

DEMOCRATIZATION OF EDUCATION: TONGUÇ AND FREIRE

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to compare two educators, namely İsmail Hakkı Tonguç, the General Director of Primary Education during 1937-1946 in Turkey and Paulo Freire, a well-known Brazilian educator and philosopher, in terms of their understandings of pedagogy. A parallelism is drawn between the two scholars in terms of their emphasis on connecting school to real life with an emphasis on the unity of theory and practice; formulating an egalitarian and liberatory relationship between teachers and students through their emphasis on democratic principles; and, thinking of pedagogy as a transformative and liberatory political practice which would empower students by turning them into "active subjects" and help them develop critical consciousness. Depending upon all these similarities, it is argued that both scholars' understandings of pedagogy provide a fertile ground for those who search for democratizing both educational process and the society especially by increasing the political participation of the poor.

Keywords: İsmail Hakkı Tonguç, Paulo Freire, Village Institutes, Liberatory Pedagogy.

EĞİTİMİN DEMOKRATİKLEŞMESİ: TONGUÇ VE FREIRE

ÖZ

Bu çalışma, 1937-1946 yılları arasında Türkiye'de İlköğretim Genel Müdürlüğü yapmış olan İsmail Hakkı Tonguç ve Brezilyalı eğitimci ve felsefeci Paulo Freire'nin pedagoji anlayışlarını karşılaştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu doğrultuda, çalışmada, iki eğitimci arasında okulu gerçek hayatla ilişkilendirme ve teori ve pratiğin birliği üzerine yaptıkları vurgu, öğretmenlerle öğrenciler arasında demokratik ilkeler dolayısıyla eşitlikçi ve özgürleştirici bir ilişkinin formülasyonu ve pedagojiyi öğrencileri onların "aktif özneler"e dönüşmelerine ve eleştirel bir bilinç geliştirmelerine yardımcı olacak şekilde yetkilendirecek dönüştürücü ve özgürleştirici bir siyasal pratik olarak görmeleri açısından paralellik kurulmaktadır. Söz konusu benzerliklerden yola çıkılarak, her iki eğitimcinin pedagoji anlayışının yalnızca eğitim sürecini değil, aynı zamanda bilhassa yoksulların siyasal katılımını arttırarak toplumu da demokratikleştirmeyi hedefleyenler için verimli bir zemin oluşturduğu öne sürülmektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: İsmail Hakkı Tonguç, Paulo Freire, Köy Enstitüleri, Özgürleştirici Eğitim.

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Introduction

İsmail Hakkı Tonguç (1897-1960) was an educator who was mainly known as “the architect of the Village Institutes”, schools founded in Turkey in the 1930s to educate and train village children to become teachers for villages. Tonguç was called as “Pestalozzi of Turkish education” by Hasan Ali Yücel who was the Minister of National Education during 1938-1946 in Turkey because of his aim to educate the poorest section of the country, i.e. the peasants. Yücel called him also as an “unusual intellectual” since Tonguç, rather than being a director sitting down and signing documents in his office, travelled the whole country and visited 61 provinces, 305 districts and 9150 villages during his service as the General Director of Primary Education.¹

Paulo Freire (1921-1997), on the other hand, was a well-known Brazilian educator and philosopher. He developed literacy programmes for adult education. As a result of the success and influence of his methods for adult education, the Brazilian Ministry of Education invited him to organize a national literacy programme. However, what makes him so influential even today is not only the methods he developed for adult education while working with peasants and workers in the poor regions of Brazil, but also -and even more- his educational philosophy and ideas about critical education which influenced the critical pedagogy school to a large extent.²

In this chapter, I compare these two educators and draw a parallelism between their understandings of pedagogy in terms of, first, emphasizing the connection between school and life which saves learning from memorization; second, formulating an egalitarian and liberating relationship between teachers and students; and, third, thinking of pedagogy as a transformative and liberatory political practice which would not only empower students by turning them into active subjects and helping them develop critical consciousness, but also supporting them to engage in transformative social action. Accordingly, in the first section of this chapter, I discuss Tonguç’s and Freire’s emphasis on the connection between school and life mainly with reference to the unity of intellectual and practical activities (or, in Freire’s words, *reflection* and *action*). The second section deals with both scholars’ understandings of the relationship between teachers and students. In the third section, I focus on how pedagogy turns into a transformative and liberatory political practice in Tonguç’s and Freire’s

¹ Dursun Kut, *Demetli Yıllar: Tonguç’la, Yücel’le*, Güldikeni, Ankara 2003, p. 25.

