Liberating Teaching Democracy and Ways of Implementation

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This article focuses on the undemocratic phenomenon still existing in teaching with borrowed feminist liberation analysis model. With its illustration of liberating teaching democracy (LTD), this article defines LTD as a teaching principle of enhancing the knowledge understanding and ability of students. LTD would materialize the free development of human nature among teachers and students; liberate teachers and students' consciousness and behavior through the teaching process; build teacher-student learning communities; respect every individual experience of community members; and unfold equal dialogues. This article analyzes LTD regarding teaching goal, methods, and teacher-student relationship. Above all, ways of implementing LTD are emphasized: setting up equal teaching authority pattern, promoting teacher-student goal of human nature, and materializing the transformation from given to liberation.

Keywords: teaching democracy, feminism, liberating analysis model, ways

Introduction

Teaching reform is an eternal theme. As the status of students' major entity is enhanced, teaching democracy is an inevitable trend. However, the undemocratic phenomenon of teaching is ubiquitous in four aspects: (a) teacher-centered teaching in the classroom; (b) teacher's control; (c) the hegemonic language authority; and (d) biased teaching evaluation.

The liberating analysis model of feminism stresses the analysis of the social structure produced influence on the study in order to liberate the oppressed of education. Freire regarded education as liberation, which is the ultimate object of education.

Based on relevant theory of feminism, this study aims to renew the exploration and interpretation on the issue of teaching democracy. Then, it advocates the concept of liberating teaching democracy (LTD), and discusses its content and ways to materialize it.

LTD

Regarding education, Feminist liberation analysis model focuses on the affection social structure and learning, in order to liberate the oppressed of education. Freire, came from Brazil, the most representative of this liberating concept, regarded education as liberation, which is the ultimate object of education. His ideas consist of liberation, freedom, and equality, which have the revelation over exploration of the teaching democracy issue: caring for the weak group, regarding liberation as a means to pursue equality of teaching major entity, and possessing important meaning to resolve the phenomenon and problems.

Definition of Liberating Teaching

Through feminism, the liberating model exploring teaching democracy is based on the common pursuit: caring for the equal development of weak groups. To name teaching democracy under feminism, liberating analysis model means to realize the free development of human nature among teachers and students. LTD is a teaching principle of enhancing the knowledge understanding and ability of students. LTD would materialize the free development of human nature among teachers and students; liberate teachers and students' consciousness and behavior through the teaching process; build teacher-student learning communities; respect every individual experience of community members; and unfold equal dialogues. This teaching principle would be fully implemented throughout the teaching activity from beginning to end. It would be the basic requirement for teaching democracy, to guide the determination of the teaching goal, to select and process teaching content, to apply the teaching method, and to implement evaluation of all teaching activities.

Differences Between Liberating Democracy and General Teaching Democracy

Comparatively speaking, LTD has essential differences with general teaching democracy. The differences between these two lie in three aspects.

Different goals. General teaching democracy tends to maximize the development of students. But it does not have enough awareness of student development or existing bias. Therefore, it equalizes student development with acquiring knowledge, passing exams, and obtaining high scores in teachers' teaching practice. To feminism, teaching democracy would regard the liberation of consciousness and action as the essential. Ultimately, the liberation of human nature is the teaching goal. The determination of the teaching goal is based on the development of human nature. The teaching goal must be extended further and deeper.

Different ways of getting done. General teaching democracy demands teachers to recognize the major entity of students. But in practice, teachers only change teaching methods. By doing so, the essential problems cannot be resolved. LTD emphasizes the teaching democracy to be done through liberation. Teaching methods need to be changed, but not only creating democratic style and atmosphere. Essentially, students are allowed to be aware of the necessity of liberation. They would liberate themselves in thinking and practice in order to act consciously as the major entity of study.

