, Critical Pedagogy tells us that the teacher should not work according to (...) some moulds. On the basis of the people, he has (...) 'opposite' (...) to be able to judge, to teach him critical thinking so that he can be integrated into society. In short, to teach him how to learn. This." (p. 8),

"Uh... if we consider something to be entrenched, established, uh, and we rely on it and move on and look to change it, to improve it and that's all, uh, we're not going to achieve groundbreaking change or (...) revolutionary difference ever. Revolutionary difference, in the sense of achieving something the... the most extraordinary (...) We have to, with Critical Pedagogy, uh... change things, look at other things outside of us, maybe even far away from us (...) see their application, their effect and see how we can (...) adapt them (...) to our own society, to our own structures (...) to our own school (...)" (p. 9).

We can see that teachers attribute a renewing and radical role to Critical Pedagogy, while stressing the great importance of developing and implementing a Critical Pedagogy, both in the field of education and in society. However, there was no lack of skepticism toward Critical Pedagogy. In particular, the teacher (p. 7), referring to the purpose of Critical Pedagogy for the future transformation of society, due to the fact that she had not come into contact with its concept, stated, among other things,

"Is this thing a possibility? Is there a possibility of this happening? (...) I think it will not go ahead. I don't know, we are not ready for that. As people, no. (...) No, we are not ready, no. (...) I think we are still uh... critically we are still behind, (...) our minds are not yet opened, so to speak... so I think. Our society doesn't accept something new like that. I think so. It always reacts (...) I don't know, I don't... I mean, in schools, let's say, that I see, in big schools, not (...) in primary schools, in high schools, I don't see anything happening to these children, who are... supposedly more mature now in terms of age than in primary school. In elementary school you can't do to the kid, say now, about the political situation. They won't understand it. But in middle school and high school, kids are more mature, right? You can talk about the political situation, the economic situation of the country. You can't do that to kids. Not at all." (p. 7).

As far as the above view of the teacher (p. 7) is concerned, we would consider it quite pessimistic and passive. The teacher (p. 7) directly states her doubt about the possibility of changing society, especially through school and the use of the tools of Critical Pedagogy, describing the people as "not ready" to realize social change. Social change, however, is a continuous process and is in constant evolution through time, as it spreads throughout the entire historical event. Furthermore, the teacher (p. 7) expresses the view that a teacher cannot talk to primary school children about the political situation

because primary school children are not mature for such discussions. We believe that this perception is wrong. As Apple (1995), one of the most important representatives of Critical Pedagogy, has stated, the lives of millions of people around the world are caught up in a general economic crisis that will have very serious economic, political and cultural consequences. In this light, Critical Pedagogy must hold a non-simplistic view of the social order (McLaren, 1995a, p. 53), so that children can understand from an early age the relationships underlying social life, avoiding a metaphysical view of it, without, however, implying the unbridled adoption of a mechanistic view of social events.

Teachers were then asked about the position of the Critical Pedagogy which makes a "pairing" of the teacher as an intellectual. In this case, teachers' views were roughly divided. Eight (8) out of fifteen (15) teachers found the pairing of the teacher as an "intellectual" positive, while, in contrast, seven (7) teachers were "puzzled" about this pairing. Starting with the eight (8) teachers who expressed the view that the teacher is an intellectual, they responded indicatively,

"Well, I think that this is the role of the teacher in today's world, that should be the role. (...) with the help that I will offer him, the knowledge that I have, and through books etc. and the possibilities that the school gives me to understand that he should acquire critical thinking, so that he can judge things, and he, for his part, what is the right thing to do in the process." (p. 6).

"The teacher should (...) be (...) an intellectual, and if he is not... (...) he should become... Here try (...) society (...) to see him as an intellectual. Why? Because the intellectual is the most important part of a society. (...) whatever a state achieves, and if it wants to has to base it on education. In the education of children, of people... of tomorrow's citizens. (...) Education must be liberated, to create liberated people, free spirits, so that these spirits, through the freedom they have (...) can develop all their potential to the maximum possible." (p. 9)

"Yes, I think it is very important that the teacher should have this characteristic. After all, education is not dry teaching, uh, children are very much influenced by the teacher as an image, as a... and what I said, and as an image, that is, the teacher with his image and the way he lives should also inspire the children." (p. 11)

On the other hand, as mentioned, seven (7) of the teachers showed disagreement with the pairing of the teacher as an intellectual. They indicated:

"(...) I don't know... I don't like the word... uh 'intellectual', that is? The person who is involved... it seems very theoretical to me; how can I explain it to you? I mean, what was the mentality that the teacher is the authority, and he knows everything, and he's the master of the village... we come back to that (...)" (p. 2),

"The intellectual, uh... (...) I understand the word intellectual as a taboo word, now... it used to be considered a... nice word, important, but now... uh... we usually use it to mock, (...) 'pseudo-intellectual' for example... In what sense do we use the word "intellectual"? (...) (p. 3),

"I don't... I don't like this term, intellectual, I don't... Intellectual means someone who is (...) well, it's a bit misunderstood the... the word intellectual. That is, somebody says it somewhat mockingly: 'hey, he's impersonating the intellectual'" (p. 7).