² Michael W. Apple, Luis Armando Gandin, and Alvaro Moreira Hypolito, “Paulo Freire”, in *Fifty Modern Thinkers on Education: From Piaget to the Present*, eds.: Joy A. Palmer, David E. Cooper, and Liara Bresler, Routledge, London & New York 2001, p.128.

approaches. Depending upon all these similarities, in the conclusion part, it is argued that both scholars' understandings of pedagogy provide a fertile ground for those who search for alternative ways of democratizing both educational process and the society especially by increasing the political participation of the poor.

Connecting School to Life

The first similarity between Tonguç's and Freire's understandings of pedagogy is their emphasis on the need to connect school to life. This can be observed through their emphasis on the unity of intellectual and practical activities, which results in grounding knowledge in everyday life and thus saving learning from memorization. In the case of Tonguç, this was embodied in the adoption of the principles of "education within work" and "learning by doing" in the Village Institutes, where the students had an opportunity to put into practice what they learned³. Believing in the need to connect education - and the school- to the nature and to the practical aspects or problems of life,⁴ Tonguç was opposed to the reduction of education merely to teaching literacy and transmitting knowledge to the students within boundaries of classrooms.⁵ Believing in the necessity of multidimensional development of the human being and adopting an understanding of pedagogy which does not give any priority to intellectual activities over practical ones, he also criticized the separation between academic and vocational/technical education.⁶ Therefore, the curriculum of the Village Institutes, designed in accordance with Tonguç's understanding of pedagogy, included both agricultural and technical courses and intellectually stimulating courses which would simultaneously develop cognitive and manual skills to improve and transform not only the students' living conditions, but also that of the peasants. To improve the living conditions in the villages and to bring welfare and happiness to peasants necessitated new kind of school and education, *School of Life and Work*, which would not be limited to the classroom.⁷ Thus, the principle of "education within work" and the method of "learning by

³ İsmail Hakkı Tonguç, *Mektuplarla Köy Enstitüsü Yılları (1936-1946)*, Güldikeni, Ankara 1999, p.93.

⁴ *ibid.*, p.93.

⁵ İsmail Hakkı Tonguç, *Kendi Yazılarıyla Tonguç: Tonguç'a Kitap*, Ekin Basımevi, İstanbul 1961, p.105.

⁶ İsmail Hakkı Tonguç, *Köyde Eğitim*, Devlet Basımevi, İstanbul 1938, p.90.

⁷ İsmail Hakkı Tonguç, *Mektuplarla Köy Enstitüsü Yılları (1936-1946)*, p.124.