Different status between teachers and students. General teaching democracy stresses the interaction between teachers and students. But the status of teachers and students is basically the same. Teachers are the major entity. Thus, the function of student major entity is very limited in their interactions. LTD emphasizes the establishment of teacher-student learning communities. By doing so, the equal major entities between teachers and students are cooperative and mutually aiding each other; both possess the power of participation and determination of teaching in order to realize common development.

Demonstration of LTD

If teaching is an ecological system in which theory is the top one guiding the practice of people, LTD not only requires the change of teaching concept, but also needs respective alteration over the practical teaching activity. In other words, the realization of LTD would usher the whole transformation of teaching activities. Concretely, four major aspects would be displayed: the teaching goal, the teaching content, the teaching method, and the teacher-student relationship.

Awakening of teachers' consciousness. The awakening of teacher-student consciousness includes the awakening of self-consciousness and consciousness regarding others. The awakening of teachers'

consciousness is an important guarantee for students' consciousness awakening. Essentially, the awakening of teachers' consciousness is the awakening of the teaching culture. To teachers, reflection of their own culture and students' culture and the active reflection of habitual culture would dig out the hiding individual cultures from self-consciousness and students' consciousness. Thus, teachers would see clearly how the hiding cultures function in the behaviors of themselves and students and how they inject the external culture of thinking pattern and behavior model into the internal self-consciousness. At the same time, the culture of awakening would let teachers have more open mentality. Teachers would indeed acknowledge other reasonable cultural thinking frame in the classroom besides their own cultures in order to expose unequal power relations and behavior regarding interactions in the classroom. Obviously, cultural awakening would let teachers understand themselves more deeply. Reflection of self-hiding and mistaken cultural conception would empower teachers with the strength of transformation.

Realizing that knowledge is controlled. In the classroom, knowledge provided for students is controlled to comply with some standards or requirements, which ultimately display the demands of the society to education. The rules of education itself are deliberately or unintentional ignored. Teachers extend this controlled process if such knowledge as predetermined study content would be given to students. The major entities of teachers and students could not have cautious and critical attitude towards such knowledge, as Fletcher (1996) said, teachers and students automatically become the oppressed. According to theory of modern course, courses are the experience of learning regarding the attitude toward knowledge. This theory says that course knowledge would not be the established content for the students, rather the experienced materials promote the development of students. Teachers want to teach these knowledge, but these knowledge are only host which can trigger off dialogues and exchange based on different individuals. There is no absolutely correct knowledge in the classroom. Only different experiences of different individuals exist. Regardless of race, gender, and individual of classes, they have their unique and precious experiences. Based on such teaching, sharing of different experiences among equal major entities is unfolding. The voice of every student would get equal attention; psychologies are acknowledged; and cognition are enhanced.

Dialogue and negotiation between teachers and students. Implementing liberation, as the major way of teaching, is to form new understanding of teaching through liberating the consciousness of teachers and students. Teaching is the process of dialogue and negotiation in teacher-student communities. At the same time, actions of teachers and students must be liberated. Passiveness would be transformed into activeness; change requests and commands to dialogue and negotiation. In this process, not only teachers would be transformed, students' thinking and behavior must be transformed as well. The goal of teaching democracy cannot depend on individual teacher to be attained, students are the key of majority. Therefore, stimulating the major consciousness of students is the most important key.

Teachers and students become members of coordinating community. Equality and respect are built among different teachers and students. This relationship includes teachers of multiple disciplines and every student of the class. In the past, the teacher-student relationship is the "me-it" one which is teacher-centered and students obey teachers' authority. Among teacher-student learning communities, teachers and students are equal; between them, the "me-you" relationship exists. Teachers and students are indisputable members of the community in which all strive for a common goal; the development of each individual means the development of the whole community. Among community members, everyone treats others with open mentality; all ideas and thoughts would be freely expressed and all are pleased to listen to the opinions of others; and different

experiences are shared and respected. Different experiences of each individual are based on different situation and knowledge: folk, emotional, concrete, and individual (subjective), which are real and objective to each individual.