On above cases, we see that the teachers had considerable difficulty in defining the concept of 'intellectual'. Due to the fact that a large portion of the teachers -ten (10) out of fifteen (15)- had never before become familiar with the concept and terms of Critical Pedagogy, this was the general difficulty of teachers in 'grasping' some of the concepts of pedagogy. For our part, we tried to clarify, as many times as necessary, any concept that was confusing, difficult or unfamiliar to the teachers.

The teacher, as an intellectual, aims to help their students to develop critical, creative and analytical thinking harmoniously, using the tools, methods and means proposed by the theory of Critical Pedagogy. As Giroux and Trend (1992, p. 63) stated about the teacher as intellectual, the teachers should be socially critical and engaged with the liberation struggles, showing that they can lead by combining pedagogical practice with a discourse of hope, rejecting all forms of objectivism and detachment from things. The teacher, should not, therefore, adhere to a passive or seemingly neutral position, but, on the contrary, should take an active, if not leading, role in the effort of social transformation.

Teachers were then asked to express their views on the teacher's duties as an intellectual, both inside and outside the classroom. In this case, the teachers expressed many kinds of opinions about the role of the teacher inside and outside the classroom, mentioning, in several cases, the pedagogical role of the teacher, in addition to the teaching role, which is aimed at transferring knowledge to students, emphasizing the importance of the general transfer of values, attitudes, ways of behavior from the teacher to their students, mainly through their attitude towards life and character, as well as the pursuit of developing the critical faculty of students. Indicatively, it was said:

"Uh... he should adapt himself to the times. (...) I think you'd better teach them to function and to think with arguments, to be able to express themselves with arguments, and to make them understand that all opinions are respected, what you follow is another thing. That is, to have a critical thinking, to be able to justify their opinions, uh to have an opinion and be able to express it..." (p. 2),

"(...) once we accept that he is an intellectual and he is (...) a critical thinking person, to... to help the students to become ... er critical and thinking beings themselves, not to accept the slightest thing effortlessly, even what their teacher tells them, that is, to pass it through a filter (...) and to have the courage of their own opinion (...)" (p. 3),

"It must be outside ... okay. And in behavior and in everything and... as we are obliged to be, of course, we are not... we are not, let's say, like a bank employee or a public utility employee, we (...) here they will say: 'Hey, is he a teacher and does such things?' ... (...) ...we are obliged by the facts... (...)" (p. 5),

"Well, I think he must be a human being, not just a teacher, the stereotype, I go into the classroom, open the book, do the lesson, close it, finish it, leave. He will play here with the child, he will talk to the child during the break... he will say to them "why are you fighting?", he will play another role, not only the role of reading and I leave, I go home. So I think, that's how it is... (...)" (p. 7),

"(...) it is also his obligation to be a role model, with his behavior, with his character, with his quality, with his personal complex (...)" (p. 9),

"(...) The teacher is watched everywhere, seen everywhere, uh, heard everywhere, uh, he is the one who I believe can set a good example, uh... in any place, in any place, whether in school or out of school, if he is found (...)" (p. 12).

We could quote many more extracts from the teachers' words, but this could be considered redundant, since their answers are - in general - along the same lines. In this question, it is a very positive and important element that all teachers seemed to have recognized: the role and importance of the teacher, both in relation to the students and to the society as a whole. In addition, we also consider of major importance the fact that the teachers seemed to understand the importance of the teacher as a role model for their students in the classroom.