doing” were adopted, extending learning into the fields of production and work.⁸

Similarly, with an emphasis on the need to connect education to the real life or conditions of the people, Freire’s conception of education extended well beyond the classroom walls. As Antonia Darder states, “*pedagogy of the oppressed* was not pedagogy solely for the classroom, but rather a living pedagogy that has to be infused into all aspects of our lives, including our personal politics”.⁹ (This should not be interpreted as an undervaluation of the classroom activity which, for Freire, was important both for reproduction and transformation.) Education, for Freire, had been always a political issue not only in terms of its role in the reproduction of the existing social order but also in truly understanding and transforming the world. Therefore, it should be connected “to the larger realities in which people live, and to struggles to alter those realities”.¹⁰ It is at this very point that, in line with his objective of building a pedagogical process “grounded in the cultural and social realities of teachers and students,” Freire combines his educational methods with the concept of *praxis*, which emphasizes “the unity of action and reflection.” That is to say, connecting learning -and language- to life processes, Freire aims at removing the separation between reflection and action -a separation rooted in the historical development of class division and division of labor and contributed to the alienation of human beings.¹¹ It is only through *praxis* that the separation between reflection and action will be ended and individuals both become conscious of the reality in which they live and engage in action to transform it. Freire called this process *conscientization*, which means “the interface of critical reflection and action as ... interconnected moments in the process of individual and collective emancipation”.¹² Here, it should also be emphasized that Freire’s conception of education as “the practice of freedom” neither has an understanding of human beings as “abstract, isolated, independent, and unattached to the world” nor that of the world as a “reality apart from men.” On the contrary, human beings are considered in their relations with the world, in which “consciousness and world are simultaneous,” meaning that “consciousness

⁸ This led some people to criticize the Village Institutes both for training artisans rather than teachers and also for “overworking” students and “exploiting” their labor. For example, see Kemal Tahir, *Bozkırdaki Çekirdek*, Tekin, İstanbul 1991.

⁹ Antonia Darder, *Freire and Education*, Routledge, New York & London 2015, p.5.

¹⁰ Apple, et al., *ibid.*, p.130-131.

¹¹ Joel Spring, *Özgür Eğitim*, Ayrıntı, İstanbul 1991, p.51.

¹² Henry A. Giroux, *Theory and Resistance in Education*, Bergin and Garvey, New York & London 1983, p.227.

neither precedes the world nor follows it.”¹³ In short, in Freire’s understanding of emancipatory education learning, through which action, knowledge and consciousness develop together, becomes a “source of emancipation and a tool for social change.”¹⁴

As it is seen from the above arguments, for both scholars, learning and knowledge cannot be separated from everyday life and practical activities. This does not only result in grounding knowledge in everyday life by connecting learning and education to broader social and political problems but also helps remove the hierarchy between the unity of intellectual and practical activities and make knowledge accessible to everyone without falling into the trap of neither theoretical elitism nor anti-intellectualism. Both educators warn us against the disadvantages of both positions. Believing that human being’s activity is theory and practice (*reflection* and *action*), Freire states that it cannot be reduced to either verbalism which means “sacrifice of action,” or activism,” meaning “sacrifice of reflection.”¹⁵ Similar to Freire, Tonguç criticizes theoretical elitism and anti-intellectualism, and in order to avoid both, intellectually stimulating courses and agricultural and technical courses were given equal weight in the curriculum of the Village Institutes¹⁶. All these led Tonguç and Freire to approach the relationship between teachers and students, or educators and learners in a different way.

The Relationship Between Teachers and Students

Developing a new conception of education, especially one aspiring to promote the empowering and liberatory potential of education, requires a different understanding of the relationship between teachers and students. Being aware of this, both Tonguç and Freire emphasized this issue in their writings. In order to understand their approach to this question, it is necessary to begin with their criticisms of the teacher-student relationship in mainstream schools.

Tonguç’s approach to the teacher-students relationship can be explained by taking into consideration his criticisms towards mainstream schools, which he called *old schools*. The old school, according to him, was

¹³ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p.69.

¹⁴ Spring, *ibid.*, p.60.

¹⁵ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p.75.

¹⁶ Pakize Türkoğlu, “Öğretim Programları Yönünden Köy Enstitüleri”, *Eğitim Mücadelesi Köy Enstitüleri Özel Sayısı*, no. 6 (1980): 50-60, p.51.