Implementing Ways of LTD

Based on the above description, the ways of implementing LTD should include materializing the equal teaching authority concept, reshaping the goal of promoting human nature, and advocating the transformation from given to liberating teaching. Among the three, setting up the conception is the base, transforming teaching practice is the core, and promoting human nature of teachers and students is the goal. These three pyramid factors constitute the basic content to implement the teaching democracy of liberation.

Materializing the Equal Teaching Authority Concept

According to Max (1999), “Authority is such possibility, which an active person still realizes his will despite resistance inside a social relation. It does not matter such possibility depending on whatever foundation” (p. 95). Thus:

Authority is not something possessed or owned by behavior entity, rather an ability affecting other behavior entity. Predominant people wield power. It means that they engage in a behavior to affect the other behavior entity. It consists of the unequal relation between subjective entity and objective entity. It reflects the authority of subjective entity predominating status over objective entity. (Du, 2010, p. 63)

In a word, authority is a strength of subjective entity dominating objective entity.

Regarding the classroom concept of feminism, authority is a way to obtain subjectivity and reach the goal of teaching. Human beings need authority, which can enhance the degrees of self-subjectivity and mature. Materializing authority is a process of struggle between different “forces”. In the classroom, “different forces” mainly apply to teachers and students. The inequality between teachers and students is caused by the relatively weak status of students in the struggle of authority. Classroom teaching authority mainly reflects the control and restrain of teachers to students. Under such circumstance, the authority wielding of teachers reaches the goal of teaching ultimately. In the process of reaching the goal, students are the ultimate goal and the major entity at the same time. Too much control and restrain only makes teaching become the solo of teachers. Students cannot play the true major role in the process of learning. In order to make students—the weak group—get better development, the equal teaching authority concept must be set up. Liberating students, giving them freedom, awakening their consciousness of major entity, and making them aware of their own authority with the capacity to wield authority would help them participate in the process of teaching.

Reshaping the Goal of Promoting Human Nature

As a spiritual life, human beings can sense the value of existing life and pursue the freedom of spirit, pleasure, and happiness and the meaning and value of existing life.

Human nature is the instinct, mainly about spiritual mentality regarding the pursuit of truth, kindness, and fancifulness. Therefore, “Education would liberate the spiritual life of human beings and enhance the value and meaning of existing human lives in respect the growth rules of natural life” (Li, 2006, p. 126). Teachers and students are human beings in education, through which, meaning and value would be realized. More importantly, the pursuit of truth, kindness, and fancifulness of teachers and students would be respected.

Truth, kindness, and fancifulness of human nature are inseparable. Truth is the foundation of fancifulness. Kindness is the premise and soul of fancifulness. Fancifulness is the unification of truth and kindness; without truth and kindness, fancifulness would no longer exist. Thus, teaching pursues truth, kindness, and fancifulness. These three must have effective unification. Teaching is based on the pursuit of truth; kindness, the soul of teaching; and fancifulness, the highest goal of teaching. The harmonious intersection of these three would reach the goal of training comprehensive and harmony development of talents in order to realize the liberating human nature of teachers and students ultimately.

The pursuit of truth of human nature: From taming to liberation. Truth is the original and primitive appearance of things, and the objective rules of things. The truth of human nature is illustrated by human pursuit of the origins and the characteristics of universal. The outstanding mark of human activities is to integrate into the surrounding environment, not simply adapt to the environment. Integrating into environment includes adapting to the environment and the ability of critically selecting and transforming reality. If an individual loses the capacity of selection and obeys the choice of others, all his/her decisions are not really his/hers, but an regulation from outside. Thus, he/she is not actively integrating into his/her environment, but passively adapting, belonging, and obeying.

