

A Critical Look into Critical Pedagogy

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Abstract

In line with postmodern philosophy, critical pedagogy has gained considerable importance and has become a valuable educational goal. The purpose of this study is to dig into the effects of critical pedagogy in a modernist educational system. To this aim, 15 Iranian university students were asked to write down their feelings at the end of a course titled “Philosophy of Education”, which was their first encounter with critical theories. The qualitative analysis of the self-narratives revealed 11 themes, which demonstrated both destructive and constructive effects. At the end, implications were given for appropriate placing of critical pedagogy in the educational system.

Key Words: critical pedagogy, postmodernism, educational system, constructive, destructive.

1. Introduction

The postmodern era has encouraged new perspectives towards education. Postmodernism sees the world as contingent, diverse, ungrounded, unstable, indeterminate and is skeptic about the objectivity of truth, history and norms, and the coherence of identities (Eagleton, 1996). The debates in the sociology of education have taken on a postmodern tone (Green, 1994). Postmodernism puts into question the continuing relevance in the ‘postmodern’ age of education systems which were designed to fit ‘modern’ purposes, i.e., when “schools served as universalizing institutions, promoting unifying ideals” (Rust, 1991, p. 619). It is argued that education does not fit easily into the postmodern paradigm, since educational theory and practices are founded in the modernist tradition and that postmodernisms’ denial of the existence of a natural subject with inherent characteristics and potential contradicts the very basis of educational activity (Usher & Edwards, 1994). Cole, Hill and Rikowski (1997) mention