characterized by a strict hierarchical relationship between teachers and students. In this school, only teachers had the right to speak while students were silenced and just expected to obey the orders of teachers without any questioning.¹⁷ Moreover, since education was reduced merely to teaching how to read and write rather than connecting it to nature and life, students of the old school became “disinterested” in the social reality.¹⁸ *The School of Life and Work*, which was based on Tonguç’s understanding of pedagogy, on the other hand, would be extended beyond classrooms, connecting school to life.¹⁹ This new conception of school necessitated a different approach to the teacher-student relationship. In order to understand how Tonguç approached to the relationship between teachers and students, we can focus on the Village Institutes where this relationship was based on *work* and *obligation*.²⁰ Thanks to Tonguç’s understanding of pedagogy put into practice in the Village Institutes, the students were given the authority and the responsibility in the structure and operation of the Village Institutes and participated in administration -the right to participate in administration was one of the fundamental principles of the curriculum²¹- through the implementation of the principles like *education within work*, *equality*, *self-government*, and *self-expression* and the method of *learning by doing*. This, for Tonguç, was the only way of eliminating an administration based upon “terrorizing” authority which turned all its members into “unconscious” and “careless” puppets.²² Students’ participation in administration also helped students express themselves more freely and develop self-confidence. In addition to that, Tonguç’s opposition to, and his ambitious efforts to prevent, any kind of oppression, physical or psychological violence especially towards students in the Village Institutes should be mentioned.²³ Moreover, by learning by doing and working, by being encouraged to question what they studied, by relating the subjects to each other,²⁴ the students ceased to be passive listeners who mechanically memorized the content being presented.

¹⁷ Tonguç, *Kendi Yazılarıyla Tonguç: Tonguç’a Kitap*, p.113.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 112-113.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, p.119.

²⁰ Akçay, “Köy Enstitüleri’nde Öğretmen-Öğrenci İlişkileri Üzerine,” *Eğitim Mücadelesi Köy Enstitüleri Özel Sayısı*, no. 6 (1980): 25-29, p.75.

²¹ Türkoğlu, *ibid.*, p.58.

²² Tonguç, *Mektuplarla Köy Enstitüsü Yılları (1936-1946)*, p.42.

²³ See Tonguç, *Mektuplarla Köy Enstitüsü Yılları (1936-1946)*, pp.66, 77-78.

²⁴ Akçay, *ibid.*, p.74.

All these contributed to the creation of an egalitarian, democratic relationship between teachers and students.²⁵

In order to understand Freire's approach to the relationship between teachers and students, it is necessary to mention the separation he made between banking education and problem-posing education. The banking education, for him, carries in itself many characteristics of an oppressive society -the attitudes and practices it involves "mirror oppressive society"²⁶ -causing repression and alienation.²⁷ Here, the teacher who "thinks," "knows," "teaches," "talks," "disciplines," "chooses" and "acts" is the "Subject of the learning process," while the students who are "taught," are "thought about," are "disciplined," "listen," "comply," and "adopt" are reduced into "mere objects."²⁸ In Freire's words, in this model, "education ... becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor."²⁹ The students are turned into "containers" receiving, mechanically memorizing, and repeating the "narrated" content³⁰ -a content with a little connection to their life experiences.³¹ That is to say, there is a "gap"³² between the "existential experience of the students" and the content of the educational program which is "detached from reality" and becomes "lifeless" and "petrified"³³. However, Freire did not criticize the banking approach only for its educational content, but also for its effect on the learner's personhood. That is to say, when education is considered as a "humanizing" process contributing to "self-realization", it is the opposite that the banking education does.³⁴ It does so through its "dehumanizing" effect, i.e. through the "lack of creativity, transformation, and knowledge."³⁵ The banking education prevents learners from engaging in and controlling the

²⁵ It is in this sense, among others, that the Village Institutes can be viewed as a "rudimentary form of liberatory education" (Nuran Aytemur-Sağiroğlu, "A Search for an Alternative Curriculum and Pedagogy: The Case of the Village Institutes," in *Liminal Spaces and Call for Praxis(ing)*, eds.: Miryam Espinosa-Dulanto, David L. Humpal, Leilya Pitre & Jolanta S. Santana, Information Age Publishing, Charlotte, N. C 2013a, 61-72, p.62.)

²⁶ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p.59.

²⁷ Spring, *ibid.*, p.52.

²⁸ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p.59.

²⁹ *ibid.*, p.58.

³⁰ *ibid.*, p.58.