Materializing the awakening of students' consciousness is the key to be liberated from taming. To students, they need to establish the consciousness of major entity. They must be aware of their status as independent entity. This consciousness of major entity would be displayed in two aspects:

1. Students have the right to pursue freedom. At the same time, they must be responsible for the consequences of their self-chosen behavior. They must fulfill their own responsibilities as human beings. They must be fully aware of the right responsibility unification;
2. Students must be aware of others' independent entity. Each individual's relationship with others is equal. Therefore, while his/her rights and freedom are respected, the rights and freedom of others must be respected as well. Only by doing so would the contract spirit be rooted deeply in the soul and the democratic concept truly be materialized.

The pursuit of kindness of human nature: From one-sided to harmony. Kindness is the pursuit from practical activities with functional value beneficial and useful to human beings. Its positive significance and value have reasonable benefits to the survival and development of human beings. The pursuit of human nature development should be unified of society and individual, commonality and individuality. The need of individuality cannot be denied because of the need of social development. Individuality cannot be ignored due to emphasis of commonality. Otherwise, education would be alienated to be a tool of society and people would be alienated to be a machine and parts of social development. The human nature possessed by people would be lost.

First of all, the kindness of human nature should pursue the unification of society and individual. In the process of liberating people, the liberation of individuals, society, classes, and human beings should be dialectic and unified from beginning to end. Under some circumstances, the liberation of individual can be done to some degree, even led to be a pioneer of liberating movement of society. But thorough liberation of individual can truly be done depending on the liberation of social group which individual belongs to. Similarly, the liberation of a class and a local range depends on the liberation of whole human being and society. Only the liberation of individual is uplifted to the liberation of society and human beings, the individual could secure self-liberating the guarantee of society.

Secondly, the kindness of human nature needs to pursue the unification of commonality and individuality. Regarding the content of student development, commonality consists of some requirements of basic abilities which all students should acquire. For example, quality education stresses the development of morality, intelligence, physical exercise, beauty, and labor, which are the basic qualities of human beings. All these qualities are equally important to every student. But individuality differentiates the individual from the characteristics of others. Due to the differences of background, experience, learning ability, and interest and hobby, the advantages and disadvantages of every student would be displayed by the different development of each individual. This differentiation requires teachers to respect students' individual difference and encourage them to enhance advantages and overcome disadvantages in order to achieve more development of their advantages.

The pursuit of fancifulness: From restraint to freedom. Beauty is the essential strength and emotional demonstration of free life vitality. Beauty of human nature is expressed by the free born of freedom. Therefore, restraint on the human nature should wipe out from teaching in order to make human nature develop freely and abundantly. Freedom would bring enjoyment to individual development and maximize the value of individual.

Education freedom does not imply surface freedom or the phenomenon of unfreedom. Making students form free mind and cultivate ability is the major concern. By doing so, students can have more choices in the future and their comprehensive development is promoted. In spite of some restraints of educational activities, true educational activities must guarantee the freedom of students as the premise. "Concretely speaking, the freedom of education signifies the freedom of students and teachers and the freedom of school as an educational institute" (Dewey, 1986, p. 59).

Regarding the content, the freedom of students includes learning, thought, speech, and socializing. The locations of students' freedom consist of their families, schools, and communities. The active and passive freedom would be the ways students have. The freedom of classroom depends on free teaching ways. According to theory of modern education, teachers should pay attention to the interests and hobbies of children and adapt free ways of teaching in accordance with textbook content. To children, the free education ways are important because they would cultivate free mind of children. Jaspers (1991) once said:

Education resorts to freedom, but it is not the natural fact of anthropology. Education constantly obtain something from freedom as its content. If education becomes authority it fails. Therefore, teachers must respect the freedom of children and let them understand their motivation of study. It is not to obey to study. Simultaneously, their looking down on low-level teachers are allowed. In the process of learning, they are willing to respect teachers who would make them learn knowledge. Also, they adore those teachers who never abuse authority but resort to morality. Supposedly the ghost of authority roaming in the school with no defying students, then the authority thinking would deeply stamp on their innocent and reshaping minds—this would barely unaltered. In the future, such students would only obey and be stubborn without how to live freely. (pp. 55-56)

Teachers must have some principles by emphasizing the freedom of students in the classroom. If a student's behavior would not obstruct others and involve others' interests, he/she can have complete freedom of action. If the behavior of a student would obstruct others and involve with interests of others, sanction and restraint would be taken to limit his/her freedom of action. Complementary and beneficial relations are existed between freedom-standardization and freedom-restraint. It is a dangerous freedom without standardization and restraint. Some standardization and restraint would guarantee the freedom of more students.