The last question investigated teachers' perceptions of the "obligation" teachers have towards their students and society. We would say that in this case, too, teachers focused on the pedagogical role of the teacher, expressing ideas and opinions that refer to the idealistic image of the teacher. Due to the fact that the teachers' answers were lengthy, while at the same time they shared several common elements, we will mention some of their views indicatively:

"Well, I think that the teacher's job... (...) is an obligation, uh, towards young people... ... to awaken consciences (...) but I don't see it as an obligation in a bad sense... in the sense of a moral obligation perhaps... (...) Uh, and towards society, yes... the teacher is not only for the classroom, he is for the wider society, that's my opinion..." (p. 1),

"Uh, towards his students he has the obligation to prepare them for society... uhm... to please them, to make them happy, to... to go to school not with a heavy heart, but with a good mood, to prepare them in all areas (...) as behavior, as character, as student performance, as personality... (...) well, to be able to stand firmly on his feet, to... and not only in terms of the learning part, the purely theoretical part, but also in terms of his

character, his personality... Opposite to society the best that the teacher can do is to do... uh the... children to think critically... (...)" (p. 2),

"I think the main obligation is to teach basic values of life... (...) that are linked to their behavior... in all at all levels of behavior... and then to impart knowledge to them... uh but mainly to stimulate them, so that they can look for themselves, look for those what they should be looking for... to get to, what he says... he used to... he used to say... philosophers and Socrates, to the truth..." (p. 4),

"(...) He has an obligation to respect, uh, their age, to respect their right to education, uh, their right to play, uh... and in general all the rights of children and to respond in the best way (...)" (p. 12),

"(...) The teacher should give the best this every day, not so much didactically... (...) but more as a personality, as what he is, as his being, as his whole presence, daily, his behavior, his manners, uh, his attitude to various issues. It should be what I call the example for the students. (...) The teacher does not have to be the perfect man, one cannot be the perfect man, but he should put their students in a way of thinking, in a way of functioning so that they keep trying to do better, both towards themselves towards their family and towards society. (...) The teacher's duty to society is (...) to speak his mind freely on all matters that to participate actively in the various social activities of society, and to participate freely in all matters of concern to society at large. activities, uh, in the various activities that take place... and generally being a point of a point of reference by his attitude and behavior for others." (p. 13)

As we can see, therefore, the teachers in this question, as in the previous one, emphasized the character and behavior that the teacher should demonstrate towards their students and towards the community as a whole.

5. Conclusion

Having completed the content analysis, we are now in a position to draw the final conclusions of our research. Starting with the first research question, regarding the teachers' awareness of Critical Pedagogy, their opinions were disappointing. This is because ten (10) out of the fifteen (15) teachers had no knowledge of Critical Pedagogy at all. In fact, the reasons were traced to the fact that teachers in the Greek province do not have easy access to training seminars and workshops. This fact highlights the general need for additional training for Greek teachers working in schools in the province.

Regarding the second research question, which concerned the teachers' opinion on Critical Pedagogy, they had a generally positive attitude towards Critical Pedagogy. As mentioned earlier, ten (10) out of the fifteen (15) teachers had no knowledge of Critical Pedagogy. However, those of the teachers who were aware of Critical Pedagogy had positive attitudes towards it. Moreover, after our explanation of what Critical Pedagogy

is and what it aims at, even the teachers who had no knowledge of its aims and objectives seemed to acquire a positive attitude towards it.

On the third research question, about the role Critical Pedagogy attributes to teachers as intellectuals, teachers' views were divided. More specifically, eight (8) out of fifteen (15) teachers found the pairing of the teacher as an "intellectual" positive, while in contrast, seven (7) teachers were "embarrassed" about this pairing. As for the teachers who appeared to feel uncomfortable with the role of the teacher as an intellectual, this can be attributed to a distorted perception of the concept of intellectual in general. Thus, some considered this concept to be 'too theoretical', while others linked it to the teacher's authority over pupils, considering the concept of the intellectual to be obsolete.

The fourth research question concerned the teacher's duties as an intellectual, both inside and outside the classroom. Here teachers expressed many kinds of opinions about the role of the teacher inside and outside the classroom. In some cases, they referred to the pedagogical role of the teacher, in addition to the teaching role, emphasizing the importance of transmitting values, attitudes and behaviors. Furthermore, an important role also seemed to be attributed to the example of the teacher towards their pupils, mainly through the teacher's attitude and character.

Finally, with regard to the fifth and last research question, which concerned the obligations that the teacher has both towards their students and towards society, teachers focused on the pedagogical role of the teacher, expressing views that refer to the idealistic image of the teacher. Thus, some emphasized the importance of 'character development of pupils', others 'the need to transmit the basic values of life', while some referred to the teacher's 'obligation' to 'freely express his or her opinion on issues of concern to society at large and to participate actively in various social activities'.