³¹ Spring, *ibid.*, p.52.

³² Jones Irwin, *Paulo Freire's Philosophy of Education: Origins, Developments, Impacts and Legacies*, Continuum, London & New York 2012, p.48.

³³ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p.57.

³⁴ Irwin, *ibid.*, p.49.

³⁵ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p.58.

process of inquiry, without which humanization is impossible.³⁶ It also objectifies learners by alienating them “from their own decision-making”³⁷, silencing them and depriving them of the tools needed to “think and act reflectively”.³⁸ To quote from Freire, “Verbalistic lessons, reading requirements, the methods for evaluating ‘knowledge,’ the distance between the teacher and the taught, the criteria for promotion: everything in this ready-to-wear approach serves to obviate thinking”.³⁹ Thus, the banking system “miseducates”.⁴⁰ Rather than contributing to self-realization by questioning the world, it serves for “domination” and “adaptation”⁴¹ - adaptation to “the world of oppression”⁴².

The solution, for Freire, laid in the transformation of the structure of oppression to prepare the conditions for the oppressed to become beings for themselves -to “be more fully human.”⁴³ Here, problem-posing education plays an important role with its objective of providing the learners or the oppressed with the very tools to get rid of *culture of silence* and to take control over the social forces affecting their lives so as to gain self-awareness and self-realization.⁴⁴ That is to say, problem-posing education views human beings’ struggle for their emancipation as fundamental; and, to realize this, it does not only “enable teachers and students to become Subjects of the educational process by overcoming authoritarianism and an alienating individualism,” but also enable them “to overcome their false perception of reality,” making the world “the object of that transforming action” by human beings, which leads to the latter’s “humanization.”⁴⁵ To do this requires an understanding of “education and knowledge as processes of enquiry.”⁴⁶ Here, teachers and students become “critical co-investigators” who cooperate in their efforts to “engage in critical thinking and the quest for mutual humanization,”⁴⁷ leading to the replacement of the terms “teacher” and “student” respectively with “coordinator” and “participant.” The classrooms where knowledge is transmitted become “culture circles” where coordinators and participants investigate knowledge together through

³⁶ *ibid.*, p.58.

³⁷ *ibid.*, p.73.

³⁸ Giroux, *ibid.*, p.226.

³⁹ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p.63.

⁴⁰ Irwin, *ibid.*, p.55.

⁴¹ *ibid.*, p. 55.

⁴² Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p.65.

⁴³ *ibid.*, p.61.

⁴⁴ Spring, *ibid.*, pp.54-55.

⁴⁵ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p.58.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p.74.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p.62.

“dialogue”- “authentic dialogue”⁴⁸ between teachers and students. Dialogue, for Freire, is an “existential necessity,”⁴⁹ through which both teachers and students (or coordinators and participants) are humanized⁵⁰. He defined dialogue as an “encounter in which the united reflection and action of the dialoguers are addressed to the world which is to be transformed and humanized.”⁵¹ “True” dialogue requires *critical thinking* which views reality as a “process”, as a permanent “transformation”, and so is inseparable from action.⁵² Therefore, it cannot be reduced to a “simple exchange of ideas” or one’s “imposition” of her/his own truth.⁵³ It is neither a situation where some people “name on behalf of others” nor a “crafty instrument for the domination of one ... by another.”⁵⁴ Freire states that, as educators, “it is not our role to speak to the people about our own view of the world, nor to attempt to impose that view on them, but rather to dialogue with the people about their view⁵⁵ and ours.”⁵⁶ Thus, education, rather than being a “teacher-centred” process where the teacher is the only “narrator of the educational story”⁵⁷ authorized to talk about reality as if it was “motionless, static, compartmentalised and predictable,”⁵⁸ becomes a process in which all – both teachers and students as “unfinished” or “uncompleted” beings⁵⁹-simultaneously teach and learn through dialogue, leading to the emergence of a relationship of *partnership* based on “love,” “humility,” “trust,” and “solidarity” between educators and learners.⁶⁰

To sum up, criticizing the teacher-student relationship in traditional schools and believing in the need for an alternative formulation, both Tonguç and Freire developed a different understanding of relationship between

⁴⁸ Paulo Freire, *The Politics of Education: Culture, Power, and Liberation*, Bergin and Garvey, New York & London 1985, p.49.