In the school, the relationship between freedom-standardization and freedom-restraint is reflected in the relationship between freedom and discipline.

The true freedom should be the outcome of development through educational aid and potential leading force. It belongs to freedom of active, intelligent, and discipline. A true free child can have rights and freedom on one hand; on the other hand, he/she would be willing to bear the responsibility toward others and environment. Also, a child has the capacity to be responsible. A true free child should be a child who abides by disciplines. (Chen, 2009, p. 219)

Promoting Teaching Reform: From Giving to Liberation

Teachers' practice of transformation. Teachers' practice of transformation can be implemented in three ways: 1. Treating students equally; 2. Respecting students' differences; and 3. Empowering students. By doing so, the students will be willing to actively participate in teaching.

Treating students equally. This is the demonstration of teachers' practice of equality conception. Concretely, four aspects are listed: (a) equal opportunity in teaching of teacher-student participation; (b) equal personality; (c) equal experience; and (d) equal choice. Equal opportunity emphasizes that teaching activities should be mutually accomplished by teachers and students. Teacher-student and student-student relationships are equal. Teachers and students have the same right of participation. This equality further displays the equality of personalities, experiences, and choices. However, equality is not absolute. It must be recognized that knowledge, experiences, and abilities are unequal between students and teachers, particularly the latter are professionals of teaching. In spite of this, as the major entities in the society, the personalities of teachers and students are equal, so equal rights and obligations must be given to them by society and law.

Regarding the equality of experiences, feminism stresses that the experiences of the weak group have their reasonable value and possess important meaning in the sense of constructing harmonious society. Whether teachers of required subjects or teachers of selected subjects, whether good students or backward students, experiences of different individuals originate from different living environments, past educational backgrounds, personal experiences, and personality characteristics. All experiences are unique and respected. No experiences of whoever is superior to others. In the society, experiences of some are regarded as the main and important, others are ignored and valueless. The inequality of experiences should be avoided and prevented from happening.

Paying attention to students' individual difference. Different students have common differentiation in teaching. Teaching would be a process of seeking commonality and recognizing differentiation. Teachers need to concern about the realization of commonality, pay attention to the differentiation development, and recognize the differentiation. On one hand, they should help students be aware of their differentiation between themselves and others, and recognize their advantages and disadvantages in order to develop their personal advantages to the fullest. The differentiation is the foundation of dialogues in teaching. Due to the different recognition and experiences of students, teaching can constantly enrich the comprehension of individual through interaction and dialogue process. On the other hand, teachers would teach with differentiation. Different methods are needed for teachers to different students. Thus, the target teaching would be enhanced to the real situation of different students. At the same time, the effectiveness of teaching is improved.

Empowering students. Generally speaking, empowering "would make individual gain strength, his opinion get attention, influence relevant decision or plan, use his experience improving his performance in the working situation and further enhance the performance of organization" (Yin, Jin, & Li, 2009). Feminism

advocates to build teaching into a free environment in which teachers and students are the major entities of teaching. "The authority" in the process of feminism empowering would make students utilize energy, capacity, and potential, not the control authority of teachers. Therefore, feminism advocates empowering students to strengthen students' capacity of self-realization, and provide the authority of "concern" and "connection". Based on the understanding and respect for life, feminism is aware of providing aid, particularly concern, to strengthen the authority of students' speech, and construct important ways of harmonious teaching. To teaching, empowering students would create a more humane and justice teaching order. To students, empowering would enable them to engage in learning more actively.