In conclusion, we would like to conclude by highlighting some key points. First, the teacher, as an intellectual, has the obligation to be aware of the limits and possibilities that arise from their role and work. The limits are set by the school itself, as the reproductive mechanism of the existing class structure of society, while the possibilities arise from the central position it occupies in the lives of children - pupils and tomorrow's citizens. Secondly, they must, by their attitude and example, inspire their pupils and help them to develop their critical faculties and a spirit of fighting for democratic values, social equality and justice. Thirdly, in order to justify their role as an intellectual, they must take an open stance on social issues, actively fighting for social liberation and the transformation of society, refusing to adopt notions of objectivity and neutrality supposedly 'imposed' by the role of the teacher. Last but not least, the teacher must be aware that they are in a constant dialectical relationship with both their students and with society as a whole. It is precisely this relationship among all three 'fields of action' (pupils, school institution, society) which shows that the teacher is able to influence what is happening. For this reason, the teacher should not be trapped in perceptions that make them feel helpless in a system that is immutable and cannot be changed.

Acknowledgements

I, the author of this paper, would like to express my deepest thanks to my colleague Athena Sevi, PhD Candidate at the University of Patras, for her contribution to the completion of this paper.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

About the Author

Dr. Theodoros Vavitsas is a graduate of the Department of Primary Education of the University of Ioannina, Greece. He graduated from the Postgraduate Program "Educational Sciences" of the same Department. He holds a PhD from the Department of Education and Social Work of the University of Patras. He has participated in international scientific conferences, workshops, and his articles have been published in prestigious scientific journals. He is an Adjunct Lecturer at the Department of Philosophy of the University of Ioannina and a Postdoctoral Researcher at the Department of Primary Education of the University of Ioannina, Greece.

References

- Apple, M. 1995. *Education and Power*. London: Routledge.
- Freire, P. 1970. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York – London: Continuum.
- Freire, P. 1985. *The politics of education*. London: Bergin & Garvey.
- Freire, P. 1987. *A pedagogy for liberation. Dialogues on transforming education*. London: Palgrave.
- Freire, P. 1998. *Pedagogy of Freedom*. Lanham, USA: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Freire, P. 2006. *Teachers as cultural workers. Letters to those who dare to teach*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.
- Freire, P. 2014. *Pedagogy of Hope*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Giroux, H. 1993. *Living Dangerously. Multiculturalism and the Politics of Difference*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Giroux, H. 1994. *Disturbing Pleasures. Learning Popular Culture*. New York: Routledge.
- Giroux, H. 1996. *Fugitive Cultures: Race, Violence, and Youth*. New York: Routledge.
- Giroux, H. A. and Trend, D. 1992. Cultural workers, pedagogy and the politics of difference: Beyond cultural conservatism, *Cultural Studies*, 6(1), 51-72. DOI: 10.1080/09502389200490031
- Grollios, G. 2008. *Social Justice and Public Pedagogy*. Announcement at the 5th Scientific Conference on History of Education, Patras.
- Kontou, A. 2012. *Critical theory and Education. Adorno & Horkheimer, Habermas, Critical Pedagogy*. Athens: I. Sideris.
- Liampas, A., and Kaskaris, I. 2007. *Critical Postmodernism, Critical Pedagogy and the Ideological Schemes of Neoliberalism in Education*. Theses, 99. Retrieved from:

https://www.theseis.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=975:category-975&catid=17&Itemid=113.

- McLaren, P. L. 1995a. White Terror and Oppositional Agency: Towards a Critical Multiculturalism. In Sleeter, C. & McLaren, P. L. (Eds.), *Multicultural education, critical pedagogy, and the politics of difference* (pp. 33-70). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- McLaren, P. 1995b. *Critical Pedagogy and Predatory Culture. Oppositional Politics in a Postmodern Era*. New York: Routledge.
- Robson, C. 2010. *The Real World Survey. A tool for social scientists and professional researchers*. Athens: Gutenberg.
- Tsiami, D. 2013. Paulo Freire, Critical Pedagogy & Action Research: Common issues and views. *Action Researcher in Education*, 4, 20-42.

Creative Commons licensing terms

Author(s) will retain the copyright of their published articles agreeing that a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0) terms will be applied to their work. Under the terms of this license, no permission is required from the author(s) or publisher for members of the community to copy, distribute, transmit or adapt the article content, providing a proper, prominent and unambiguous attribution to the authors in a manner that makes clear that the materials are being reused under permission of a Creative Commons License. Views, opinions and conclusions expressed in this research article are views, opinions and conclusions of the author(s). Open Access Publishing Group and European Journal of Social Sciences Studies shall not be responsible or answerable for any loss, damage or liability caused in relation to/arising out of conflicts of interest, copyright violations and inappropriate or inaccurate use of any kind content related or integrated into the research work. All the published works are meeting the Open Access Publishing requirements and can be freely accessed, shared, modified, distributed and used in educational, commercial and non-commercial purposes under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License \(CC BY 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)