⁴⁹ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p.77.

⁵⁰ Peter Roberts, “Knowledge, Dialogue, and Humanization: Exploring Freire’s Philosophy” in *Critical Theory and the Human Condition*, eds.: Michael Peters, Colin Lankshear and Mark Olssen, Peter Lang, New York 2003, 169-183, p.176.

⁵¹ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p.77.

⁵² *ibid.*, pp.80-81.

⁵³ *ibid.*, p.77.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, p.85.

⁵⁵ According to Freire, the success of any educational program depends on its “respect” for people’s view of the world since many educational plans fail because of having being designed according to their authors’ “own personal view of reality,” overlooking “the concrete, existential, present situation of real men.” (Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, pp.82-85.)

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p.85.

⁵⁷ Irwin, *ibid.*, p.48.

⁵⁸ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p.57.

⁵⁹ *ibid.*, p.27.

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, pp.77-80.

teachers and students. Paying attention to the negative outcomes of the teacher-centred approach, they proposed a new kind of relationship between educators and learners, viewing them co-ordinators or partners who have much to learn from each other and share responsibilities in the learning process.⁶¹

Pedagogy as a Transformative and Liberatory Political Practice

Both Tonguç and Freire believed in the empowering and transformative potential of education. They were also well aware of the role education play in the reproduction of relations of oppression and domination. In the case of Tonguç, this can be seen especially in his criticism to the old school. According to Engin Tonguç, the son of İsmail Hakkı Tonguç, Tonguç was aware of the close relationship between education and politics, or education and the oppressive social order, believing that the old school, both in Turkey and Europe, had been founded to train persons in accordance with the needs of societies based on an exploitative and oppressive order. The school of life and work, on the other hand, would be that of the societies characterized by social justice rather than exploitation.⁶² According to Engin Tonguç, rather than being an educator pursuing a “childish” ideal that education per se would solve any problem in the society, Tonguç was aware of the fact that education was only one of the conditions for social development, and thus, incapable of establishing a new society characterized by social justice.⁶³

Tonguç did not limit education merely to teach how to read and write. On the contrary, being aware of the empowering and transformative potential of education, he aimed at raising interest in the social, economic, and political problems of the country and try to find solutions to them.⁶⁴ Education, for him, would help students develop a critical approach to the realities of the country. More specifically, being a person from a rural family

⁶¹ However, this should not be interpreted as denying the role of teacher as one conducting that process since, for Freire, “there is no education without the teaching, systematic or no, of a certain content” (Freire, *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Continuum, London & New York 2004, p.94). Nor it means the denial of the role of authority in the educational process. The principle of authority was adopted as an instrument of performing work in the Village Institutes which were based on Tonguç’s understanding of pedagogy (Şevket Gedikoğlu, *Evreleri, Getirdikleri ve Yankılarıyla Köy Enstitüleri*, İş Matbaacılık ve Ticaret, Ankara 1971).

⁶² Engin Tonguç, *Devrim Açısından Köy Enstitüleri ve Tonguç*, Ant Yayınları, İstanbul 1970, p.197.

⁶³ *ibid.*, pp.187, 201-202.

⁶⁴ Tonguç, *Kendi Yazılılarıyla Tonguç: Tonguç’a Kitap*, p.62.