However, materializing empower is not necessary to deprive of others' authority, or signify the shifting of authority from one to another. Essentially, empowering pursues a cooperative and sharing mutual development. At the same time, empowering emphasizes neither empowering from outside nor passively empowered by someone. Empowering happens inside through which authority comes from, not from outside. Empowering is the self-decision by actors consciously. Thus, authority always accompanies with the actors' practical action process. Therefore, letting students gain strength would not allow giving some authority to students, but through liberating major entity of students, which gain the freedom of thinking and behavior. Students can wield authority and engage in the process of teaching with teachers.

Students' practice of transformation. The transformation of teachers' practice is to promote the transformation of students' practice ultimately: The learning process of students would be transformed from passiveness to activeness, a process of actively building knowledge and experience. Also, students can feel the enjoyment and success brought by the process of learning.

Exerting the major entity of learning fully. The major entity of student is relative to the major entity of teacher. Students possess the same functional characteristics of major entity in the teaching process: selection, initiation, motility, and creativity. In past teaching, students get used to obeying the authority of teachers who dominate teaching affairs. Students cannot utilize the initiation of learning. The utilization of student major entity is related to the understanding of their self major entity. Also, it is related to certain behavior ability. Selection is displayed by learning as a process of selection: the selection of learning goals, methods, and means. Also, it includes the selection of "what to learn" and "how to learn".

Students would actively study the most valuable knowledge which is chosen by their own wishes. Autonomy possesses governing and controlling rights and abilities relevant to self activities. Students would have the governing and controlling rights and abilities in the teaching process. However, the initiation of students is directly affected by teachers. The over acting of teachers (authority, governing, and controlling everything) would deprive of students' initiation and make them obey teachers blindly. Motility is demonstrated by students' understanding of object and reforming object imitatively and actively, not passively and inactively to understand and practice. Motility emphasizes the activeness and initiation of major entity behavior. If study is not originated from the activeness and initiation of students, the study enthusiasm of students could not be mobilized. Creativity is the supreme demonstration and highest level of major entity. It is an essential characteristic of major entity to pursue novelty and uniqueness; an intrinsic of surpassing self and outward object. Innovation and differentiation are natural instincts of children. The learning process of students is also a process full of creativity. In a word, the realization of LTD needs students to mobilize their function of major entity and become the masters of study. Then, students and teachers would have equal status to engage in teaching activities.

Unfolding dialogues with learning communities. Based on the appreciation of different experiences of feminist group, respecting the experiences of every student is emphasized in teaching. In a learning community, the study of knowledge is not simply a process of reception, memorization, imitation, and repetition, but a process of enriching self-experiences through dialogues. Therefore, dialogues between community members have important significance to the realization of LTD. Dialogues of a community include teacher-student dialogue and student-student dialogue. The teacher-student process is the one of life exchange and sharing from which teachers implement education and essentiality is life. Students receive education through exchange and sharing. Most importantly, they are leading a meaningful life, creating and growing up. Life itself has the goal of creation and development. In student-student dialogue, exchange practice of dialogues is not only about “working together”, “sharing”, and “information exchange”. The real significance is to stimulate sparks of thinking, let them pay attention to new problems, and generate new understanding through dialogues with others in order to create the biggest learning space and unprecedented new thought and behavior. In a word, students can voice their own concern and express their thinking through dialogues with communities. In the process of thinking collision with others, learning becomes an active sharing and building process. Students would acquire knowledge, cultivate problem consciousness, and enhance the ability to resolve problems.

Conclusion

From feminist liberation analysis model, LTD is a teaching principle of enhancing the knowledge understanding and ability of students. It would materialize the free development of human nature among teachers and students. LTD depends on teachers and students to materialize. Regarding conception, teachers and students need to have equal concept of teaching authority and reshape the goal of developing teacher-student human nature. In practice, teachers must transform teaching from given to liberation, treat students equally, respect the differentiation of students, and empower students. Students need exert their major entity and pursue their own development through dialogues with communities.

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