and well aware of the exploitative relations or mechanism in the rural area,⁶⁵ Tonguç attributed education the role of helping peasants understand the village reality⁶⁶. Therefore, the major task to solve the problems of the country was “to educate peasants at all costs” and “to enliven the village”.⁶⁷ This was necessary not only for modernizing the villages, but also for ending their exploitation.⁶⁸ It was, for Tonguç, also the condition for establishing “people’s government”⁶⁹ by increasing the political participation of the people -especially the peasants.⁷⁰ The same point is emphasized also by Engin Tonguç who argues that Tonguç’s political objective was to create a society in which exploitation ended and the exploited classes gained consciousness and had their rights and participated in administration.⁷¹ According to him, what Tonguç meant by “enlivening the village” was not to save the peasants from poverty, but provide them with opportunity to gain class consciousness and remove exploitative mechanism to end their exploitation.⁷² That is to say, the villages would be “enlivened from inside” consciously.⁷³ Here, the teachers appeared as intellectuals who were expected to play a crucial role in this process, being together with the people rather than “dominating” them.⁷⁴

Similar to Tonguç, education, for Freire, was more than teaching literacy. It had always been a “political”⁷⁵ question⁷⁶, either contributing to the reproduction of relations of oppression and exclusion or preparing the conditions for transforming the world⁷⁷. Therefore, having been aware of the role traditional education played in the reproduction of the societies of oppression and exclusion, Freire developed a new conception of education

⁶⁵ Taner Timur, *Türk Devrimi ve Sonrası*, İmge, Ankara 2001, pp.209-210.

⁶⁶ Tonguç, *Kendi Yazılarıyla Tonguç: Tonguç’a Kitap*, p.105.

⁶⁷ *ibid.*, pp.69, 105.

⁶⁸ *ibid.*, pp.102.

⁶⁹ Tonguç, *İ. Hakkı Tonguç: Kitaplaşmamış Yazıları I*, Köy Enstitüleri ve Çağdaş Eğitim Vakfı, Ankara 2001, p.211.

⁷⁰ Tonguç, *Kendi Yazılarıyla Tonguç: Tonguç’a Kitap*, p.88.

⁷¹ Engin Tonguç, *ibid.*, pp.183-184.

⁷² *ibid.*, p.195.

⁷³ Tonguç, *Kendi Yazılarıyla Tonguç: Tonguç’a Kitap*, p.102.

⁷⁴ Aytemur-Sağiroğlu, “Özgürleştirici Eğitim Arayışları: Köy Enstitüleri ve Eleştirel Pedagoji Okulu,” *Amme İdaresi Dergisi* 46, no.1 (2013b), p.92.

⁷⁵ Freire views politics and education as “distinct” but “indissociable.” It is mainly in this sense that he has been criticized. Irwin argues against such accounts stating that Freire thought of education as a “process” to be understood both “in its own right” and also “in its connections to politics.” For more detail, see Irwin, *ibid.*, p. 46.

⁷⁶ Myles Horton and Paulo Freire, *We Make the Road by Walking: Conversations on Education and Social Change*, eds.: Brenda Bell, John Gaventa, and John Peters, Temple University Press, Philadelphia 1990, p.145.

⁷⁷ Apple, et al., *ibid.*, p.129.

which sided with the excluded and the oppressed⁷⁸ and highlighted the transformative and emancipatory potential of education to “humanize” the world, which is “the objective of social life”⁷⁹. According to Freire, humanization, which is human beings’ “ontological vocation” could not be achieved in the *culture of silence*, where human beings with a “false perception of reality” are “objectified,” “alienated,” and become “beings for others,” i.e. “dehumanized.”⁸⁰ That is to say, it is not possible to humanize the world unless human beings become aware of the forces (or their own life processes) which determine their consciousness since they become the objects of economic and social planning in the *culture of silence*, unaware of their life activities, and do nothing to transform their world.⁸¹ Humanization can be achieved only through “unveiling” -a “critical understanding”- of reality and “critical intervention” in it.⁸² Only then human beings can transform “the structure of oppression” and become “beings for themselves.”

83

This brings us to Freire’s conception of *problem-posing education* as a “humanist and liberating praxis.” Education is not expected to help human beings only become aware of their reality (or understand the world) but also transform it through praxis, which will end the separation between reflection and action connecting learning -and language- to life processes. For problem-posing education, it is fundamental that human beings who are subjected to domination must be empowered and engage themselves in the struggle for their emancipation. To do this, it “enables teachers and students to become Subjects of the educational process.”⁸⁴ This also means attributing teachers the role of “critical cultural workers” whose “transformative” work -in addition to “reflexive” one- goes beyond the classroom.⁸⁵ That is to say, since educators’ role requires their “involvement in and dedication to overcoming social injustice” rather than merely teaching mathematics, geography,

⁷⁸ *ibid.*, p.130.

⁷⁹ For Freire, the objective of social life is to “humanize” the world -a process through which human beings not only reflect about and become aware of the social forces affecting them, but also become capable of transforming the world. According to him, being a human means being an actor who makes choices and determines one’s own fate, while to be free means having self-knowledge and being aware of the social world which determine one’s consciousness (Spring, *ibid.*, p.47).

⁸⁰ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p.61.

⁸¹ Spring, *ibid.*, pp.48-58.

⁸² Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p.68.

⁸³ *ibid.*, p.61.

⁸⁴ *ibid.*, p.74.

⁸⁵ Apple, et al., *ibid.*, p.130.

history, etc, they are more than “teaching specialists.”⁸⁶ The teachers need “to transcend their merely instructive task and to assume the ethical posture of a mentor who truly believes in the total autonomy, freedom, and development of those he or she mentors,” enabling the latter -the students- “become the owners of their own history.”⁸⁷

To sum up, being aware of the close relationship between pedagogy and politics and the transformative and liberatory potential of education, both Tonguç and Freire developed an educational project which is closely tied to their objective of the “empowerment of dispossessed populations”⁸⁸. That is to say, rather than limiting the role of education to teach how to read and write, they aimed to stimulate and promote its empowering and transformative potential which would contribute, at the end, to the increase in the political participation of the poor and the democratization of the society as a whole. Here, both educators view teachers as intellectuals whose emancipatory and transformative work goes beyond teaching literacy in the classroom.

Conclusion

This study pointed out the similarities between Tonguç and Freire in terms of their understandings of pedagogy. Both educators underlined the need to connect school to life especially through their emphasis on the unity of intellectual and practical activities, or reflection and action, thanks to which, being grounded in everyday life, learning was not only connected to life processes but also saved from mechanical memorization. This, in the case of Tonguç, was materialized in the principle of education within work and the method of learning by doing, while it was embodied in the concept of praxis in Freire’s works. Moreover, criticizing the traditional teacher-students relationship in mainstream schools, both scholars argued for an alternative/democratic relationship between teachers and students, considering them as equal partners in learning process. Lastly, pedagogy appeared to be a transformative and liberatory political practice in Tonguç’s and Freire’s approaches. Being sensitive to the misery and suffering of the oppressed, especially the peasants, both scholars aimed to empower students

⁸⁶ Freire, *Teachers as Cultural Workers: Letters to Those Who Dare Teach*, Westview, Boulder 2005, pp.103-104.

⁸⁷ Freire, “A Response”, in *Mentoring the Mentor: A Critical Dialogue with Paulo Freire*, eds.: Paulo Freire, James W. Fraser, Donaldo Macedo, Tanya McKinnon and William T. Stokes, Peter Lang, New York 1997, p.324.

⁸⁸ Darder, *ibid.*, p.9.

-and peasants or the oppressed- through education, helping them develop a critical approach to social reality, turning them into active subjects and encouraging them to engage in transformative social action. More than that, they attributed education an important role in promoting political participation of the poor or the oppressed – but being aware of the fact that developing new educational methods would not be sufficient in itself to transform the relations of oppression.

All these similarities display that both Tonguç and Freire, criticizing the traditional pedagogical approaches and mainstream schools, proposed alternative ones which aimed at stimulating the emancipatory and transformative power of education and turning it into an empowering and liberatory political practice by connecting education and the school to life through alternative methods of learning and formulating a democratic - rather than hierarchical- relationship between educators and learners. Therefore, their understandings of pedagogy provide a fertile ground for those who search for democratization of both educational process and the society especially by increasing the political participation of the poor.

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